DARK WANDERERS: GYPSIES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH POETRY

by

LANCE JASON WILDER

(Under the Direction of Tricia Lootens and Anne Williams)

ABSTRACT

This project explores the phenomenon of what has often been called the "Gypsy Problem" in nineteenth-century Britain. Although the Roma/Gypsies have been in Great Britain at least since 1505, interest in the Gypsies exploded in the nineteenth century, and mainstream British legislators, scholars, and writers all found themselves fascinated by this mysterious people whose origins, language, and customs were unknown to people outside of the tribe. In novels alone, the Gypsy figure became suddenly quite common during the period, and several scholars have explored their role in the novels of the nineteenth century. To date, though, their role in the poetry of the time has gone largely ignored, despite the fact that poetic references to them increase nearly fourfold from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. The driving question for my project is this: why do so many poets of the nineteenth century find in the Gypsies something that fuels the poetic imagination? Over and over, the Gypsies take on a similar role in the century's poetry: they become ways to think about other issues. The Gypsies act as a useful intersection of nineteenth-century anxieties. In this way, they provide the poets with a canvas on which to paint various histories of the period. First, I examine concerns about freedom and moderation in John Clare's several short Gypsy poems and John Ruskin's Newdigate Prize entry, "The Gipsies." In the next chapter, I consider religious identity in George Crabbe's "The Hall of Justice," John Kenyon's "Sacred Gipsy Carol," Arthur Penrhyn Stanley's Newdigate-winning "The Gypsies," Father Prout's "Flight into Egypt," Francesca Alexander's "The Madonna and the Gypsy," and Amy Levy's "Run to Death." I then turn to time and purpose in William Wordsworth's "Gipsies" and Matthew Arnold's "To a Gipsy Child by the Sea-Shore," "Resignation," "The Scholar-Gipsy," and "Thyrsis." In the final chapter, I turn to issues of history and gender in George Eliot's *The Spanish Gypsy*. Throughout, I frequently return to the cultural and historical work the Gypsies are doing in the poetry, as well as to a recurring thread concerning the visual arts and Marian iconography.

INDEX WORDS: Gypsies, Roma, British Literature, Poetry, Race, Religion, Gender, Class, Freedom, Time, History, Ethnology, Orientalism, Enclosure, Jews, George Crabbe, John Clare, John Ruskin, John Kenyon, Father Prout, Francis Sylvester Mahony, Francesca Alexander, Amy Levy, William Wordsworth, Matthew Arnold, George Eliot, Titian, Raphael, Scientific Racism, Madonna

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B. A., Furman University, 1992

M. A., Baylor University, 1995

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2004

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August 2004

DEDICATION

To my parents, Don and Shirley Wilder, my first teachers, and, of course, to Shannon, my better self, my best friend, my love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

So many people deserve my gratitude for their help and encouragement during this project that, no matter how long I wax cloyingly on, I shall inevitably omit someone who deserves better from me. Nonetheless, since this is the last time in my career that an editor will not try to limit my thanks, I am certainly going to try to be thorough. I cannot fail to thank my committee, particularly my co-major professors. Quite a team, Tricia Lootens and Anne Williams enthusiastically guided me through this project and, in the process, nurtured me as a scholar. Dr. Lootens never pressured me to follow her own research; in fact, she seldom even mentioned that she had done research on a topic I was pursuing (to save me some of the anxiety of influence, I suspect). A portrait of restraint for allowing me to forge my own way and stumble on my own scholarly passions, she relentlessly encouraged me to find my own voice. She demanded close reading but always reminded me not to lose sight of the larger cultural contexts, and she insisted that I remain true to what excited me in the topic. Not once did I leave one of our meetings at Blue Sky Coffee House without feeling more energized and excited about my project that I did when I walked in—and I can think of no better way to describe what a major professor can do.

Dr. Williams has done precisely the same thing but in different manner. From her, I learned long ago that there is joy to be had in scholarship. I know no other scholar who so energetically melds her personal passions with her academic interests. This example of personal engagement with one's work gave me the freedom to tie my own passions for visual art into my literary delvings, a direction that made my project more gratifying to me than it would otherwise

have been. In addition, she has given me crucial guidance and training by her unrelenting demand for rigorously close reading and nimble leaps between not just disparate works and writers but also disparate disciplines. She has further influenced me by allowing me to teach with her, read her manuscripts, and serve as her research assistant, demonstrating up close what the scholarly life is and should be. Together, Drs. Williams and Lootens took me as a student and worked rigorously to make me a colleague.

The other members of my committee—Simon Gatrell, Anne Mallory, and Richard Menke—also deserve many thanks. Dr. Gatrell, it is no overstatement to say, is one of the primary reasons this dissertation exists. He waited patiently as I struggled for just the topic I wanted for a seminar paper in a directed reading on Arnold and Clough. Little did he know how I would abuse his patience: when I ambushed him with a 45-page tome on Arnold's Gypsy poems, he not only proved a careful reader but also encouraged me to consider it as a dissertation possibility. Dr. Menke and Dr. Mallory have given me countless hours of friendly encouragement, sage advice, and careful reading, generosity I have repeatedly punished by asking for still more. They have both startled me by the nimbleness and grace with which they have been prepared to discuss these issues when I have sneaked up on them with no prior warning and, in a panic, begged guidance. As a result, they have shaped this dissertation often by the fallen words of wisdom that they let drop in passing and that they did not know I was sweeping up eagerly into a little bag of anxiety. For modeling to me what it is to be a relatively young, starting scholar in our field, I am grateful. They have imaged precisely what I want the next part of my career to be. My entire committee have also done me the great service of being absolutely unyielding when it comes to prose. They have demanded that I write interestingly,

accurately, and, above all, clearly. Any merit in the following pages certainly reflects this guidance, and any weakness in these pages is certainly mine, not theirs.

Many others have had important hands in this project, both directly and indirectly. The late Dr. Linda Julian, who succumbed to cancer in the final months of this project, the late Dr. Rudy Bates, and Dr. Phillip Elliott—all three splendid teachers of nineteenth-century British literature—guided my early stumbling interests in the Victorian period. Dr. Roger Brooks, the retired Director of the Armstrong-Browning Library at Baylor University, fostered my passion for Arnold with his own. By hiring me as an assistant to the UGA at Oxford Program, Dr. Judith Shaw subsidized and encouraged invaluable research time I had at the University of Oxford. Dr. Darlene Ciraulo-Greenhalgh provided me with precious work time by shouldering more than her share of the load while we worked with the UGA undergraduates in Oxford. Despite their being outside my own field, Drs. Margaret and Wyatt Anderson, Carole Henry, and Pam Taylor have been depthless wells of enthusiasm and encouragement even when my own excitement for my project occasionally waned, and they have been kind friends to both me and Shannon.

By listening to my academic needs—even when I did not know how to articulate them—Dr. David Bradshaw, of Worcester College, Oxford, did a wonderful job of selecting the two dons with whom I worked while at Oxford. Perhaps equally important, David energized me with his own academic vigor and also his interest in my project. Dr. Maarten Delbeke, also of Worcester College, taught me how to "read" painting and architecture and, what has proved particularly important, introduced to me the research methods of the art historian. As my guide through Marian iconography, this Catholic tutor was notably patient with my Protestant ignorance. The other Fellow with whom I worked, Dr. Lawrence Goldman, of St. Peter's College, Oxford, did for me in social history what Dr. Delbeke did for me in art history, and a

quiet talk in his rooms over a sherry gave me what I imagined was the prototypical "Oxford experience." As a nineteenth-century social historian, Dr. Goldman greeted my project with great enthusiasm, cheerfully guiding me through dusty nineteenth-century volumes of Hansard's parliamentary debates and Victorian crises about gender, race, religion, and colonialism. His knowledge of archives and resources led me to fun and productive paths I had not at all anticipated. When the creaky wheels of the University of Oxford archives and the Bodleian Library needed a weightier shoulder to move them than mine, he gladly volunteered.

How can any research project end without thanks to the many librarians and archivists who allowed it to happen? The staff at the Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Georgia were exceedingly accommodating. While in Oxford, where I did much of my research, I incurred a great debt to the Bodleian Library for allowing me reader privileges. Especially, the staff of the Upper Reading Room were helpful, and I realized that they should probably get a restraining order against me when they stopped asking my name before they handed me my stack requests. I am grateful to Dr. Simon Bailey, the University Archivist, and Stephen Tomlinson, in Western Manuscripts. I certainly hope that their help is more memorable to me than my pestering is to them. I also appreciate Sue Usher's granting me access to the Oxford University English Faculty Library. Charles Nosworthy, in the Special Manuscript Collection of the University of Leicester, gave gracious and long-distance aid in procuring Sir Benjamin Brodie's Newdigate entry, "The Gypsies," a poem that did not find its way into my dissertation but will undoubtedly appear in later projects.

I gratefully acknowledge the permissions to use materials from a variety of sources that has been pivotal to parts of my work. The Scuola Grande di San Rocco in Venice generously allowed me to reproduce Titian's *Annunciation*; Francesca Alexander's illustrations appear here

with the permission of the University of Georgia's Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library; the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister of Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden has permitted me to reproduce Raphael's *Madonna di San Sisto*.

No graduate student can overstate his or her appreciation for the financial support received along the way. Particularly, I am grateful to the University of Georgia English Department and the University of Georgia Graduate School. Especially under Drs. William Provost and Christy Desmet, the years of teaching assistantships in the English Department not only provided income but also allowed me to discover my own love of teaching. Dr. David Payne's continually employing me in the UGA Writing Center provided me with a variety of administrative and teaching experiences that I never anticipated. All that said, despite my pleasure in the classroom, the UGA Graduate School Dissertation Completion Grant freed me from my teaching duties for a pivotal final year in which I did the vast majority of my work.

Now, I come to the thanks that are even harder to articulate, those that go to my friends and family, who have provided support, encouragement, and love. My friends at The White Horse Tavern have no idea they played any role in this project. As I would duck across from the Bodleian to take a break in the cramped White Horse, however, they would often ask about my work, and among my most joyful memories are the times nearly every person in the White Horse was discussing Gypsies in the surrounding areas. They provided me with a warm, friendly respite from my work, keeping me pleasantly distracted from Gypsy monomania by often asking me to explain everything from baseball to American politics, keeping me pleasantly distracted from Gypsy monomania. They embraced me as their "American regular," which may, in the end, be what I shall remember most from my time in Oxford.

Many friends have supported me throughout this project. Kevin Byerly and Jeff Ball expressed as much encouragement for a student of poetry as two engineers could muster. Rob Archer, Hadley Mozer, Rachel Norwood, and Beth Ann Way have given friendship, encouragement, and insight. Meg Amstutz's friendship to both Shannon and me has been one of life's best pleasures. She and I cheered each other on as we both finished up our dissertations. I bore Leslie Petty's dissertation-induced neuroses as she completed her degree, and I have turned the tables on her in the last several months. Her friendship has been one of my most important accomplishments at UGA, and after Shannon, she is the person to whom I have turned most for support, encouragement, friendship, and advice during this process.

How can I describe my debt to my family? My in-laws, Jim and Tommye O'Brien, have supported and been excited for me so much that they have made the "in-law" only a nominal title. Surely they feel differently about their daughter than they do about their son-in-law, but they have been kind enough to make the distinction invisible to me. My siblings, Scott and Lisa, and their families have done all that a little brother could possibly dream of: they have made sure I knew they were proud of me and that they were there if I ever needed anything at all. All of this even during the short period when my brother was misremembering my dissertation topic ("Oh, Gypsies! For some reason, I was thinking gnomes. Gypsies make a lot more sense!"). My parents, Donald and Shirley Wilder, were my first and most loving teachers. They have encouraged my curiosity and intellectual pursuits from the beginning, never once asking what the practical side of a degree in English is. They have rejoiced at every achievement and supported every struggle. My family have always acted as if they were sure I was going to finish—although, no doubt, they could not have been—even when I was sure of just the opposite myself. Together, they have presented me with wells of generosity and support that seem too deep for

words. I could tell anecdote after anecdote of that support and generosity, but those instances are only symptoms of a more systemic love.

If there is anyone whom words fail me to thank, she is my wife, Shannon. Of course, she has put up with all the requisite anxiety, depression, neuroses, and surliness that fall upon any significant other of a dissertator. Fortunately, however, she has not done so passively. She has given me not only boundless love but also insightful criticism and advice, reading and responding to multiple drafts. She is my best critic and my best sounding board. When I am unsure how to proceed, I ask myself, "What would Shannon do at this point?"—and I do not mean that solely in terms of my academic projects. When I am unsure about a chapter, she is the first person I want to read it or with whom I want to discuss it. When I am unsure how to incorporate my directors' feedback, hers is the first advice I seek. There are many reasons I am pleased to be completing this degree, but among the chief are that, by finishing now, I will be able to turn and provide her, as best I can, the same support, love, and encouragement she has given me, as she begins her own dissertation.

Of course, teachers, friends, and family aside, no acknowledgements would be complete without mention of Sasha (the Russian Blue foundling), Merlin (the black foundling Merry Christmas cat), or Perfectly Puggish Queen Guinevere. Sasha and Guinevere did their part by using their body weight on my lap to keep me from flying out of my desk chair while writing. Merlin and Guinevere also helped by insisting that I take breaks to feed them (or ignore them at my own peril). All three of them kept within convenient reach, knowing I would never finish if I could not easily pet them. Typing (me), snoring (the pug), and purring (the cats) to madrigals, nocturnes, and lieders, with the occasional Miles Davis or Portuguese guitar thrown in, the four of us kept my little study crowded, loud, and happy while I worked.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: POETS AND THE GYPSY PROBLEM

I. GYPSIES UNDER THE DREAMING SPIRES: THE 1837 NEWDIGATE PRIZE

> *I heard Stanley recite his "Gypsies" in the Theatre in 1837; the scene comes back to me as of yesterday—the crowded area, the ladies in their enormous bonnets; handsome, stately Dr. Gilbert in the Vice-Chancellor's chair; the pale, slight, weak-voiced boyish figure in the rostrum; the roar of cheers which greeted him. (Tuckwell 98)*

That is how Reverend William Tuckwell remembers Arthur Penrhyn Stanley's reading of his winning entry for the Newdigate Prize for English Verse. Stanley, later Dean of Westminster, faced stiff competition, for the prize is prestigious. In 1837, *The Times* announced that fifty-four students had entered (June 1, 1837, p. 3, col. f).[1] Traditionally, the winner reads his or her entry at Encaenia[2] in the Sheldonian Theatre. In the history of the Newdigate, 1837 was extremely unusual. The University of Oxford, the very image of humane, liberal learning, has seldom been the first to leap into a new trend or a merely fashionable topic. The slow, conservative wheels of Oxford do not move lightly or change directions easily. Their grinding

[1] Curiously, until late in the century, this is the only instance that *The Times* printed the results of the Prize. Occasionally, the newspaper published the topic for the ensuing year, but not the results. Unfortunately, of the fifty-four entries on "The Gypsies" in 1837, as far as I have been able to discover, only three survive: Stanley's, Sir Benjamin Brodie's, and John Ruskin's. Stanley's and Ruskin's were printed in later editions of their work, while Brodie's appears to exist only in holograph manuscript form at the University of Leicester. Written by men whose later fame was not based on their poetry, all three read much like the undergraduate exercise they are; together, however, they capture several of the prevailing attitudes toward Gypsies in the first half of the nineteenth century. Of course, one may wonder how truly great is the loss of fifty-one undergraduate poems that did *not* win the prize.

[2] Held on Wednesday of the ninth week of Trinity Term, Encaenia is the ceremony at which the University awards honorary degrees and commemorates benefactors.

toward the Gypsies in 1837, then, underscores a nineteenth-century obsession with the wanderers and provides one of the most intriguing chapters in the century's Gypsy discourse. In that year, "The Gypsies" was the set topic for the Newdigate Prize.

In 1806, Sir Roger Newdigate of University College established a prize in his name for "a copy of English verse of fifty lines and no more in recommendation of the study of the ancient Greek and Roman remains of Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting." By 1827, with the consent of his heirs, Newdigate's "very inconvenient restrictions" on subject matter were lifted (*Historical Register* 165). The topic is set every year by the Professor of Poetry, and the entries are judged by that Professor and two members of Convocation appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors to judge both this prize and the Chancellor's English Essay Prize. From 1831 to 1842, the Professor of Poetry was John Keble. If the set topic for the poem were merely random every year, its being on the Gypsies in 1837 might simply be a truly interesting coincidence, though the question of why would remain. The subjects, however, have not been random; they have been of a very particular sort, a sort that the Gypsies simply do not fit. From the lifting of Sir Roger's original requirements for topic until 1939, the set subject has been "most commonly a person, place or event of historical significance; since 1947 [prize was suspended 1940-1946] it has more often been of an abstract or philosophical nature" (Hibbert 277). The table below highlights the Gypsy anomaly for the Newdigate in the ten years before and after 1837.

Table 2.1
The Newdigate Prize for English Verse from 1827-1847

Year	Topic	Professor of Poetry	Winner[3] (if known)
1827	Pompeii	Henry Hart Milman	Robert Stephen Hawker
1828	Richard Coeur de Lion	Henry Hart Milman	
1829	Voyages of Discovery to the Polar Regions	Henry Hart Milman	
1830	The African Desert	Henry Hart Milman	
1831	The Suttees	Henry Hart Milman / **John Keble**	
1832	Staffa	**John Keble**	
1833	Granada	**John Keble**	
1834	The Hospice of St. Bernard	**John Keble**	
1835	The Burning of Moscow	**John Keble**	
1836	The Knights of St. John	**John Keble**	Frederick William Faber
1837	**The Gypsies**	**John Keble**	**Arthur Penrhyn Stanley**
1838	The Exile of St. Helena	**John Keble**	
1839	Salsette and Elephanta	**John Keble**	John Ruskin
1840	The Judgment of Brutus	**John Keble**	
1841	The Sandwich Islands	**John Keble**	
1842	Charles the Twelfth	**John Keble** / James Garbett	John Campbell Shairp
1843	Cromwell	James Garbett	Matthew Arnold
1844	The Battle of the Nile	James Garbett	
1845	Petra	James Garbett	John William Burgon
1846	Settlers in Australia	James Garbett	
1847	Prince Charles Edward, after the Battle of Culloden	James Garbett	

Source: *Historical Register* 165-66; *Council Secretariat*.

With little exception, the topics of these twenty-one years have to do with people, places, and events of historical significance and often specifically British significance, a case that simply cannot be made for the Gypsies until later in the century. Furthermore, although the Suttees refer to a Hindu practice outlawed in India by the British in 1829, none of the other topics focuses on any single racial, ethnic, or religious group specifically *as* a group. Other than in 1837, the

[3] It was not until the 1970s that a copy of the Newdigate prize-winning entry was required for the archives in the Bodleian Library. Past entries, then, survive entirely serendipitously. If the winner, not to mention those who did not win, went on to some fame, then there is still only a chance that someone may have preserved the poem because of that person's fame. Many entrants, though, even the winners, are likely lost forever. I have not gone to any great lengths to find the winners of other years unless they announced themselves somewhat readily.

closest the Newdigate came to that sort of topic in the nineteenth century was 1861's "The Vikings," a group whose historical significance for the British Isles is obvious, and 1874's "The Last of the Red Indians."

Saying with any specificity why the Gypsies were a topic of interest in Oxford in 1837—at least interest keen enough to lead to the set topic for the Newdigate—is difficult. Perhaps one of the recent books on Gypsy origins was the catalyst. More likely, perhaps, the topic struck John Keble because of the parliamentary debates about the 1835 Highway Act (5 & 6 Will. IV, c. 50, s. 72, 76), a piece of anti-Gypsy legislation that penalized the vagrants forty shillings if caught encamping on the highway. Perhaps, however, one need look no further than the Gypsy obsession began gripping the British imagination by the early years of the nineteenth century.

That the century's excitement about Gypsies manifested itself in the topic for a poetry prize is fitting, for Gypsies captured the poetical imagination of the period. A great many poets both fed and fed off of the nineteenth-century passion for and anxiety about Gypsies. Many of them found in the subject of the Gypsies something that they could transform imaginatively. What about the Gypsies aroused their imaginations, however, often differed, and it is this question with which this project is concerned. Why do so many poets of the nineteenth century find in the Gypsies something that fuels the poetic imagination? Although a few critics have glanced briefly at this question in specific poems, as far as I have been able to discover, no one has attempted to answer it more thoroughly in terms of the century, a century in which interest in the Gypsies grew exponentially. Certain problems attend this project, and among them is that the poems reflect a vexed relationship between symbolic and historic Gypsies. While many poems of the century treat the Gypsies as metaphors for something else entirely, others focus on

the Gypsies as a real subordinated group of people. In both sorts of poem, however, the Gypsies take on a similar tropologized role: in both the literal and the symbolic treatments, they become ways to think about other issues. As overdetermined symbols of race, class, gender, religion, and freedom, Gypsies act as a precise intersection of nineteenth-century concerns, providing these poets with a field on which to exercise anxieties about a variety of the period's debates.

ii. "The Gypsy Problem": Historical and Critical Contexts

A search for *Gypsy* and its several variants in the *Literature Online* database of British literature (*LION*) reveals the following data: in eighteenth-century prose, the words occur 147 times in 62 works, while in nineteenth-century prose, they appear 689 times in 180 works. In twentieth-century prose, the numbers tumble to only 30 times in 15 works. Similarly, in eighteenth-century poetry, *Gypsy* and its variants occur 284 times in 195 works; in nineteenth-century poetry, however, the words appear 877 times in 440 works. In twentieth-century poetry, the occurrences fall off to 292 times in 210 works. While a number of problems with such a research method prevent these numbers from any level of scientific certainty,[4] the numbers do, at least, suggest significant growth in the number of British works (and presumably writers) interested in Gypsies during the nineteenth century.

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[4] *Literature Online*. 2002. Proquest Learning and Information Co. 10 Jan. 2003 <http://lion.chadwyck.com/>. *LION* is a searchable full-text collection of literature from a large number of time periods, nationalities, ethnicities, and literary movements, but it reflects all the idiosyncrasies one might expect in such a resource. For example, though *LION* contains an impressive number of texts, many texts simply have not been entered into the database yet. Another possibly misleading aspect of these numbers is that twentieth-century literature is more difficult to enter into the database because of copyright issues. Also, these numbers reflect some overlap: some works that use, for instance, the word *Gipsy* may also use the word *Gipsies* and are, therefore, counted twice in these totals. Problems of periodization, too, play into these figures: for example, Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816) appears in the searches of prose from both centuries. Finally, the vocabulary does not necessarily indicate the context: some poems may use one of these words more than once but have little or nothing to do with actual Gypsies (for example, "we ate our dinner Gypsy style" or references to a Gypsy rose), while other poems may use the word only once but focus entirely on the Gypsies. I have, however, used the search results as they appear in *LION* rather than adjusting them for these eccentricities.

At the beginning of the 1800s, the Gypsies[5] were no newcomers to Britain, but no one knows precisely when Gypsies first arrived. Though historians acknowledge that the Gypsies may have arrived even centuries earlier, the first unmistakable reference to them appears on April 22, 1505, in the Lord High Treasurer for Scotland's reference to "the Egyptianis in the Kingis command" (Crofton, "Early Annals" 5-6; Vesey-FitzGerald 20-21). The earliest record of their presence specifically in England comes nine years later in *A Dyalog of Syr Thomas More, knyght*, and it also refers to the palmistry long associated with the Gypsies: in 1514, an Egyptian woman who witnessed the death of Richard Hunne "could tell marvellous things by looking into one's hand" (Vesey-FitzGerald 28).

Just as the date of their arrival is something of a mystery, no one knows precisely from whence the Gypsies came. The name *Gypsy* reflects the early belief that they came from Egypt. Many thought they were nomadic, like the Wandering Jew, as penance for some sin against Christ: some legends claimed that Gypsies refused the Holy Family hospitality when they fled to Egypt to escape Herod; some identified them as Cain's descendents, for the word Cain means "blacksmith" or "metal-worker" in Semitic languages (Clébert 1); another, still more specifically, claimed that the Gypsies, traditionally tinkers and metalworkers, had fashioned the

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[5] What to call this group has become, in recent years, complicated. Traditionally, in various countries, they have gone by the names, among others, of *Travellers*, *Bohémiens*, *Gitano*, *Tsigani*, *Cigano*, *Zigeuner*, and *Heydens*. The most common term in the English-speaking world, Gypsies, is problematic, for it is based on early misconceptions about their origins, that they were Egyptians. The other English term, Travellers, fixes the people with a single defining characteristic, one that is untrue of many of today's sometimes-sedentary Roma. As the Romani rights movement has gained momentum in the last two or three decades, the people long known as Gypsies have pointed out that all of these are names imposed upon them by the West. Even among the "Gypsy" community, however, a preferable name is still of some debate, for while some say that the entire ethnic group are identified by the terms Rom, Roma, and Romani, others argue that Roma is but one tribe out of several. Nonetheless, Roma/Gypsies (sometimes spelled *Rroma* to distance them from accidental associations with Romania or Rome) is the term used by the Council of Europe, as well as many Romani rights organizations. My own choice of terms is intentional. The period I am examining predates these particular concerns with nomenclature, and since the writers I am exploring use the term *Gypsy*, I have done likewise for the sake of clarity (not to mention convenience). For much more on the problems of classification and its relationship to race and cultural relations, see Thomas Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change: The Development of Ethnic Ideology and Pressure Politics among British Gypsies from Victorian Reformism to Romany Nationalism*, particularly pp. 51-93 and 187-216; and David Mayall, *Gypsy Identities, 1500-2000: From Egipcyans and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany*.

nails used at Christ's crucifixion; still another reported that the Gypsies were set wandering as punishment for their apostasy.[6] Tracking the roots of Romany, the closely guarded language of the Roma, to Hindi and Sanskrit, scholars from the nineteenth century onward have dismissed these early Egyptian associations and all other speculations and agreed that the Gypsies came from somewhere on the Indian subcontinent.

From 1530 until the end of the eighteenth century, Parliament enacted *eight* pieces of major legislation regarding Gypsies. In the nineteenth century, it enacted *eighteen* (Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers* 189-92).[7] According to Henry Crofton, one of the charter members of the Gypsy Lore Society, by 1530, the Gypsies had apparently "become an intolerable nuisance in England," for in that year, the Act concerning Egipcions stated,

> Afore this tyme dyverse and many outlandysshe [foreign] People callynge themselfes Egyptians, usyng no Crafte nor faicte of Merchaundyce had comen into this realme and gone from Shire to Shire and Place to Place in greate Company, and used greate subtyll and crafty meanes to deceyve the People, beryng them in Hande [persuading them] that they by Palmestre coulde telle Menne and Womens Fortunes and so many tymes by crafte and subtyltie had deceyved the People of theyr Money and also had comytted many and haynous Felonyes and Robberies to the greate Hurte and Deceyte of the People that they had comyn amonge. [textual emendments are Crofton's]

The Act decreed, "From hensforth no suche psone be suffred to come within this the Kynge's Realme" ("Early Annals" 8-9). The legislation became more and more severe, including, under Philip and Mary, capital punishment for simply remaining in Britain, until finally, in 1783, under

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[6] I discuss the legends of the Flight into Egypt in Chapter 3, below. These legends appear in a number of places, but all three as well as others are summarized in Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *Gypsies: An Illustrated History* (18-22). See also Francis Hindes Groome, *Gypsy Folk Tales* (xxvii-xxx); and Jean-Paul Clébert, *The Gypsies* (1-8). Liégeois reports that the apostasy legend has some basis in fact, according to papal letters. Another legend, quite different from these, is that the Gypsies are descended from Adam and his first wife before Eve. They are, therefore, without sin and not condemned to work as the descendents of Adam and Eve are. The notion of sinlessness suggests that this first wife was not Lilith.

[7] Mayall provides an excellent table, describing the legislation from 1530 to 1908. For more information on the laws aimed at Gypsies, see also Thomas Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change: The Development of Ethnic Ideology and Pressure Politics among British Gypsies from Victorian Reformism to Romany Nationalism*; Barbara Adams, et al, *Gypsies and Government Policy in England: A Study of the Travellers' Way of Life in Relation to the Policies and Practices of Central and Local Government*; and David Mayall, *English Gypsies and State Policies*.

George III, the earlier draconian laws were repealed. These sixteenth-century laws, however, were only the beginnings of what has often been called the "Gypsy Question" in Britain.

In the nineteenth century, legislation tended to be subtler but still fairly pointed in its targets, and the complexion of the issue began to change. The "Gypsy Problem" was much in the news and periodicals of the day. Especially early in the century in Britain, the *Gajos* (a Romany word for non-Roma) largely despised and feared the Gypsies as they had for nearly three hundred years already. As David Mayall puts it,

> [Gypsies] had a freedom resented by the householder and were seen as marginal to the normal forces of law and order. Those travellers who did not work, or were not seen to work, were thought of as idle mendicants; those who did were said to pursue sham and vagabond employments which evaded hard and real toil. In short, they were seen as unwelcome and unsavoury parasites. The nomadic way of life stood in defiance to that experienced and suffered by the sedentary population. It rejected materialism, conformity and subjugation to industrial discipline. Anything that suggested eccentricity and unconventionality was treated with an interest qualified by reserve and suspicion. (*Gypsy-Travellers* 90)

According to George Behlmer, whose essay "The Gypsy Problem in Victorian England" is perhaps the best general survey of this particularly nineteenth-century dilemma, another source of anxiety involved not just the Gypsies' own rejection of a sedentary life of industrial labor but also their corrupting influence upon the workforce already in place: "a common assumption of the governing classes was that every worker harbored latent impulses toward wandering, and thus any contact between intractable vagrants and respectable workers posed the danger that these impulses might be activated" (231).

The predominant assumption about Gypsies in the early part of the nineteenth century was that a people so unfettered posed a threat to both the financial and moral stability of society, an attitude not completely uncommon even in the latter part of the century. The government was determined to quell this sort of behavior with new laws that made all manner of Gypsy activities

illegal. Such action was difficult, though: "because Gypsies were among the most self-sufficient of wanderers, they posed a vexing problem for local authorities bent on applying uniform sanctions against vagrancy" (Behlmer 232). Nonetheless, one of many such efforts, the Vagrancy Act of 1824 "was perhaps the most pernicious piece of legislation in force against Gypsies and travelers in the nineteenth century. [. . .] it gave considerable discretionary powers to magistrates, who showed little reluctance in enforcing it, and by sweeping the countryside as 'a remorseless drag-net' no nomadic family was able to feel immune from its generalised provisions" (Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers* 147). Under "the vague and all-encompassing clauses" of the Act, the local constabularies gained the summary authority to persecute the Gypsies without the tedium and expense of jury trials and to force them to "move on unless tented on private property and by permission of the owner" (154, 147). John Hoyland, a Quaker missionary to the Gypsies, observed that the Act caused the imprisonment of some Gypsies even though they had not actually broken any laws or plundered any property (230).

Even the little compassion the Gypsies received at this time came primarily "from missionaries bent on converting them into sedentary Christians" (Behlmer 236). "Manipulative benevolence," in Thomas Acton's excellent phrase, "began to exist alongside direct repression from the start of the nineteenth century; but at first the one was probably no more effective than the other had been in changing patterns of Gypsy life and Gypsy-*Gajo* relations" (104). Hoyland was the first of these missionaries to publish his studies as a book—*A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits, & Present State of the Gypsies: Designed to Develope the Origin of This Singular People, and to Promote the Amelioration of their Condition*. Hoyland was one of the first English *Gajos* to posit the Gypsies' Indian origins (Heinrich Grellman preceded him on the Continent) and to call on other *Gajos* to give sympathy and mercy to the unenlightened Gypsies.

Because of his experiences among the Gypsies, he also theorized that learning the Gypsies' language was the key to their confidence; thus Hoyland became one of England's first Romany *Rais*, or "Gypsy Gentleman," a term that "connotes a patron whose familiarity with and generosity to Gypsies has earned him an honored status among them. Flattered by the deference they received from these traditionally aloof people, the Ryes would conclude that language was the bridge between the roving and the settled life" (Behlmer 237). Following Hoyland's efforts, others established charity schools, the most famous of which were founded by Reverend John Baird in Kirk Yetholm in Scotland and by Reverend James Crabb at Southampton. The missions were "in general very assimilationist in outlook; none of them had any qualms about trying to persuade or bring pressure to bear on parents to leave their children behind in apprentice schools" (Acton 104). Not all people, however, felt such optimism about the "improvability" of the Gypsies. In 1850, the racial ethnologist John Knox exclaims,

> Will the leopard change his spots, or the Ethiopian change his dye? When that happens, I shall then believe that the gipsy may become a labouring, industrious Christian man; supporting his family decently and quietly; taking his share of trouble as a parish constable, churchwarden, and vestryman; paying his rates, general and local; duly attending divine worship, and clamorous in support of high church or low church, free church or church and state! What mighty changes must have passed over the globe before all this happens! (161)

As the century progressed, the Gypsy reputation underwent a sort of reformation, largely as a result of these missionary efforts. Harassment and mistrust continued, of course, but Gypsies became the dubious beneficiaries of a devoted group of champions. The reasons for this evolution are many. As begun by Hoyland and Crabb, religious concerns were one significant motive. In fact, as Acton explains, "there was in that early period not the rigid distinction between the romantic and the welfare worker that afterwards arose" (104). George Borrow, for example, may be credited with the birth of "Gypsiology" and its subsequent body of adherents,

yet even his early work arose from his work with the British and Foreign Bible Society. From 1841 into the twentieth century, Borrow's semi-fictional/semi-autobiographical accounts of Gypsy life enjoyed a great deal of success. In 1841, he published *The Zincali; or, An Account of the Gypsies of Spain*; in 1843, he published *The Bible in Spain*; and in 1851, he released *Lavengro; the Scholar, the Gypsy, the Priest*, which was criticized severely but read much. Finally, in 1857, he issued *The Romany Rye; a sequel to 'Lavengro*,' a semi-autobiographical account of his travels with the Gypsies. His books, however, were only a few of many accounts of the British *Rais*, having begun with Hoyland's. These *Rais* formed a body of real nineteenth-century Scholar-Gypsies or Gypsy-Scholars who, like Matthew Arnold's famous Oxford lad, went to live with the Gypsies, planning on learning all they could before returning to reveal the secrets they had uncovered.

Less religious reasons also contributed to this reformation of the Gypsy reputation. One cause was the rural Romantic movement in England: "precisely because the Gypsies stood apart from the mainstream of urban-industrial life, they held a special fascination for the critics of that life" (Behlmer 232)—despite the fact that the Gypsies also stood apart from the mainstream of rural-agricultural life. Also, a new interest in the Gypsies' language, Romany, led to these changing attitudes as nineteenth-century philologists strove to learn the language and its origins. While Borrow's work popularized the field, Charles Godfrey Leland "typified the new generation of Ryes whose passion for the race was recast as scholarship" as he pursued the preservation of Gypsy lore and language (Behlmer 241). Together, those who feared that rural England was soon to be no more, the impassioned new cult of Gypsy-focused philologists, anthropologists, and ethnologists, and romanticizing writers created a reformed view of the Gypsy as Rousseau's Noble Savage himself.

Many of these people, particularly those anxious about the perceived loss of rural England, looked to Gypsies, who "would not do as models of English racial virtue. But they could serve as representatives of the hardy competence associated with 'true country folk'" (Behlmer 239). In fact, in the 1880s and '90s, it became fashionable for wealthy gentlemen "to hire or buy caravans in which they spent holidays on the road, 'Romany-style'" (239). "Playing Gypsy" became all the rage.[8] Along with the fear of "rustic doom," however, came a fear of Gypsy doom. Many feared that the Gypsies were dying out as well. The migration of affluent city-dwellers to the idealized countryside threatened to overcome the rural rovers, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, some Gypsies were finding their nomadic patterns touching more and more on the cities, particularly during the winter, when some would even settle in urban homes for the cold months. The sight of Gypsies in the city was too much for their champions: the fear that Gypsies were on the verge of extinction and the passion to save them grew rapidly. The new breed of romanticizing Gypsiologists capitalized upon the nostalgic ruralism, voiced by those like Edward Bulwer Lytton, that inspired so many poets and novelists of the second half of the century. In fact, many Gypsiologists maintained warm relations with Bulwer Lytton, Thomas Carlyle, George Eliot, Algernon Charles Swinburne, and Theodore Watts-Dunton.

The philologists, who saw themselves as something like linguistic archaeologists, generally concurred with Max Müller's theory that most European languages were derived from a south Asian language called Aryan, and they further believed that Romany was closer to its Aryan roots than other languages. Nevertheless, while these scholars generally agreed about the

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[8] Some figures had been doing this play-acting much earlier. One may think of *Jane Eyre*'s Rochester or even *The Mill on the Floss*'s Maggie Tulliver. Unlike earlier "Gypsies," however, in the 1880s and '90s, people began "playing Gypsy" in order to experience what they feared were a dying race, a dying lifestyle, and a dying rural England.

linguistic origins of Romany (and, therefore, the geographic origins of the Gypsies), there was still plenty about which to argue, especially how they got from the Indian subcontinent to England. About all that was certain was that the tribe had reached at least Scotland by no later than 1505. Beyond this spare fact, all that remained was conjecture. Richard Jefferies argued that the Gypsy culture was "older than the Chinese [. . .] older than the Aztecs; [reaching] back to those dim Sanskrit times that seem like the clouds on the far horizon of human experience" (162). In his notes to Walter Simson's *History of the Gipsies*, James Simson asserted that intermarriage had left Gypsy blood in the veins of many famous people (mostly nomads like John Bunyan and Sir Richard Burton), and the *Rai* Burton posited that the Gypsies were related to the Northwest Indian Jats. Burton also drew interesting parallels between the Gypsies and Jews, both groups forever homeless and welcomed in no land but somehow still clinging to their traditional cultures. Leland and Francis Hindes Groomes advanced the theory that Gypsies were

> "colporteurs" of magical beliefs. The colporteur notion was diffusionism run wild. It postulated that on leaving India, the Gypsies carried with them scores of Indian folktales, and that during their odyssey through Persia, Armenia, the Balkan Peninsula, to western Europe and the Americas, they had deposited these folktales with local populations, all the while adding new legends to the corpus. Thus, for example, both European witchcraft beliefs and the fairy tales collected by the Brothers Grimm allegedly owed much to Gypsy fertilization of folk culture. (Behlmer 243)

Theories about their history were scattered nearly as widely as the Gypsies themselves.

This obsession with tracing the origins of these wanderers and outcasts led to the publication of numerous histories. In addition to many dozens of articles published in nineteenth-century British periodicals, these are only a few of the book-length attempts to fix the origins of the Gypsies:[9] Hoyland's survey (1816); the Reverend James Crabb's *The Gipsies'*

[9] For extensive bibliographies on Gypsies, see Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers in Nineteenth-Century Society* (244-56); and Diane Tong, *Gypsies: A Multidisciplinary Annotated Bibliography*.

Advocate; or, Observations on the Origin, Character, Manners and Habits of the English Gipsies (1831); Samuel Roberts' *The Gypsies; their Origins, Continuance, and Destination, as Clearly Foretold in the Prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (5 editions, 1836-1842); Reverend Crabb's *A Condensed History of the* Gypsies (1843); William Howitt's *The Rural Life of England* (1843); the anonymously published *Gypsies: On the Origin of the Gypsies* (1863); Walter Simson's *A History of the Gipsies: With Specimens of the Gipsy Language* (1865); Henry Woodcock's *The Gipsies: being a Brief Account of their History, Origin, Capabilities, Manners and Customs* (1865); Leland's *The Gypsies* (1882); Burton's *The Jew, The Gypsy and El Islam* (1898). These are in addition to the work in the new *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*. Begun in 1888 and surviving still today, the Society was devoted to unearthing and preserving all things Gypsy, particularly history, language, and tales. The Society welcomed work by new Gypsiologists like Crofton, Paul Bataillard, John Sampson, and David MacRitchie

Many of these histories are contradictory, speculative, romanticizing, or condescending. While Hoyland described their changelessness and their "scrupulous regard to the Institutions of their ancestors" (233), the romantic philologists and Gypsiologists mourned civilization's altering and eradicating the Gypsies. Even in their disparateness, however, these works document one history—the history of a homeless race, both its past and its future uncertain and its present dogged by those who would despise and remove them, reform them, or dissect them. In the nineteenth century, the Gypsies were a people established in the English landscape for more than three hundred years, yet they were as alien and exotic as if they had only just appeared from strange lands.

Especially beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, then, commentators have written much on Gypsies in general, Gypsies in Britain, and even Gypsies in literature.

Under the influences of the relatively new fields of anthropology, ethnology, and philology and the enthusiasm of the Romany *Rais*, scholars from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries were eagerly attempting to fix the Gypsies' geographic origins, record and understand their language, and trace their migrations and their history.

In the second half of the twentieth century, however, following World War II, Gypsy scholarship fell into a new set of hands.[10] An increasing number of scholars began showing interest in what is often called the Romani Rights Movement, a movement attempting to establish that the Roma are essentially a race without a nation, a people without a home. Donald Kenrick and Ian Hancock,[11] among many others, have expressed interest not only in the Gypsies' history but also, in the words of one of Kenrick's book titles, in "the destiny of Europe's Gypsies." At the same time, another group of scholars have provided significant new examinations of the history, current situation, and future specifically of Gypsies in Great Britain.[12] These scholars have added both breadth and depth to the more general category of Roma / Gypsy studies, though perhaps, given the vigorous studies of other marginalized groups, it is surprising that the list of major contributors is not much longer.

As far as English literary studies of Gypsies go, however, despite the repeated use of the Gypsy in poetry and fiction, contributions come a bit more by fits and starts. While studies of other marginalized groups in literature have flourished in many quarters, the Gypsies have

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[10] Some estimates put Gypsy deaths in the Holocaust near 1.5 million, second only to the Jews. In fact, the Gypsies were the only racial/ethnic group other than Jews targeted on any large scale by the Nazis. Even after World War II, many activists and observers have considered the plight of the Gypsy the chief human rights crisis in Europe.

[11] Interestingly, as far as I am aware, in the American academy, Hancock, Professor of Linguistics at University of Texas at Austin, is the only commentator on Romani issues who also identifies himself as Rom.

[12] See especially Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald, *Gypsies of Britain: An Introduction to Their History*; Thomas Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change: The Development of Ethnic Ideology and Pressure Politics among British Gypsies from Victorian Reformism to Romany Nationalism*; David Mayall, *Gypsy-Travellers in Nineteenth-Century Society*, *English Gypsies and State Policies*, *Gypsy Identities, 1500-2000: From Egipcyans and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany*; George K. Behlmer, "The Gypsy Problem in Victorian England." Behlmer's is probably the best general survey of the "Gypsy Problem" in this period, sorting out what can be an overwhelming amount of information.

somehow escaped a great deal of notice. The attention that has been paid to them has largely involved their position in the nineteenth century and in nineteenth-century literature—understandably, given the growth of interest suggested by the *LION* database figures cited above. Nonetheless, even the nineteenth-century work has involved vastly more work on Gypsies in novels than in poetry. A few commentators have gone back so far as Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering* and as far forward as D. H. Lawrence's *The Virgin and the Gypsy*; most, however, have limited their discussions to the prominent candidates: the fleeting encounter with Gypsies in Jane Austen's *Emma*; Rochester's charade in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*; Heathcliff, the "gypsy brat" in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*; and Maggie Tulliver's adventure in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*.[13]

In terms of the poetry, though, critical inquiry on the topic has been rather more sporadic. Anne Janowitz's "'Wild Outcasts of Society': The Transit of the Gypsies in the Romantic Period Poetry" stands apart as a much more attentive treatment than most others. Janowitz's 1999 essay pairs the Gypsy with the figure of the Wandering Jew as she explores what she calls the Romantic "poetry of rurality" and considers the economic context in which these poems were produced (213). In between discussions of this Gypsy-Jew connection, she reads several of John Clare's Gypsy poems in terms of the rural nostalgia that marks much of the period's poetry.

Other than Janowitz, however, few have written about Gypsies in the poetry beyond a few treatments of Matthew Arnold's "Resignation," "The Scholar-Gipsy," and "Thyrsis" and

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[13] Among the several examinations of Gypsies in fiction are Deborah Epstein Nord, 'Marks of Race': Gypsy Figures and Eccentric Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing"; Mary Elizabeth Hayes, "Maggie's Education of 'Her Unknown Kindred' in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*"; Leslie A. Chilton, "The Gypsies of *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *Jane Eyre*"; Frank Timothy Dougherty, "The Gypsies in Western Literature"; Michelle Marie Mancini, "The Pursuit of Gypsiness in Nineteenth-Century Britain"; Audrey Carr Shields, "Gypsy Stereotypes in Victorian Literature"; John Turner, "Purity and Danger in D. H. Lawrence's *The Virgin and the Gypsy*."

George Eliot's *The Spanish Gypsy*.[14] In her book article "Ethnic Heroism: Matthew Arnold's and George Eliot's Gypsies," Barbara Waxman notes the common feeling of anxiety among Victorian writers who saw upheaval, particularly religious, all about them, and she argues that, in "The Scholar-Gipsy" and *The Spanish Gypsy*, respectively, Arnold and Eliot attempt to create heroes who could allay Victorian anxieties that life was growing increasingly meaningless. However, she asks why the poets chose specifically ethnic heroes to carry the banner of meaning. The possibilities she suggests are that, while many Victorians felt alienated from their cultural history because of the rapid changes during the century, the Gypsies in Arnold's and Eliot's poems are "deeply rooted in the past history and traditions of their race and are faithfully united to one another" (117). Arnold's and Eliot's Gypsies are also, as most memorably expressed in "The Scholar-Gipsy," focused on "*one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire" (l. 152).

The greatest distinction between the two poems, according to Waxman, is that Arnold's truant Oxford student flies from contact with society, while Fedalma, urged by Zarca and despite her own desires, sets course directly for the public sphere. Both of these, Waxman posits, are appealing Victorian heroes: the Scholar-Gipsy possesses the "unconquerable hope" that so many Victorians felt they lacked (l. 211), and Fedalma feels the sort of "divided aims and negative intuitions about the future" that so many Victorians shared (125). Waxman concludes that, while many Victorians dismissed or damned the Gypsies, "Arnold and Eliot, on the contrary, saw in the gypsies a lesson in how to diminish people's painful alienation from one another and a lesson in how to link the past with the present in order to face the future with infinite enthusiasm and hope" (126).

In addition to the published work, three doctoral dissertations written in the last quarter-century have touched interests similar to my own here. Frank Timothy Dougherty's dissertation,

[14] For more these studies, see citations in chapters four and five.

"The Gypsies in Western Literature" (1980), has a short section on Arnold's and Eliot's poems, but his study is much broader, focusing on a startlingly wide selection of Western literature, including, among many others, Cervantes, Fielding, Goethe, Scott, and Tennessee Williams. His relatively short chapter on "The Gypsies in Victorian Literature," focuses solely on Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and *The Spanish Gypsy*, George Meredith's 1871 novel *The Adventures of Harry Richmond*, and Arnold's "The Scholar-Gipsy." Audrey Carr Shields' dissertation, "Gypsy Stereotypes in Victorian Literature" (1993), focuses specifically on the issue of stereotypes and again deals primarily with novels with some attention to Arnold's and Eliot's poems. Michelle Marie Mancini's dissertation, "The Pursuit of Gypsiness in Nineteenth-Century Britain" (2000), focuses on the writers of nineteenth-century Gypsy texts and their "profound determination to comprehend the essence (origins, history, and present conditions) of real gypsies and an equally urgent desire to retain gypsiness itself as a pure essence, a diffuse source of mystery and freedom with special relevance for practitioners of imaginative art" (5). According to Mancini, the problem the writers encounter again and again is 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. Such a principle implies that anyone who actually writes or publishes information about gypsies cannot be offering the truth, while anyone that knows the truth cannot offer it to others. Those who can must refuse; those who are willing must fail. (6)

Mancini explores writings of all sorts, including poetry, fiction, and non-fiction; however, her poetic emphases lie primarily on Arnold and Eliot. Furthermore, her thesis resists exploring particularly *how* the Gypsies are used in the poetry of the century and, instead, focuses upon how effective the representations and attempts to achieve Gypsiness actually are.

Beyond these few, however, scholars have essentially ignored the broader uses of Gypsies in nineteenth-century British poetry. The Gypsies are a significant group in British

history and culture, and they have been studied somewhat extensively as such. Their cultural and historical significance is particularly great during the nineteenth century, when commentators both positive and negative paid them more and more attention. While their relationship with the novels of the century has received some attention, however, their relationship with the poetry—at least beyond two or three major poems—has gone largely unnoticed.

iii. Gypsies in the Century's Verse

A great many poets of the century found in the subject of Gypsies something that they could transform imaginatively, but what about the Gypsies aroused their imaginations often differed. This is the critical gap I hope to fill with this project. By pursuing Antony Harrison's pivotal question, "Why gipsies?" I hope to demonstrate that the answers to that question are many and vary from poem to poem, sometimes even within a single poem. The poets' many uses of the Gypsy figure, though, work together to form a piece. The poets find in the Gypsies a malleable trope, not blank but still a paintable canvas on which they can image anxieties of the century about matters such as freedom, religious identity, time, purpose, gender, and history.

Deborah Epstein Nord accurately assesses the significance of the Gypsy figure in the nineteenth century:

> If English literature of the nineteenth century contains within it a constant, ubiquitous marker of otherness, of non-Englishness or foreignness, it is the gypsy. A figure of literary origins and anthropological interest, the gypsy could signify social marginality, nomadism, alienation, and lawlessness. Unlike the colonial subject, who remained a remote and wholly foreign figure, or the Jew, who, though outsider, functioned within English society, the gypsy hovered on the outskirts of the English world, unassimilable, a domestic and visible but socially peripheral character. (189)

Similarly, though more briefly, Anne Janowitz asserts, "The Gypsy has the peculiar status in the countryside of being ever-present and ever-exotic" (218). The century's poets, then, found in the Gypsy an irresistible and inescapable figure that they could use to explore a variety of concerns, the focus of this project. To that end, I have divided the material thematically, exploring within each chapter the poets who engage in the given thematic discourses.

The primary texts I explore are William Wordsworth's "Gipsies" (1807); John Clare's several short Gypsy poems, written throughout his career; Father Prout's "Flight into Egypt" (1836); John Ruskin's 1837 entry for the Newdigate Prize, "The Gipsies"; Arthur Penrhyn Stanley's poem that actually won the Newdigate that same year, "The Gypsies"; John Kenyon's "Sacred Gipsy Carol" (1849); Matthew Arnold's "To a Gipsy Child by the Sea-Shore" (1849), "Resignation" (1849), "The Scholar-Gipsy" (1853), and "Thyrsis" (1866); George Eliot's *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868); and Amy Levy's "Run to Death: A True Incident of Pre-Revolutionary French History" (1881). Omitting the hundreds of references that appear to do little more than mention a Gypsy, this project focuses only on poems that use the Gypsy for something more than scene-setting, for props on their stages. I have, instead, chosen those that, I think, offer the most sustained and substantive treatments, relating to matters of freedom, racial and religious Others, time, purpose, gender, and history. As a matter of convenience, I have taken the boundaries of the century as my own, restricting my study to "nineteenth century" rather than to "Romantic" and "Victorian" poetry. For that reason, I have omitted a few late eighteenth-century, Romantic references to Gypsies and also some poems from very late figures who bridge the Victorian and Edwardian periods in the first decade or two of the twentieth century.

First, I explore the poems of John Clare and John Ruskin's Newdigate entry as works that are caught up in the discourse of freedom and its discontents. Clare's poems engage in the

rhetoric of enclosure and confinement as the poet faces the hedges spreading around his native Northamptonshire and the later asylum walls in the Epping Forest and in Northampton. He takes for his own the Gypsies as an emblem of freedom, the characteristic most frequently assigned to them, as he faces his own increasing isolation, restriction, and alienation. Ruskin, on the other hand, damns the Gypsies for the very attribute Clare celebrates. Contra Clare, Ruskin argues that, because of their absolute commitment to liberty, the Gypsies are the worst of slaves and the most dangerous of creatures, for they serve a tyrant that rules their very existence. He uses the wanderers as evidence that true freedom comes only from the velvet chains of gentle servitude and that order and law are more important than freedom.

Next, I turn to poems that employ the Gypsies in order to consider matters of religion. In a fascinating tradition and in an effort to explore a variety of religious matters, John Kenyon, Father Prout (the literary persona of Francis Sylvester Mahony), Francesca Alexander, and John Ruskin locate the Gypsies at or near the Nativity, identifying them closely with the Madonna and Child. Kenyon's Gypsy Magi visit the Nativity, bringing a Broad Church message. Prout, Alexander, and Ruskin participate in the tradition of placing a Gypsy in the Holy Family's Flight into Egypt. The Gypsy they present, however, is not truly a Gypsy, for they deny the old woman her Gypsiness, recreating her instead as simply a proto-Christian in Gypsy rags. In an even more intriguing sleight of hand, Amy Levy identifies a Gypsy woman and her baby *as* the Madonna and Child in order to consider religious Others, Christianity, and her own Jewishness. Expressing concern for this "persecuted race," Levy's speaker refuses to exoticize the Gypsy woman. Instead, by identifying her and her baby with the Madonna and Child and erasing all other signs of their alterity, she transforms into horror the matter-of-fact attitude of the French

noble huntsmen who deny the Gypsy woman's humanity and femininity, using their dogs to murder her and her child.

The final two chapters explore Matthew Arnold's and George Eliot's more sustained considerations of Gypsies. In the first of the two, I argue that Arnold finds in the Gypsy figure an element he himself desires: transcendence of time. By means of a Gypsy trope that evolves through the four poems, Arnold's speaker secures for the Gypsies a form of immortality and eventually assigns to them the detachment and reflection necessary to the ideal poet. He then also attempts to secure for himself and for Arthur Hugh Clough similar timelessness. He achieves these feats, however, by maintaining the Gypsies' otherness, keeping them, as Johannes Fabian would argue, temporally distant. Employing the Gypsy figure as an apt parallel for the position of women, Eliot, on the other hand, uses a Gypsy foundling as a way to explore both the Gypsy and woman as the "unhistorical other[s] of history" (Crosby 1). The poem examines the efforts of Gypsies and women to enter the hegemonic order of history, achieving ultimately a sort of cognitive dissonance as to whether or not such entry is even possible. In the process, curiously, Eliot reverses much of what the other poets have done with the Gypsy figure: rather than being generally free, free from religion, and free from time, Eliot's Gypsy heroine is subject to an absolute duty, while the Gypsy religion becomes Gypsies themselves, slaves to time but alien to history.

These chapters are tied together in several ways. Chapters three, four, and five have running through them the surprising thread that involves Christian iconography. The poets repeatedly position the Gypsies near or as the Holy Family, a gesture that achieves different effects in each case. This thread connects—perhaps necessarily—to the poets' recurring use of the visual arts and a certain painterly aspect to many of the poems. These threads are significant,

for at times, they become so central to an understanding of the poems that they become the lenses through which the poems must be read. For example, Eliot's Spanish Gypsy may be read nearly completely through the canvas of Titian's *Annunciation* and through the lens of Marian iconography.

All of the chapters are further joined in their agreement that Gypsies do real work in the poetry of nineteenth-century Britain. Commentators have certainly dealt with some of these poems, though, on others, barely a word has been written. To date, however, there has been no serious effort to address the poetical uses of the Gypsy across the course of the century. Of course, if the nineteenth century were not so unusual in its relationship with the Gypsies, that would not seem a notable omission, but the century is unusual, indeed. As the *LION* database hints, the centuries before and after the nineteenth are not nearly so interested in—one might say even obsessed with—Gypsies. Over and over, the poets of this period reach out to the Gypsy as a provocative lens through which to explore some of the chief anxieties of the century. In this way, they map the concerns of freedom, racial and religious identity, time, gender, and history onto the Gypsy figure, transforming this people into a sort of wandering signifier and roving metaphor.

CHAPTER 2

GYPSIES IN THE WILD: DEFINING FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

The Gypsies, largely by virtue of their being perceived as both natural and exotic, have long been images of liberty. They are a common part of the British landscape, yet by skills seemingly both canny and uncanny, they retain their freedom from British society. In fact, in the popular Western imagination, this is perhaps the predominant characteristic of the group, especially dating from about the mid-nineteenth century, thanks to the romanticizing Gypsiologists. The responses to that characteristic, however, have not been unanimous, for contemporary commentators alternately idealized and demonized them for it. Some perceived them as enviable and beautiful for their ability to remain unaffected by the corrupting and enervating influences of industrialized society, while others perceived them as dangerous in their imperviousness to society's normalizing restraints. As Anne Janowitz points out, the former attitude appears more later in the century than it does early. Particularly in the first decades of the period, David Mayall observes, "[Gypsies] had a freedom resented by the householder and were seen as marginal to the normal forces of law and order" (*Gypsy-Travellers* 90). Writers in the bulk of the century, on the other hand, demonstrated an "urgent desire to retain gypsiness itself as a pure essence, a diffuse source of mystery and freedom with special relevance for practitioners of imaginative art" (Mancini 5). Nonetheless, these several and complex responses to the seemingly anchorless Gypsies appear repeatedly throughout the period.

This theme of freedom and the related but contrasting themes of moderation and responsibility within societal structures may easily serve as lenses through which to read nearly every poem in this project. By serving no earthly master, Kenyon's, Alexander's, and Prout's Gypsies at the Nativity and in Egypt are able to give their loyalty where it is most deserved—to God, the Madonna and Child. Matthew Arnold's Scholar-Gipsy remains free of societal and cultural corruption. George Eliot's Fedalma finds her newly discovered Gypsiness both constraining and liberating in its relationship to her public and private lives. Other lenses, though, as discussed in later chapters, serve those poems better. Some poems, however, are connected more thoroughly—and sometimes nearly exclusively—to this theme, and in fact, the poems of this chapter tropologize the Gypsies as nineteenth-century considerations of freedom and moderation. Taken together, John Clare and John Ruskin employ the Gypsies in a dialogue on nineteenth-century anxieties about freedom. Clare's several Gypsy poems, as Janowitz has touched upon, are largely tied up in a discourse of liberty and confinement—either by enclosing hedges or by asylum walls. On the other side of the exchange, Ruskin's Newdigate Prize entry reflects a cultural concern about the limits of freedom and the dangers it poses to order.

i. Of Hedges and Asylum Walls: A Lifelong Desire for Gypsy Freedom

In 1966, Ian Jack began an essay on John Clare with a delightful and accurate pronouncement: "If Clare had never lived it would have been tempting to invent him, for he conforms remarkably to the romantic stereotype of The Poet. He was very poor: he was uneducated: he was a passionate lover: he described the scenes of external nature with extraordinary fidelity: and for many years of his life he was mad" (191). While scholars have long debated how his poems fit into the Romantic category, Clare himself was undeniably, as

Jack says, "the romantic stereotype of The Poet." One characteristic Jack does not mention makes him even more so: Clare not only wrote a great deal about the romantic figure of the Gypsies (though usually in a decidedly unromantic fashion), but he also had a great deal of personal intercourse with the Gypsy families around his village.

Anne Williams remarks, "By the late eighteenth century, gypsies were a cliché of the picturesque, and of newly popular ballads. The eighteenth-century picturesque was a solidly middle-class, comfortable esthetic, an art of vistas rather than of interiors" (10). To find them, then, in the poetry of John Clare, a poet deeply engaged in the rhetoric of rurality and a dedicated collector of ballads in early nineteenth-century England, is hardly surprising. In a close reading of "The Gipsy Camp" (1841), however, running counter to Paul Dean's contention that "Clare does not lend himself well to close analytical criticism" (98), Williams demonstrates that the Gypsy image is not merely a fitting brushstroke in Clare's often-picturesque descriptions of rural southern England but much more complicated.[1] For Williams, this complication is evident in his heteroform response to poetic and aesthetic convention, but one may find it perhaps even more in matters nearer Clare's own personal experiences and anxieties.

In both "'Wild Outcasts of Society': The Transit of the Gypsies in the Romantic Period Poetry" and "Clare among the Gypsies," Janowitz touches tantalizingly upon the relationship between Clare's Gypsies and his anxieties about liberty and confinement. She briefly points to his concerns about the enclosure movements, especially as they came home to Helpston, and his later incarceration at Dr. Allen's private asylum in Essex and the more congenial Northampton Asylum. Though she does not elaborate at great length on this relationship and looks primarily

[1] In reference to Clare's very first Gypsy poem, "The Gipsies Evening Blaze" (*EP* 1: 33), Jonathan Bate later makes a similar observation about Clare's use of but refusal completely to indulge in the picturesque (97). And of "The Gipsy Camp," Bate argues, "It has the precision and the simplicity, the shafts of beauty and the lack of glamour that characterise his mature poetic voice. [. . .] The camp may still be a 'picture,' but the cold hands, squatting dog and stinking mutton on the fire have the smell of reality upon them" (98).

at his early poems, she has doubtlessly brought up a salient theme that runs throughout Clare's Gypsy poems and one worth further exploration. In both his early poems of rural nostalgia and his later poems written from Northampton Asylum, his Gypsies reflect an enviable, though at times ambiguous, freedom. Early in his career, his poems and his treatment of Gypsies often suggest his own anxieties about enclosure, a movement that affected him directly, and the poems alternately image a Gypsy population that are unenclosed and free and the same Gypsies excluded and harassed by the ever-lengthening fences of wealthy landowners. In his later poems, the Gypsies, still in an intimate relationship with nature and the English countryside, take on a larger liberty, as his poems begin, in the words of Janowitz, to "employ the rhetoric of confinement and freedom" ("'Wild Outcasts'" 219).

Among the poets in this project, Clare is the only one who had any significant personal experience with the Gypsies, and this knowledge of real Gypsies surely leads to his singularly demystified and naturalized Gypsy figures. As a common working man and later a prominent writer of the "Peasant Poetry" that had its turn in fashionable reading circles, Clare was economically not far removed from the Gypsies and other migrants who were subjects of the early-century enclosure movement and Poor Laws debate. For this reason alone, perhaps, the plight of Gypsies should have resonated with Clare. "What matters to individual lives," however, as Jonathan Bate notes in his excellent recent biography of Clare, "is personal experience, not economic statistics" (49), and Clare's own experiences with the poor farmer, the migrant, and the Gypsy certainly echo throughout his poetry.

Clare was fascinated by the Gypsies and visited them often. One of the most fervent chroniclers of rural songs and ballads,[2] he was equally devoted to recording specifically those of

[2] See especially George Deacon, *John Clare and the Folk Tradition*; and John Goodridge, "Telling Stories: Clare, Folk Culture, and Narrative Techniques."

the Gypsies. "Boswell's Crew," one of the two or three chief Gypsy families (along with the Smiths and the Grays) in the area, were among his favorite companions and were famous for their fiddle playing. John Gray (son of Fowk Gray and husband of Maria Boswell) was a particularly well-known fiddler, and he taught Clare to play "by the ear" (Bate 94; *Prose* 35). In what Bate calls Clare's "self-appointed role as mediator between oral and written culture," Clare recorded in his journal, "Finished planting my A[u]riculas—went a Botanising after Ferns and Orchises and caught a cold in the wet grass which has made me as bad as ever—got the tune of "highland Mary" from Wisdom Smith a gipsey and pricked [wrote down the musical notation] another sweet tune with out name as he fiddled it" (*JCBH* 232-3).[3]

So intimately involved with Gypsies was Clare that he defended them against what he perceived as unjust attacks on their character. In his autobiography, Clare discusses an 1819 incident of two local Gypsies' horse theft and subsequent death sentence. Upon appeal to the Prince Regent, their sentence was commuted to transportation (Bate 95). *Fireside Magazine* reported a local farmer's reaction: "'I have heard, with joy mingled with fear, that a couple of gypsies have just been convicted for horse-stealing at Peterborough and condemned, but that their sentence has been commuted to transportation. Thus, thank God, there will two less in the country. Would I could say two thousand'" (qtd. in 95). By way of contrast, Clare's response is horror at the decision given by the sentencing magistrate, the Reverend Samuel Hopkinson:

> An ignorant iron-hearted Justice of the Peace at —— Sessions, whose name may perish with his cruelty, once sitting as judge in the absence of a wise & kinder-hearted associate mixed up this malicious sentence in his condemnation of 2 gipsies for horse-stealing: "This atrocious tribe of wandering vagabonds ought to be made outlaws in every civilized kingdom & exterminated from the face of the earth" & this persecuting unfeeling man was a clergyman. (*Prose* 35)

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[3] Much of Clare's autobiographical writing is in *John Clare by Himself*, cited throughout as *JCBH*.

Clare complained, "Everything that is bad is thrown upon the gypsies—their name has grown into an ill omen and when any one of the tribe are guilty of a petty theft the odium is thrown upon the whole tribe" (*Prose* 35).

His intercourse with the Gypsies around Helpston was so close and frequent that the villagers began to associate him with them—as did he himself. His reputation in the village sometimes suffered for this close association: "My odd habits did not escape notice—they [local villagers] fancied I kept aloof from company for some sort of study—others believed me crazed and some put more criminal interpretation to my rambles and said I was night walking associate with the gypsies, robbing the woods of the hares and pheasants, because I was often in their company" (*Prose* 32-3). In fact, Clare even considered joining up with the Gypsies:

> I had a great desire myself of joining the Smiths Crew & a young fellow that I workd with at a limekiln did join with them & married one of their gipseys his name was James Mills & he's with them still—I usd to dislike their cooking, which was done in a slovenly manner, & the dread of winters cold was much against my inclinations their descriptions of summer revellings & their journeys to Kent & their wood rendezvous at Norwood where they got sums of money by fiddling & fortune-telling & them that coud do neither got a high harvest by hop-gathering which work they describd as being so easy were likely temptations to my fancy. (*Prose* 36)

As Fraser notes, Clares also mentions his aversion to Gypsy food elsewhere (90). In "The Village Minstrel," he describes, "Their pot oer pilferd fuel boils away / Wi food of sheep that of red water dyd / Or any nauceous thing their frowning fates provide" (*EP* 2: 172).[4] In "The Hedgehog," he says,

> When gipseys hunt it with their noisey dogs
> Ive seen it in their camps they call it sweet
> Though black and bitter and unsavoury meat
> But they who hunt the field for rotten meat

[4] In recent years, thanks largely to Eric Robinson, David Powell, and P. M. S. Dawson, Clare's poems have become available as he wrote them, free of regularized grammar and spelling. All reference to Clare's poetry will be to their editions of *The Early Poems of John Clare, 1804*-1822 (cited hereafter as *EP*), *Poems of the Middle Period, 1822-1837* (cited hereafter as *MP*), and *The Later Poems of John Clare, 1837-1864* (cited hereafter as *LP*).

> And wash in muddy dyke and call it sweat [sic]
> And eat what dogs refuse where ere they dwell
> Care little either for the taste or smell.
> (*MP* 5: 364)

Elsewhere, he notes that "their roasted hedgehog bitter though as gall / Is eaten up & relished by them all" and describes their "stinking mutton" (*MP* 5: 375; *LP* 1: 29). Nonetheless, rather than reading these lines as a condemnation of the Gypsies, Bate rightly points out, "That the thought of bad food and cold winters prevented Clare from going the way of Mobbs [Mills] was typical of his refusal to romanticise reality" (97).[5]

These experiences with the Gypsies intimately related to "Clare's lifelong preoccupation with locating himself in many senses, and in defiance of other people's attempts to place him" (Haughton and Phillips 1). Commentators have long regarded Clare as fundamentally a poet of place.[6] This sense of place in Clare's poems manifests itself in a number of ways, but early in his career, he often expresses it through his repeated criticism of the enclosure movements. So much was Clare involved in the enclosure debate that Janowitz calls him "the poet of enclosure" ("'Wild Outcasts'" 218). "From the second quarter of the eighteenth century to the first quarter of the nineteenth century," Raymond Williams notes, "by nearly four thousand Acts, more than six million acres of land were appropriated, mainly by the politically dominant landowners: about a quarter of all cultivated acreage" (96). Williams points out that the enclosure movements "had been going on since at least the thirteenth century, and had reached a first peak in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries" (96), but they had only come significantly to bear on the Helpston area in the first decade or so of the nineteenth century. In 1799, the first neighboring

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[5] The difference in the names Mobbs and Mills comes from Bate's use of the manuscript version of Clare's *Autobiography*, while Tibble and Tibble's edition was the one available to me.

[6] See especially John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare*.

parish, Bainton, was enclosed, and parliament allowed enclosing much of the remainder of Northamptonshire in 1809, a process that continued until 1820 (Bate 46-7).

These enclosures affected the social and economic order of the Helpston commoners at fundamental levels. The three large fields of Helpston were shared by all the landowners and tenants, and "in Clare's world, there was an intimate relationship between society and environment. The open-field system fostered a sense of community: you could talk to the man working the next strip, you could see the shared ditches, you could tell the time of day by the movement of the common flock and herd from the village pound out to the heath and back. [. . .] The fields spread out in a wheel with the village at its hub" (Bate 47). As John Barrell and Bate have both argued, this wheel-like configuration, in stark contrast to the essentially linear topography of the enclosed lands, lent a circularity to the experiences of Clare's society, "an open-field sense of space" unlike the "linear—and again in the most literal sense—*enclosed* space" (Barrell 103; Bate 47-8). This tension is, according to Paul Dean, in his review of Bate's biography, "the key to Clare's psychology, to his writing, his life, and his eventual mental collapse. He is a sufferer from spiritual claustrophobia" (94).

Clare saw the effects of enclosure in a number of ways as "the vulgar tyrants of the soil" co-opted the lives of the common villagers (*MP* 2: 11). For the community, as Bate notes, it involved "the destruction of ancient birthright based on co-operation and common rights" as well as "the infringement of ancient customs" such as Whitsunday and Plough Monday (49). For himself, the privatizing of the commons and the woods "infringed the right to roam, which had been one of the joys of his youth" (50). This restriction surely led to an ancillary effect on Clare himself: in what Bate calls a "desultory period in Clare's life, from 1809 to 1817," Clare's writing was interrupted by his living a bit largely in the Helpston pubs. In a telling contrast, "in

solitary labour on the heath Clare had the space in which his imagination could range, whereas when working with a team on the labour of enclosure his poetic freedom was reined in and his taste for ale took over" (75). Enclosure affected not just his physical wanderings but also his imaginative wanderings.

When dealing with enclosure, Clare's poems repeatedly fluctuate between bereavement and anger, understandable emotions when he, at times, even ties the desecration of the countryside to his own decline. "Helpstone" (c. 1809-13) expresses an early sadness. The speaker, looking upon the excellences of his native parish, mourns, "But now alas those scenes exist no more / The pride of Life with thee (like mine) is oer" (*EP* 1: 160). Lest the reader assume the changes are the result of simple and natural mutability, the speaker makes the situation completely clear:

> Now all laid waste by desolations hand
> Whose cursed weapons levels half the land
> Oh who could see my dear green willows fall
> What feeling heart but dropt a tear for all
> Accursed wealth oer bounding human laws
> Of every evil thou remains the cause
> Victims of want those wretches such as me
> Too truly lay their wretchedness to thee
> Thou art the bar that keeps from being fed
> & thine our loss of labour & of bread
> Thou art the cause that levels every tree
> & woods bow down to clear a way for thee.
> (*EP* 1: 161)

The growing notes of anger in this poem are unmistakably louder a few years later in "The Lamentations of Round-Oak Waters" (1818). As the speaker looks on the stream, "the naked stream of shade bereav'd / In grievous murmurs rose" (*EP* 1: 228). The remainder of the poem consists of the stream's song of lament for the Clare-speaker, itself, the surrounding countryside, and the Turnills, a small farming family known to the Clares. The river notes the injury done to

all for whom it cares, injury suffered at the hands of the village laborers, set to work building fences and walls, damning streams, and cutting trees. These laborers, however, are victims of this injury as well, for they were "sweating slaves" of the landowners who are the workers' and the river's real foes:

> "Their foes and mine are lawless foes
> "And L-ws thems—s they hold
> "Which clipt-wing'd Justice cant oppose
> "But forced yields to G-d
> "These are the f—s of mine & me
> "These all our Ru-n plan'd
> "Alltho they never felld a tree
> "Or took a tool in hand"
>
> "Ah cruel foes with plenty blest
> "So ankering after more
> "To lay the greens & pastures waste
> "Which proffited before
> "Poor greedy souls—what would they have
> "Beyond their plenty given?
> "Will riches keep 'em from the grave?
> "Or buy them rest in heaven?"
> (*EP* 1: 233-4)

These powerful feelings relate not only to what Clare sees happening to the places and people he loves but also to his own sense of his place and vitality. He concludes "Helpston Green" (c. 1815; *EP* 2: 11-13),

> Farwell thou favorite spot farwell
> Since every efforts vain
> All I can do is still to tell
> Of thy delightful plain
> But that pro[v]es short—increasing years
> That did my youth presage
> Will now as each new day appears
> Bring on declining age.

Farewell to the environs he loved is, for Clare, saying farewell to his own youth, and more than simply bidding it farewell, it is to greet "declining age."

Repeatedly, in his early poems, these themes of enclosure, freedom, and Gypsies intersect. Clare did not, however, forget the topic even in later poems: as late as 1837, the year he first entered the asylum at Epping Forest, he wrote in the voice of the land,

> The gipseys camp was not affraid
> I made his dwelling free
> Till vile enclosure came & made
> A parish slave of me
> (MP 5: 113)

Early, however, these intersections are often rooted in Clare's sense of class identification with the Gypsies. When he was only fourteen or fifteen, either just before or just as enclosure began, Clare wrote his first significant Gypsy poem, "The Gipsies Evening Blaze" (*EP* 1: 33), which was essentially a picturesque tribute to the Gypsies' idyllic lives: "To me how wildly pleasing is that scene / Which does present in evenings dusky hour / A Group of Gipsies center'd on the green." Bringing together words like "Boreas," "sybil," "proggling," and "flaze," the poem demonstrates perfectly what James McKusick has termed young Clare's "not altogether intentional *heteroglossia*, mingling high and low diction and grotesquely mangling the conventions of standard poetic discourse" (228). Underneath the picturesque description, however, McKusick has recognized "a sense of class solidarity that exposes the inauthenticity of such effete poetic description as 'Boreas' and 'sybil,' conveying instead the desperate scarcity that pervades these 'short-sward pastures'" (227). Clare's class-consciousness and related identification with the Gypsies, then, exist just as enclosure comes to Helpston and only intensify in the subsequent years.

The remainder of Clare's pre-asylum treatment of the Gypsies continues these intersections. In "The Gipseys Camp" (1819-20; *EP* 2: 119-20), the speaker tells an amusing anecdote of having his fortune read by an "old sybil" who saw nothing but good fortune ahead of

him until he expressed skepticism about the truth of her predictions. Then "she furious stampt her shooless foot aground" and told of how he would "when alls done be shovd to hell at last." Notable here, though, other than his customary refusal to romanticize the Gypsies, is his employment of a technique unusual among his early poems—the past tense: "How oft on Sundays when Id time to tramp / My rambles led me to a gipseys camp." What seems to be lost in the past here, though, is not the Gypsies so much as Clare's own ability to ramble freely about the countryside. Perhaps the Gypsy camp is still there; his tramping, however, is no more. The Gypsies simply make a part of his memories of that freedom.

Close by Clare's home stood Langley (or Langdyke) Bush, a whitethorn tree "dating back to Saxon times" (Bate 53).[7] Clare appears to have seen the fate of the tree as connected to that of the Gypsies: addressing the tree in "Langley Bush," he complains, "Thy spots a favourite wi the smutty crew / & soon thou must depend on gipsey fame / Thy mulldering trunk is nearly rotten thro" (*EP* 2: 250). Enclosure has affected them both, as Langley Bush's rotting reflects symbolically its loss to the commoners and Gypsies of the village. From Saxon times, the tree was famed as the "meeting-place of the 'hundred court' of Nassburgh—that is to say, as the symbolic site of the common law rights of the local people" (Bate 53). Those rights, however, have been lost with the enclosure acts, and Clare disavows knowledge of them: "Of 'langley court' being kept beneath thy boughs / I cannot tell."

"The Gipseys Song" (1825; *MP* 4: 52) is a more straightforward celebration of Gypsy freedom, sung in the first-person voice of a Gypsy. While it begins to take on a more idealizing note than his earlier Gypsy poems, this poem does nothing if it does not emphasize that the Gypsies are free and not subject to magistrates, for it repeats the idea at every turn. The Gypsies

[7] Angus Fraser mourns (in 1971), "Gypsies no longer camp there, the nearby heathland having been ploughed over. The area is flanked by two files of massive electricity pylons" ("John Clare's Gypsies" 89).

"pay no rent nor tax to none / But live untythd & free." Unlike Clare, whose free rambles have been impinged upon by the new fences and hedges, the Gypsy sings, "& were we list we roam," for "our chorus still shall be / Bad luck to tyrant majistrates / & the gipseys dwelling free." Their camp is filled with fiddle music and song, so that "eccho fills the woods around / With gipsey liberty," and "our joys are uncontrould." The singer repeats twice that Gypsy women are "fond & free." The "wild woods" are "a home of liberty / Free as the summer clouds we roam / & merry boys we be." Their neighbors are the woodland creatures, who "share & love the quiet well / Of gipsey liberty." The poem ends with this prayer:

> Go were we will may kindred fate
> Our friendly partners be
> Protect us from the magistrate
> & keep our dwellings free
>
> & we will sing & dance around
> With a heart that never fails
> Tho magistrates like hungry hounds
> Still threaten us with jails
> & while the ass that pears our camp
> Can find a common free
> Around old Englands heaths we'll tramp
> In gipsey liberty

For the first time, Clare's treatment of the Gypsies does not reflect the material reality that they share with him as members of the lower classes. In a movement that continues throughout his later Gypsy poems, he idealizes them to the point that the Gypsies become nearly allegorical figures whose sole purpose is to represent freedom.

On July 8, 1837, after a long period of Clare's deteriorating physical and mental health, his doctors certified him, and a week later, he entered Dr. Matthew Allen's private asylum in the Epping Forest (Bate 407). As Bate notes, "posthumous psychiatric diagnosis is a dubious activity," but many current critics speculate that among his most prominent maladies may have

been bipolar affective disorder (412). Apparently to Clare's own surprise, he remained there some years, improving but still insane by Dr. Allen's accounts. In 1840, however, Clare wrote to his wife, insisting that he was now perfectly sane, wishing her to come for him, and feeling "all the miseries of solitude [. . .] through years of absence and confinement" (*Letters* 645). This desire for freedom was tied up with his desire for sex. Several times while at the asylum, "Clare would see a girl and write a poem about her." Toward his latter months in the Epping Forest, he believed he had two wives, was a famous prizefighter, and possibly even that he was Byron, leading Bate to the conclusion that "sex is on his brain and that is one reason why he begins identifying with Lord Byron" (Bate 437). His longing to go home and "'to have the society of women'" continued, and his overall progress led Dr. Allen to feel that he need not be confined much longer (439).

Clare apparently agreed with Dr. Allen, and it seems fitting that the Gypsies were involved with Clare's 1841 escape from the asylum. In a period of melancholia one Sunday afternoon, Clare took one of his usual walks in the forest and met a band of Gypsies. They offered to help him escape and to hide him. After Clare offered them a later payment of fifty pounds, they planned an escape in a week. They seemingly lost interest in the plan, however, for the following Sunday, they were gone. Two days later, on July 20, 1841, Clare followed the route out of the forest that the Gypsies had told him of and, wearing a Gypsy hat "as a badge of identity," began his eighty-mile walk home to Northborough, where he arrived three and a half days later (Bate 439-40; McKusick 233; Blackmore 212).

At home, the split in Clare's mind worsened until, on December 28, 1841, his doctors recertified him and committed him the next day to the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum. More than ever, Clare appears to have equated the asylum with the involuntary loss of freedom.

Throughout his remaining years there, he repeatedly referred to it in a rather creative rhetoric of confinement: "the purgatoriall hell & French Bastile of English liberty," "Captivity among the Babylonians," "a Prison on all hands that ever numbs Common sense," "the English Bastile, a government Prison where harmless people are trapped & tortured till they die—English priestcraft & english bondage more severe then the slavery of Egypt & Affrica" (*Letters* 657, 661, 669). He even warned his sons that they should not visit him because "its a bad Place & I have fears that they may get trapped as prisoners as I hear some have been" (*Letters* 654). In his peculiar orthographical period of capitalizing every word, he complains,

> For What Reason They Keep Me Here I Cannot Tell For I Have Been No Otherways Than Well A Couple of Year's At The Least & Never Was Very Ill Only Harrassed By Perpetual Bother—& It Would Seem By Keeping Me Here One Year After Another That I Was Destined for the Same Fate Agen & I Would Sooner Be Packed In A Slave Ship For Affrica Then Belong To The Destiny Of Mock Friends & Real Enemies. (*Letters* 643)

Being "cooped up in this Hell of a Madhouse till I seem to be disowned by my friends & even forgot by my enemies" has combined with his mental imbalances in order to raise his naturally intense aversion to confinement and fervent desire for freedom to the level of raving psychosis (*Letters* 647).

In his asylum writings, "he dreamed of places and people beyond the confines of the asylum," many of them various women, both real and imaginary (Bate 485, 486), and his Gypsy poems in these years are no exception. As McKusick observes, "Throughout his asylum period, Clare returns frequently to the topic of gypsies, describing their free, wandering life, their uncouth language and their establishment of an alternative community outside existing social structures" (232). Written while under Dr. Allen's care, the most famous and most examined of Clare's Gypsy poems is "Gipsey Camp" (1840-1; *LP* 1: 29), with its well-known concluding couplet: "'Tis thus they live—a picture to the place; / A quiet, pilfering, unprotected race." In it,

Clare's concern is not Gypsy freedom so much as Gypsy vulnerability and what McKusick calls "Clare's sense of class solidarity with the Gypsies" (233). Here, his emphasis is on the vulnerable homelessness, alienation, and marginalization he shares with the Gypsies. Examining the ways the poem subverts picturesque conventions, Anne Williams argues the final couplet shows that "pity and detachment are equally mixed":

> The last line exemplifies the speaker's balance between sympathy and detachment (characterized in the poem by his tendency to place the gypsies in a "picture.") This final line also removes the poem from any sentimentality or romantic cliché; it is Clare's final surprise for the reader. [. . .] "Pilfering" is petty thievery, and it suggests silent and trivial action (the "tainted mutton" may have a dubious provenance as well as a dubious smell.) But the suspicion evoked by thievery is immediately countered by "unprotected." These gypsies are "vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods." Protection—a house—brings legal and social rights and responsibilities. But these gypsies have no shelter; thus their disregard for social conventions is not only understandable but inevitable. (11)

Williams's pointing to the "vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods" of "Tintern Abbey" echoes also Clare's own declaration at the end of *Journey out of Essex* upon arriving home from Dr. Allen's asylum: "so here I am homeless at home and half gratified that I can be happy any where" (*JCBH* 264). This sense of both place and placelessness, home and homelessness, alienation even in company connects Clare and the Gypsies in this poem.

This homelessness is not, however, the idealized image of freedom that appears in his other Gypsy poems but is, instead, a gritty "picture" of double-marginalization and vulnerability. The camp is not marked by song and merriment but is "squalid," with "stinking mutton" and a starving dog. As McKusick points out, the narrative voice of the Gypsy boy and the starving dog underscores their positions as "both marginal figures even within the marginal world of gypsy life." In this way, the juxtaposition "suggest[s] a sympathetic identification with Clare's own existence, excluded from the warmth of all human kindness in the utterly marginal world of the asylum" (234). Janowitz agrees, noting "the knowledge of alienation which is the condition of

isolation: the Gypsy at his fire, the poet in the asylum" ("Clare among the Gypsies" 169). After the romanticized "The Gipseys Song," Clare has returned to a starkly realistic imaging of the Gypsy, one resonant with the alienation and vulnerability Clare experienced within the asylum walls and within his own increasingly split mind. Yet again, Clare has found in the Gypsies something that resonates with him. This time, however, his identification is not marked by envy of a life he does not have so much as it is by a sober, gritty recognition of an alienation he does.

After "Gipsey Camp" and his removal to Northampton, his detachment from reality and sense of isolation from society increased. According to William Jerom's memoir of Clare, after seeing Queen Victoria's royal progress in 1844, one of the asylum staff asked Clare what the queen had said to him. Clare replied, "'O she said 'I'm John Clare'" (qtd. in Bate 473). The Reverend J. C. Westbrook's "Reminiscence" of Clare reports that, in 1847, "'[Clare] imagines that an army of soldiers is stationed within a certain circumference of his present abode; and that, therefore, even if he desired to acquire more freedom than he at present enjoys, his efforts to attain it would be frustrated at the outset'" (qtd. in Bate 473). G. J. DeWilde describes an even more striking split in Clare's personality:

> He would talk rationally enough at times, about poetry especially, but on one occasion in the midst of a conversation in which he had betrayed no signs of insanity, he suddenly quoted passages from Don Juan as his own. I suggested, gently, that they were usually attributed to Byron, upon which he said that was true, but he and Byron were one; so with Shakespeare; Shakespeare's plays were his composition when he was Shakespeare; and turning round upon me suddenly he said: "Perhaps you don't know that I am Jan Burns and Tom Spring?" In fact he was any celebrity whom you might mention. "I'm the same man," he said, "but sometimes they called me Shakespeare and sometimes Byron and sometimes Clare." (qtd. in Bate 474-5)

These startling reports reflect a growing loss of identity and deteriorating sense of self, but they also demonstrate that his anxieties about freedom continued even in his insanity.

As this mental deterioration continued, Clare's Gypsies, like himself, became more and more idealized, divorced from reality, while retaining Clare's consuming desire for freedom and independence. His next significant Gypsy poem, "The Camp" (*LP* 1: 457), is undated but was written some time after 1847, the year of Westbrook's anecdote. It is a simple song, written as a moonlight invitation to the Gypsy camp, where, unlike the squalid "Gipseys Camp," there is ale, song, and merriment. Unlike the earlier "unprotected race," these Gypsies are carefree: "The joys of the camp are not the care of the crown." The Gypsies here also experience isolation and alienation from English society, but they experience these as a community, reflected by the repeated detail that the camp is "not a mile from the town." The Gypsies live outside of English society but within their own immensely satisfying society. Their isolation is its own reward, idealized and enviable to Clare, as it leaves them free from the "cares of the crown."

His remaining Gypsy poems, "The Gipsey Lass," "The Bonny Gipsey," and "My Own Sweet Gipsey Girl," similarly undated, combine this idealizing tendency with his late habit of writing poems about individual women. The first of these (*LP* 1: 634) locates his "bonny lassie" firmly outside of society and firmly within nature. The poem is a litany of natural description, a nature in constant free motion and uncircumscribed by fences or asylum walls. In addition to the description of the nature surrounding the "Gipsey Lass," the Clare-speaker situates her in nature and nature in her. She is "berry brown," with "a bosom like as snow," "a foot like the roe," and "like the sweet birds she will sing." All objects in nature exist in relation to her: "the brook it runs so clear by my bonny lassie O"; "the blackbird singeth near my bonny lassie O"; "the ground lark singeth high o'er my bonny lassie O"; "the nightingale lives nigh my gipsey lassie O"; and "they're with her all the year." Unlike Clare, this woman enjoys freedom and commune with nature. She is a solitary figure, for the poem mentions no other Gypsies even, but since she

is “the sweetest maid on earth” and “there’s none in all the world” like her, she needs no companionship but her natural life.

Maria, “The Bonny Gipsey” of the next poem (*LP* 2: 866), continues this superlative idealization. Maria’s cheeks “are like June roses”; “her teeth are like the pearl”; “her eyes more bright than dew drops”; “her lips more red than coral that in the Ocean grew.” She is “sweeter than the May flower upon the awthorn tree,” “sweet as the wild hedge rose and the woodbines fragrant curl,” and unlike his earlier “tawny” and “smutty” Gypsies, she is “tanned with the summer sunshine she’s like the berry brown.” This Gypsy lass, however, does not live in complete isolation, unrelated to any other Gypsy, for “she can sit beneath the May bush and feel herself as fair / While she thinks upon the gipsey lad for ever absent there.” The Clare-speaker can dream of her, and she can dream of him. She, however, lives freely, in all her superlative natural glory like the earlier “Gipsey Lass,” while Clare’s avatar, “the gipsey lad,” is “for ever absent there,” denied the natural freedom she enjoys.

Maria reappears in Clare’s final Gypsy poem, “My Own Sweet Gipsey Girl” (*LP* 2: 1096), in similarly excessive idealization. Again, his descriptions of her consist primarily of natural superlatives. She is again “nut brown,” “sleep[ing] on beds of rushes / And her hair is hung wi dew.” Clare’s earlier “class solidarity” with the Gypsies creeps back into this late poem, however. Shut out from material goods, her only access to wealth is a natural one, as he identifies her with gold, diamonds, pearls, and ivory, but the wealth is natural and idealized: the diamonds are in her eyes, the gold in her hair, the pearls in her teeth, the pearls and ivory in her breasts. Richer still, “her heart it is full wealthy / Like a diamond in a mine.” She enjoys a freedom impossible since enclosure came to Northamptonshire:

> I love the grass she treads on
> The flowers that she sees

The wild thyme bank she beds on
Mid the songs of honey bees
I love the hedge she lies by
The furze bush by the camp
The Blackbird prinks and flies by
Where my gipsey lass doth tramp.
[. . . . . .]
Oh I love the rushy common
And the wild rose hedge to see
And the gadding woodbine bloomin
Is a sweet flower to me
There bonny young Maria
Sits and plaits her dark brown hair.

This freedom, though, is unavailable to the speaker. From the second stanza to the end, he presents the entire poem in the present tense, including his descriptions of Maria and her tramping on the commons and lying by the hedges. The first stanza, on the other hand, is primarily in the past tense:

Twas her on heaths I courted
The young Maria Soames
On rushy knolls we sported
The common was our homes.

While the commons of Clare's memory may still be where one finds Maria, he no longer courts the Gypsy lass, or sports on the "rushy knolls," or makes his home on the commons. Between enclosure and the asylum walls, such freedom has long ago been unattainable to John Clare, and in his late years, it is becoming unattainable even to his declining mind.

This recognition of his freedom's being in the past and the Gypsy's freedom in an idealized present, unmolested by enclosure's fences, reflects his closing years' tendency to a sort of desperate resignation. In 1860, James Hipkins, a Westminster gentleman, had written to the asylum administrator, Dr. Edwin Wing, enquiring after Clare's condition and health. Dr. Wing encouraged Clare to write a few lines of verse and a brief note to Hipkins, but all Clare could muster was this:

> Dear Sir
> I am in a Madhouse & quite forget your Name or who you are you must excuse me for I have nothing to commu[n]icate or tell of & why I am shut up I dont know I have nothing to say so I conclude
> yours respectfully John Clare
> (*Letters* 683)

As Bate points out, "this is a voice not of madness but of quiet despair" (522). In the most oft-quoted words of Clare's asylum years, Agnes Strickland reported, upon a visit to Clare, that he complained, "Why, they have cut off my head and picked out all the letters in the alphabet—all the vowels and all the consonants and brought them out through my ears—and then they want me to write poetry! I can't do it" (qtd. in Tibble, *A Life* 437). The vowels and consonants had perhaps gone, but the anxious desire for freedom had not: his repeated wish in his last years was "'I want to go home'" (Bate 529). This desire for freedom, for independence from the hedges, from the walls, from the asylum's keepers manifested itself over and over throughout his poetic career; never, however, did it appear more consistently and poignantly than in his Gypsy poems.

ii. Ruskin's "Gipsies" and the Need for Order

In 1837, just turned eighteen, John Ruskin submitted his poem "The Gipsies" for the Newdigate Prize (it did not win).[8] Upon the testimony of "the wary in such matters," he was not likely to win, for he scorned the conventions of prize poems (*Works* 2: xxiv). He wrote to his father that his tutor, Canon Dale, "gave me some directions for gaining Oxford poetical prizes , which were very excellent directions for writing bad poetry. One was to imitate Pope. [. . .] However, one piece of counsel was excellent, viz. to write two poems—one in my own style, the other polished and spoiled up to their standard, so that if I failed to carry all before me with my own, I might be able to fall back upon the other" (*Works* 2: xxiv). Despite desperately wishing

[8] He submitted again in 1838 on the topic of Napoleon's exile on St. Helena before winning in 1839 on the topic of Salsette and Elephanta.

his son to make his way as a poet, Ruskin's father did not entertain much hope for his success with prize poems: in an April 7, 1837, letter to W. H. Harrison, he wrote,

> The truth is, that verses taken at random from his poetic heap are just about as fit for the public eye as a block of marble just starting into form would be for the model room of Somerset House. I was greatly pleased and much obliged by the business-like manner in which you dissected his trifle; such criticism is of more value to him than any ten of his best efforts will ever be to you. I cannot get him to correct or revise anything; and if he ever aspires to contend for a poetry Prize at Oxford, he must fail, for this reason, that there is not the poem having the greatest number of beauties, but that which betrays fewest faults, that carries the day. I trust your note may make my son begin to think how very far he may go wrong by indulging in unchecked, unpruned, unamended composition. (*Works* 2: xxv)

This description of the likely successful prize poem fits well with Arthur Penrhyn Stanley's opinion that he sent his mother the day he submitted the winning poem in 1837. In that letter he noted a distinction between the best poetry and the best prize poem (28-9).

Nonetheless, unsuccessful though it was, Ruskin submitted a poem suited more to his own style than to an imitation of Pope. The result was the most pointed and scathing indictment of the Gypsies in nineteenth-century poetry. Judging by his 1885 comments on Gypsies discussed in chapter three, his view seems to have changed over the course of his life, but as an eighteen-year-old undergraduate, he leaves little doubt of his scorn for the wanderers. With no indication of notable personal experiences with the Gypsies, one can perhaps assume that his intense feelings about them lie at the intersection of his lifelong tendency to strong opinion and the cultural cliché likely present in any seventeen- or eighteen-year-old's comments on the subject. These stereotypes and cultural clichés, however, merely mask the dominant concern that underlies the poem. The poem is laid out in a carefully argumentative form that leads the unsuspecting reader from the picturesque, to a village anecdote, to a discussion of religion, to comparisons of Gypsies to other races and species, before finally arriving at its crux—the need for order and boundaries that lead to a more moderate and, therefore, truer form of freedom.

The poem begins with a common picturesque scene before moving to a lengthy anecdote about a Gypsy tribe, living lawlessly near a village. After mockingly describing a young "Gipsy knight" and his chicken thievery as high adventure, the speaker considers the power exerted over the villagers by an old fortune-telling crone (43).[9] The village skeptics "refused to own a Gipsy's influence," but even those "sages shuddered if the Gipsy frowned" (62, 68). After a manner, she practices a sort of leveling social control with her prophecies to the village children:

> Strangely she used the power her art possessed
> To stamp the ductile gold of boyhood's breast:
> She fired the humble, and the proud controlled,
> Now roused the fearful, now repressed the bold.
> (77-80)

That control is dangerous, however, for she speaks "deceitful words! that give strange passions birth" (87). Her prophecies fuel these passions and encourage the children to chase the tantalizing dreams she instills in them, leading only to the despair of unexpected ends:

> She saw, and speaking, wove, with cruel art,
> Soft silver meshes round the youthful heart,
> And touched its core with lightning thoughts, in vain;
> Played with its passion, sported with its pain.
> Oh! cruel words, to rouse emotions there
> Whose voice is rapture, but whose end—despair.
> (154-9)

Considering the destructiveness of her words that haunt the children for the rest of their lives, the speaker warns, "For, sibyl, thine no transitory power" (162). He concludes, "Such the poor remnant of the faith that seemed / To read the roll of destinies it dreamed," and he wonders at "that once lofty art" and "its higher influence lost" (168-9, 170, 174). The once-powerful, mystical art of the Gypsies is now reduced to the manipulation of foolish villagers.

The poem next turns to what are ostensibly religious concerns, as the speaker addresses the Gypsies' lack of any belief system, but these concerns serve ultimately as evidence of their

[9] Citations are of line numbers as printed in *Works* 2: 27-41.

otherness that leads to his conclusions about freedom and moderation. Ruskin's footnote to the end of this village anecdote posits that "astrology—certainly a science derived either from the Assyrians or Egyptians—appears to have been the only superstition believed in by the wandering tribes" (177n). These astrological powers seem proper to the Gypsies, for "tearful stars, and planets weak and wan" are "meet gods" for a race that "knew no soft control / From the sweet chains that other beings bind, / The love of God or man—of country or of kind" (191, 192, 195-7). Departing from the tradition that the Gypsies derive from Egypt, he points out that even the Egyptian pagans have shrines, idols, and some form of belief,

> But, 'midst the wandering tribe, no reverenced shrine
> Attests a knowledge of the Power Divine
> By these alone, of mortals most forlorn,
> Are priest and pageant met with only scorn;
> To all mankind beside, through earth and sky,
> Is breathed an influence of Deity.
> (212-3)

The Gypsies are the only utterly godless humans on earth, the only race without the instinct to bow to some semblance of deity. To some notion of a higher power, all other tribes, "savage or sage, by common instinct bow; / And, by one impulse, all the earth abroad, / Or carve the idol or adore the god" (231-3). The Gypsies, on the other hand, "the most impious, most desolate, / Careless of unseen power or semblant stone,— / Live in this lost and lifeless world alone" (235-7).

What follows is a litany of the horrors attendant upon such godlessness, "oh, life most like to death!" (238). Without religious belief, they live their lives without any order or structure, for whatever chance throws in their path, "no hope can joy, no fear can guard or guide; / No trust supports in danger or despair; / Grief hath no solace, agony no prayer" (247-9). This poverty leaves them with only "life's short span," for without faith in something larger or beyond

life, “the lost are lost forever, and the grave / Is as a darkness deep” (246, 250-1). In this way, the Gypsy is the only human who dies utterly because “such death is death indeed, which nor bestows / Peace on the soul, nor on the clay repose” (270-1). As additional evidence of their otherness even among Others, and because they lack either faith or home, they alone on earth do not commemorate or remember their dead. Without religion, “no whispered prayer, no sacred service said, / Bequeaths to dust the deeply reverenced dead” (276-7). Furthermore, without home, “no mossy stone, when other memories cease, / Shall keep his name, or mark his place of peace” (278-9). Instead, as to the fallen Gypsy,

> Unwept, unknown, he lies: the outcast band,
> To whom the world is all a foreign land,
> Remember not the graves their fathers own,
> But pass away, and leave their lost alone.
> (282-5)

In an inversion of the Pauline celebration, Ruskin laments, in the Gypsies’ case, “O Grave, how fearful is thy victory! / O Death, how dread thy sting” (260-1).

Their homelessness further emphasizes their sub-humanity and even sub-bestiality. Not only do savages like “the lonely Indian” and the Arab know a home, but also the beasts like “the wandering ostrich,” “the lonely mountain eagle,” and “the faint gazelle” have their own “place[s] of rest” (292, 307, 286-8). Even the elements, “the very winds and waves,” know peace “in the purple silence of the West,” but to the Gypsies, “that abandoned race,” “less blest than bird, or wave or wind, / All climes are strange, all countries unkind” (334-5, 330, 340-1).

Such loneliness, hopelessness, and exclusion from the blessings other creatures have leave the Gypsy emotionally inert, numbly wasting away “in an unwaking moveless agony,— / The peace of powerless pain,” for like still, stagnant water and “corpses in the sleep that dreameth not,”

> So pines, so fades the spirit, when unmoved
> By any voice, remembered, known, or loved.
> Such pangs of silence in the hearts have birth
> Of those who have no fellowship on earth.
> (352-5)

This spiritual rotting is the inevitable conclusion for those who experience "life without light, and death obscure with fear, / The world without a home, the grave without a tear" (358-9).

After 360 damning lines, the speaker takes a turn that suggests at first the possibility of redemption: "yet they have their inheritance—the force / Of that high influence" (360-1). They have freedom. The liberty they enjoy is that to which all creatures on earth aspire and the seemingly powerless Gypsies' true power:

> All things that move on earth are swift and free,
> All full of the same fire of lovely Liberty:
> This, this is their inheritance—the might
> That fills the tyrant's throne with fear, his night
> With dreams of desolation; that unbinds
> The wrath of retribution in the minds
> Of those whom he has crushed; and, from the hand
> Breaking the fetter, gives and guides the brand.
> (378-85)

Their liberty frightens tyrants and inspires the oppressed. It is the force behind revolutions and social justice. Ruskin's speaker concludes, therefore, that, when viewed in this way, the Gypsies are not homeless, emotionally dead, or godless, for "this is the birthright, which alone can be / Their home, their hope, their joy, their trust, their deity" (386-7).

Ruskin devotes the next section of the poem to the imagined response of a "haughty wanderer" to his charges. In reply, the Gypsy speaker addresses "Ye abject tribes, ye nations poor and weak!" charging their enslavement by the institutions of the hegemonic order:

> Yours be the life of peace, the servile toil;
> Yours be the wealth, its despicable spoil;
> Stop to your tyrants' yoke with mildness meet,
> Cringe at his throne, and worship at his feet;

> Revere your priesthood's consecrated guilt;
> Bow in the temples that your dreams have built;
> Adore your gods—the visionary plan
> Of dotards grey, in mockery of man—
> (390-7)

The Gypsy, on the other hand, is free of all of this. He has no house, for he has for "my dwelling, all the earth" (401). He cannot be compelled by the state, for "no birth can bind me, in a nation's cause, / To fight their battles, or obey their laws" (402-3). Likewise, while "women may grow pale" at the words of the priest, "me he derides not with his ghastly tale" (404, 405). In a declaration worthy of Rousseau, the Gypsy speaker exclaims, "Such as it hath been must my spirit be,— / Destroyed, not shackled,—if existent, free" (416-7).

The Gypsy's argument is compelling as Ruskin allows his freedom to sound admirable and enviable in the lofty rhetoric of liberty. Embedded in the middle of the speech, however, are lines, still spoken passionately, that declare freedoms bearing a more insidious tone. The Gypsy is free not only from the more institutional forms of control but also from those ethical and moral boundaries any civilized Englishman should suppose others naturally to respect:

> Virtue and vice, the names by which the wise
> Have governed others, I alike despise.
> No love can move me, and no fear can quell,
> Nor check my passions, nor control my will.
> The soul, whose body fears no change of clime,
> Aims at no virtue, trembles at no crime;
> But, free and fearless as its clay, shall own
> No other will upon its fiery throne.
> (406-13)

Gypsies then are the single most dangerous creature alive, for they practice a sort of moral chaos, careless equally of virtue and vice, aspiring to no moral goal, and fearless of committing any sin. Neither love nor fear can affect them, and their passions and will are uncontrollable by any force other than themselves. Their god is their own will.

These are the lines along which Ruskin's speaker responds to the imagined Gypsy argument, a response that concludes the poem. He answers,

> Such are the thoughts of Freedom, unrestrained;
> Such is the good which men have felt, or feigned,
> To be the highest of all gifts that bless
> The mortal dwellers in this wilderness.
> (428-31)

Freedom, the source of so many laudable virtues and events, "becomes, if unrestrained, so deep a curse / As nations should grow pale at" (442-3). Unrestrained freedom is the herald of absolute chaos, "the standard whose dark folds unfurled / Shade the red ruins of a wasted world," "the shout that Madness laughs to hear, / When dark Rebellion grasps his gory spear" (448-9, 450-1). Such freedom spells the end of England, "feeding, worm-like, on the nation's death, / Which they have cast into the dark abysm / Of guilty Freedom, worst of despotism" (455-7). In the end, paradoxically, unrestrained freedom puts an end to freedom and becomes the worst sort of tyrant.

True freedom, Ruskin explains, is one of moderation and mild servitude: "There's but one liberty of heart and soul, / A thing of beauty, an unfelt control,—" (458-9). This gentle, "unfelt control" occurs only

> When Love and Virtue and Religion join
> To weave their bonds of bliss, their chains divine,
> And keep the heaven-illumined heart they fill
> Softly communing with itself, and still
> In the sole freedom that can please the good,
> A mild and mental, unfelt servitude.
> (462-7)

Freedom comes, for example, from service to Christ, whose "yoke is easy" and whose "burden is light" (Matt. 11: 30), a connection pointed out by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, the editors of *Works* (467n). True freedom is a moderate version, not the kind that the Gypsies

practice and worship. True freedom is available to those who submit themselves to the velvet chains of civilized religion's liberating bonds.

As Edmund Burke famously declared nearly fifty years earlier, "It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters" (8: 332). His Newdigate entry is not the last time Ruskin makes such an argument about freedom. Much of "The Lamp of Obedience," the seventh chapter of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), is devoted to this position. In it, he discusses "that principle [. . .] to which Polity owes its stability, Life its happiness, Faith its acceptance, Creation its continuance,— Obedience" (*Works* 8: 248). Echoing his poem of twelve years earlier, he declares,

> How false is the conception, how frantic the pursuit, of that treacherous phantom which men call Liberty: most treacherous, indeed, of all phantoms; for the feeblest ray of reason might surely show us, that not only its attainment, but its being, was impossible. There is no such thing in the universe. There can never be. The stars have it not; the earth has it not; the sea has it not; and we men have the mockery and semblance of it only for our heaviest punishment. (8: 248-9)

He even appends a note to the chapter, in which he deconstructs nearly line by line the notion of freedom in Coleridge's "Ode to France" (8: 271-2). He asserts another force instead: "if there be any one principle more widely than another confessed by every utterance, or more sternly than another imprinted on every atom, of the visible creation, that principle is not Liberty, but Law." In support of this argument, he points to the Book of Common Prayer's "whose service is perfect freedom" (8: 249). This opposition to not only the practice of but also the possibility of absolute freedom appears elsewhere in Ruskin's work, articulated often with the older writer's skill. The undergraduate poet's argument, however, is just as passionate, though less polished. Ruskin was only seventeen when the Professor of Poetry announced the topic of the Gypsies for the 1837 competition. Even so young, he saw in "the earth's wide wanderers, mocked of fate,"

an image of that excessive liberty of which he was so wary, and he took the opportunity to voice what became a lifelong desire for order.

iii. The Nineteenth-Century Dialogue

For John Clare, shut out from the countryside he so loved and shut in an asylum from social intercourse, the Gypsy figure provides a malleable trope that explores his anxieties about independence, freedom, alienation, and confinement. Early on, they are, like him, a part of a lower economic class that is further marginalized from the hegemonic order by fences, shut out from a common inheritance that had, before enclosure came to Northamptonshire, seemed their birthright. Denied the village commons, they are also denied the intercourse of shared society. The Gypsies begin, however, in his poetic imagination to represent a sort of freedom that he likes to suppose is independent of the hedges, though his early poems nearly invariably bring them back around to exclusion from the land. Later in life, as Clare began to feel alienated not only from the world outside of Dr. Allen's or the Northampton asylum but also from his own mind, the Gypsies reflected alternately both that alienation and freedom from it. As he grew further and further detached from the outside world and from his own memories, however, his Gypsies lose the realism that sets them apart from other nineteenth-century treatments and become instead increasingly idealized and romanticized. They remain always, though, a way for John Clare to consider the liberty of which he has for nearly sixty years felt bereft.

John Ruskin, on the other hand, like Clare, sees the Gypsies as a useful emblem of freedom but uses them to condemn the sort of freedom Clare celebrates. In this way, they serve him in a similar way: they provide him with a model in which to demonstrate utter liberty so that he can explore his own—as well as nineteenth-century—anxieties on the topic. Unlike

Clare's explorations of confinement and alienation, though, Ruskin's Gypsies serve as foils to his ideal "perfect freedom," a gentle submission and servitude to something higher than oneself. This is a theme to which Ruskin would return repeatedly throughout his life, but even as a seventeen- and eighteen-year-old, his treatment of Gypsies evolves into an argument about the need for order, both personal and social. Together, Clare and Ruskin explore some of the most critical nineteenth-century concerns about liberty, concerns to which other writers return repeatedly in prose, fiction, and poetry throughout the century. Taking hold of the contemporary fascination with Gypsies and the predominant characteristic ascribed to them, Clare and Ruskin transform those Gypsies directly into that attribute of freedom. With their refashioned tropes in hand, they present completely opposing arguments on the prominent nineteenth-century anxiety about independence and submission, freedom and moderation.

Chapter 3

Madonnas and Gypsies: Considering Religious Identity

One of the early legends that explained Gypsy wandering was that, like the Wandering Jew, they traveled as penance for some sin in a dark past. As noted in chapter one, that sin has been variously identified as having fashioned the nails for the Crucifixion, having renounced Christianity, and having denied the Holy Family hospitality on the Flight into Egypt. Among the many names given to the Gypsies throughout the world, the Dutch have called them *Heydens*, or Heathens (Hoyland 1), which is the way the Christian West has viewed the group from the beginning. In 1816, Quaker missionary John Hoyland published *A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits, & Present State of the Gypsies: Designed to Develope the Origin of This Singular People, and to Promote the Amelioration of their Condition*, the first book-length project in English about the Gypsies. In this work, Hoyland declared what became one of two prevailing opinions on Gypsy religion: "With respect to religion, it has appeared that the greater part of the Gypsies live without any profession of it; *Tollius* says, worse than heathens" (127). Of course, the other opinion in the century was that the Gypsies adhered to some mystical Eastern creed, and both of these stereotypes persist today.[1]

[1] In reality, the notion of "cultural colporteurs" mentioned in chapter one is relevant to religious practice among the Roma throughout Europe and Great Britain. In Great Britain, some are Roman Catholic, and others are Greek Orthodox; in Ireland, they are largely Roman Catholic; in Estonia, they are mostly Lutheran; in Russia, they are Orthodox; in Italy, they are Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Muslim; in Bulgaria, they are Christian and Muslim. In all countries, of course, there are also Roma who are atheist and agnostic. Those who practice a sort of organized religion, however, do so in rather heterodox fashion. For example, Bulgarian Roma may be baptized by a Roman Catholic priest and buried by an Islamic imam. Some scholars, though, report that myths and taboos independent of these religions still hold root among all of these groups. See Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers* (89-92); and Jean-Paul Clébert, *The Gypsies* (133-60).

Eastern mystics or irreligious altogether, the Gypsies were, therefore, to be shunned or proselytized. George Crabbe's "The Hall of Justice" (1807) is an evangelical poem that describes a Gypsy woman before a local magistrate for judgment for stealing food to feed her child. In the early portion of the century, few distinguished between Gypsies by blood and Gypsies by habit; the "Gypsy" is, therefore, actually an English orphan who had joined the Gypsies, forced into error by economic need. She falls in love with one Gypsy, is taken and made pregnant by his father, and prostituted by another. She tells her tale to the magistrate, a woeful tale concerning all manner of sin and suffering—rape, bigamy, incest, prostitution, venereal disease, thieving, death, and a daughter taken from her and about to be transported. Significantly, nearly all of these are either sexually related crimes, imagined easily from the ancient stereotype of the Gypsies as sexually both promiscuous and lawless, a commonplace in Orientalist rhetoric. The magistrate, who seems stern and unyielding at first, softens at each stage of her pitiable story. When finally, her tale complete, she prays mercy for her transported daughter and justice for herself, the magistrate instead offers her another sort of mercy:

MAGISTRATE.

Recall the Word, renounce the Thought,
    Command thy Heart and bend thy knee,
There is to all a Pardon brought,
    A Ransom rich, assur'd and free;
'Tis full when found, 'tis found if sought,
    Oh! seek it, till 'tis seal'd to Thee.

VAGRANT.

But how my Pardon shall I know?

MAGISTRATE.

By feeling Dread that 'tis not sent,
    By Tears for Sin that freely flow,
By Grief, that all thy Tears are spent,
    By Thoughts on that great Debt we owe,
With all the Mercy GOD has lent,

> By suffering what thou canst not show,
> Yet showing how thine Heart is rent,
> Till thou canst feel thy Bosom glow,
> And say, "MY SAVIOUR, I REPENT!"
> (ii. 127-42)

The poem does not suggest what becomes of the woman's daughter, but the woman herself receives the mercy of Christian salvation, for even a Gypsy can be saved—or at least, in this case, a "white" Gypsy can.

In his *Historical Survey*, Hoyland, a few years later, notes, "In the decision on the vagrant case, in Crabbe's 'Hall of Justice,' [. . .] a temper is displayed so truly Christian, and so different from what is just alluded to [Gypsy treatment under current English laws], that in consulting the best feelings of human nature, it adds dignity to magistracy" (231). He ends his study by calling for a wider application of those "truly Christian," "best feelings of human nature":

> In reference to England, it is a beautiful exclamation of the *Christian Observer*: "Surely when our charity is flowing in so wide a channel, conveying the blessings of the gospel to the most distant quarters of the globe, we shall not hesitate to water this one barren and neglected field, in our own land." Uniting cordially in this appeal, it is a great satisfaction to be able to state, there are traits of character in this people, which encourage attention to Gypsey soil. Let it but be cleared of weeds, and sown with good seed, and the judicious cultivator may calculate upon a crop to compensate his toil. (261)

While "many persons appear zealous to send Missionaries to convert heathens in the most distant parts of the world," he complains, "a late writer observes, 'the greatest, perhaps of all heathens, are at home, entirely neglected'" (264).

These attitudes were not uncommon, for as George Behlmer notes, "what scant sympathy Gypsies received before mid-century came from missionaries bent on converting them into sedentary Christians" (236). Unlike Reverend Hoyland and seemingly George Crabbe, however, many of the poets of the century found the matter more complicated than all of that. Repeatedly,

rather than looking at the Gypsies simply as fallow ground that needed breaking, they found in the Gypsies a surprising means by which to consider otherness and Christianity itself. Surprisingly, this consideration, unlike the Protestant, evangelical bent of Hoyland and Crabbe, frequently involves the more Catholic image of the Madonna and Child. For example, enacting multiple levels of appropriation, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, John Kenyon, Father Prout (Francis Sylvester Mahony's literary persona), and Francesca Alexander and John Ruskin draw on European ballads and legends of Gypsy origin to show Gypsies interacting, usually sympathetically, *with* the Madonna and Child. In an intriguing turn from these other poets, though, Amy Levy casts Gypsies in the pose *of* the Madonna and Child, transforming not only the Gypsy but also the Madonna herself.

The vast majority of the century's other poems explore and reinforce Gypsy alterity. With the telling exception of Levy's poem, however, all of these largely elide that difference in an effort to normalize the Gypsies. These poetic strokes of *trompe l'oeil* create what Homi Bhabha calls "mimicry," "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (126). According to Bhabha, "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (126). This discursive form "is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (126). These poets retain superficial elements of "Gypsiness"—palmistry and mysticism, for example—but erase other, more fundamental forms

of difference, creating nominal Gypsies who are actually proto-Christians. In this way, they paint the Gypsies as "*almost the same, but not quite*."

For all of these poets, this juxtaposition of the Gypsies with the Holy Family allows the domestication of the exotic by drawing the Gypsies into contact with not just a familiar Judeo-Christian image but also an adored one that had experienced a mid-century "Marian revival in Britain" even among Protestants (Lootens 53). Gypsies serve also, however, as effective tropes by which to explore a variety of religious questions and anxieties. For Stanley, the Gypsies' interaction with the Holy Family explains the current low state and possible destinies of Gypsies in England, but more importantly, it enables him to map Gypsy identity onto Jewish and Christian identities in what ends up as simply a call to holiness for the Christian Church. For Kenyon, the low state of three Gypsy "Wise Men" provides a means by which to consider the Broad Church Movement. For Prout, Alexander, and Ruskin, placing the Gypsies in sympathetic poses near the Holy Family disarms the threatening by denying their heritage and transforming them into the very image of Christian faithfulness. Levy's Gypsy Madonna, on the other hand, provides a way by which to consider the plights of women and of racial and religious Others.

i. Kenyon's Gypsy Magi and the Broad Church Movement

Traditionally, the Magi who visited the Christ Child have been identified alternately as Eastern philosophers, astronomers, Saracens, and Zoroastrian priests. At the beginning of the third century, Tertullian was the first to suggest that they might have been kings, but this identification did not become widespread until the sixth century. Around the same time as Tertullian, Origen was the first to give them names—Gaspar (or Caspar or Jaspar), Melchior, and Balthasar—but, again, this tradition did not gain popularity until the sixth century (Murray 318-

19). Occasionally, though less frequently, the Wise Men have been identified as Gypsies, largely because of their Eastern origins, their traveling, their garb in artistic representations, and their mystical reading of the stars. Still, regardless of their particular identity, they have remained significant in Christendom as representatives of the Gentiles: "while the shepherds were the first Jews to venerate Christ, the first Gentiles to recognize and worship Christ were the Magi, hence the Feast of the Epiphany, held on 6 January, marks the beginning of the mission to the Gentiles" (Murray 319).

In 1811, in the fourth volume of his *Voyage dans les départemens du Midi de la France*, Aubin-Louis Millin tells of encountering near Aix-en-Provence "une troupe de six à sept misérables, hideux et à demi nus"[2] who offered to tell the fortunes of those in Millin's party (159). Millin follows this short anecdote with a brief history of the local Gypsies based on Pierre Joseph de Haitze's *Histoire manuscrite de la ville d'Aix*. Millin's and de Haitze's descriptions of the Gypsies are by no means flattering. Millin, however, appends to his account a different sort of representation:

> *Je joins ici un noël composé en 1680 par un bénéficier de la cathédrale d'Aix [Louis-Scipion Puech], qui peint bien les mœurs des Bohémiens, et la manière dont ils donnoient et donnent encore la bonne aventure. Cette chanson est singulière et fort gaie: l'auteur introduit à la crèche du Sauveur trois Bohémiens, qui cherchent à deviner dans les mains de l'enfant Jésus, de Marie et de Joseph, ce qu'ils sont et ce qui leur arrivera.* (163)[3]

Millin goes on to provide Puech's original Provençal poem, along with a literal French translation of it. Essentially, what Millin describes and what Puech's poem, "*Noël des Bohémiens*," portrays is a group of Gypsy "Wise Men" who have come to visit the Christ Child

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[2] "a troop of six to seven wretches, hideous and half-naked."

[3] "I attach here a carol composed in 1680 by a benefactor of the Cathedral of Aix, which paints well Gypsy customs and the manner in which they used to and still do tell fortunes. This song is singular and extremely merry: at the Savior's crib, the author introduces three Gypsies who seek to read in the palms of the infant Jesus, Mary, and Joseph who they are and what will happen to them" (translation mine).

and bring him gifts of their fortune-telling—though, perhaps, one may more accurately say that they sell him their fortune-telling since they request payment.

In 1849, John Kenyon published *A Day at Tivoli*, a book of verse in which he, in turn, translates into English Millin's translation of Puech's poem, transforming it, by means of his prologue and epilogue, into a Broad Church plea. Most of the poem, entitled "Sacred Gipsy Carol," is rather unsurprising fare, as the Gypsy Magi visit the Nativity and foretell what is in the Gospels. It is an Adoration of the Magi in rags rather than silks, with prophecies rather than frankincense. They identify Jesus as "the equal of the Deity, / His well-belovëd progeny, / And born to be adored" (149).[4] They foresee the Cross and its cause: "And if of thy sad martyrie / My tongue the cause may dare to touch, / It is—that Thou hast loved too much" (151-2). Likewise, they see the Resurrection afterward. Offering to read Joseph's palm, they tease him with the baby-stealing stereotype of the Gypsies:

> And think'st thou, then, that, plotting sly,
> We shall steal yon ass that is feeding by?
> Old Man! Old Man! far better pelf
> Would be the blessed babe himself.
> (159)

For each bit of information they find in the hands of the Holy Family, they beg coin in payment until the final two speeches. The "First Gipsy" tells the Child,

> But now, Sweet Babe! full well we wot
> That thou art born with little store;
> Thy lot—a naked—lowly lot;
> Therefore—of pence we talk no more.
> (161)

He asks only that the Babe will "hear our prayer" (161). Then the whole Chorus of the Three Gipsies tell their prayer:

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[4] Throughout this chapter, absent lines numbers in most of the poems, I cite page numbers in the editions noted in the bibliography.

> If with too much liberty,
> We have dared thine ear importune;
> If with too much liberty,
> We have dared to read thy fortune;
> Humbly We pray to Thee,
> Build thou for us a destiny;
> And be it one, Immortal Son
> Blessing us Eternally.
> (161)

The Gypsies beg coin from the Holy Family, but their earnest prayer is actually for what has been most denied to them—a destiny of their own.

To the poem, Kenyon appended a prologue and epilogue apparently of his own composition. The Gypsies had long been popular in Scottish, Welsh, and English ballads, but most of those treatments tend toward the whimsical. The Provençal ballad and the Italian ones used by Prout, Alexander, and Ruskin are more devotional, providing a fit framework for the Christian arguments the poets render. The ballad Kenyon uses provides a picture, a simple painting of three humble, somewhat mischievous Gypsies, kneeling at the Nativity. Kenyon, however, uses that ballad simply as an exemplum to image the Broad Church argument he fleshes it out with in his prologue and epilogue.

While his notes suggest he translated the French poem in 1833 in Marseilles, he dates this prologue and epilogue 1849, just as the Broad Church Movement was beginning to grow rapidly, and the verses reflect the beliefs of that movement. In the prologue, the Gypsies beg, "Refuse not, Reader, the brief mysterie-play, / Which our poor Gipsy-trio here enacts," for the legend is "true to feeling, false albeit to facts" (145). Actually, they argue, such tales seem truer to the heart "than stricter fact, with dogma harsh and cold, / Oft falsified; to harden me or you" (145). Starting a metaphor that they continue in the epilogue, they celebrate,

> Faith, like yon liberal sun's impartial power,
> Where'er her genial ray, like his, shall strike,

> Wakes forth from every soil its fitting flower;
> If not alike each flower—all flowers—alike.
> (145)

In all soils, souls are awakened by faith, Anglican and Gypsy alike, and "that humblest weed hath comeliness, where born; / 'Tis still the heart which consecrates the creed" (145). The Gypsies reemphasize the broadness of Christian faith, finally, by asking the reader,

> Nor take our speech in mockery or despite,
> Tho' strange it be, or ruder than thine own.
> Where equal justice rules, with equal right
> Each tribe—each tongue—hath access to the throne.
> (145)

Preparing to tell their "brief mysterie-play" about three Gypsy adorers of the Christ Child, the Gypsies defend their ability to have faith. Unlike Hoyland's untilled soil, these Gypsies claim that all soils are equally arable under the light of faith.

The epilogue, entitled "Devotion," expands on these ideas in a higher diction and appears to be in Kenyon's own voice rather than those of the Gypsies. It begins with a question: "Where shall Devotion find her fitting food? / 'Twas asked; and it was answered, 'Every where' (163). He asks the reader, "Lead me thou to yonder ancient pile, / Where the built organ, through its thousand flutes, / Peals majesty" (164), assuring that,

> [. . .] as we wander thro' the wond'rous fane,
> Or kneel us, trust me! I shall feel, like thee,
> Chaunt—censer—picture—statue—rubied pane—
> Nay, cope and robe.
> (164)

In exchange, he asks only,

> [. . .] But come thou too, with me,
> To where yon worshipper, more picturesque
> Than graceful, in his coat of many a flaw,
> Is humbly hymning to that Saint grotesque.
> (164)

Certainly, then, the reader will have to grant "that there Devotion too fit food may find / In the rude notes of that street-chaunted song. / So deemed our elder race" (165). He does not claim that low is better than high but that there is room in Christendom for both, in the trappings of incense and stained glass as well as in a "coat of many a flaw."

After this sort of Broad Church plea, however, Kenyon at first seems to suggest the superiority of the Low. Speaking of "our elder race," he argues,

> Their faith—they knew—
> Was strong for daily wear; a stuff to trust.
> No flimsy robe, hung up the whole week thro'.
> "And but for Sunday-service cleansed from dust;"
> But a stout faith, that free from formalism,
> (On which Devotion's name too oft we dub,)
> In week-day life nor found, nor sought, a schism;
> But mingled with it; and could bear the rub.
> (165)

He even compares this "elder race," "free from formalism," to Spenser's Una, the one, true faith, for "must we come in smoother phrase array'd," he says, "Their faith (like Una, wheresoe'er she stray'd) / Could make 'a sunshine in the shady place'" (165). What seems to assert the superiority of the Low, however, instead suggests that the "elder race" combined seamlessly the strengths of both High and Low Church. These older faithful

> [. . .] far above, as abstract thought may reach,
> And far beneath, as human instincts go,
> Could find congenial atmosphere in each;
> No theme too lofty, as no love too low.
> (166)

Finally, then, this is just the sort of Broad Church Kenyon desires, ending his poem with this call:

> With such interpretation would I leaven
> That ladder-vision, erst by Jacob seen;

Its foot on common earth; its top in heaven;
And God's mild angels on each step between.
(166)

The poem ends with this argument that the ladder of devotion should cover High, Low, and all in between, blessed at every rung by angels.

In 1833, sixteen years before this prologue and epilogue, Kenyon published *A Rhymed Plea for Tolerance in Two Dialogues with a Prefatory Dialogue*. This poem, a satire, supports "his notion of the principle of full religious tolerance [that] is not just a legal or cold sense of tolerance or a merely practical one which may be given or withheld at private will, but, rather, an inward charity. Such an inward charity is not an effect but a cause; not an expediency, but rather a duty, and it is this principle which he desires to see written on the statute books and church offices" (Raymond 54). The poem demonstrates, according to Meredith Raymond, author of the excellently titled "John Kenyon, the Magnificent Dilettante," Kenyon's "fear of what he saw as a trend toward dogmatism beginning around 1833 and developing as the Oxford Movement" (58).

Ultimately, this suspicion of the Oxford Movement informs Kenyon's use of the wandering trio at the Nativity. Four years before *Rhymed Plea for Tolerance*, he found and translated Puech's poem. Twenty years later, when he gathered poems together for *A Day at Tivoli*, a book he dedicated to his distant cousins and beneficiaries, the Brownings, his literal translation into English became a figurative translation of the ballad into a highly specific mid-century English concern. He found in these Gypsies a means by which he could articulate not only his Oxford anxieties but also his hope in the burgeoning Broad Church Movement, implicitly positioning them at the far extreme of potential Christianity. Of course, he could have used the scriptural shepherds instead, but he had these Gypsies ready at hand for two decades. More importantly, the Gypsy stereotype underscores his argument more than the shepherds, for

the shepherds are Others primarily by way of class. Gypsy alterity, though, is overdetermined by way of class, race, and religion. As the Murrays note, the Adoration of the Shepherds marks the beginnings of Christ's ministry to the Jews, but the eternal otherness of the Gypsy, in the place of the Gentile Magi, images the Broad Church ideal even more vividly.

ii. Gypsies and the Holy Family on the Flight into Egypt

Like Kenyon, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Father Prout, Francesca Alexander, and John Ruskin all place the Gypsies alongside the Holy Family. They, however, do so in a more traditional context. One of the earliest explanations for the Gypsy Diaspora is that a Gypsy refused the Holy Family hospitality on their Flight into Egypt. For that sin, the entire group was set wandering for penance. In this setting, Stanley, Prout, Alexander, and Ruskin consider Gypsy otherness, as well as their past and destiny, by placing them in a familiar Christian scene. Ultimately, however, like Kenyon, by locating the Gypsies in a patently Christian setting, the poets end up meditating more on Christianity itself than on the Gypsies.

Stanley's Newdigate Poem

On June 7, 1837, Stanley read his Newdigate Prize poem, "The Gypsies," in the Sheldonian Theatre during Encaenia. By that day, he had already felt fairly certain that his entry would win. In a letter to his mother on April 2, 1837, he acknowledges that Benjamin Brodie's entry, "in point of real poetical power, is much superior to it—though (I think also) inferior in point of arrangement and richness of ideas" (28). He complains, "There is no comparison between my bald, forced, and monosyllabic lines and his profusion of imagery, and most absolute command of language, and most harmonious and unbroken versification. I think there

can be no doubt that his is really the best, though, at the same time, it is so unlike a prize poem that I think it more than doubtful whether it will succeed" (28-9). Upon this distinction, he pinned his hopes of winning: "I think the fairest thing would be to say that mine is the best *poem*, and his the best *poetry*" (29).

Stanley begins his poem on the Gypsies in eloquent but culturally clichéd manner, describing a picturesque wooded scene. After a detailed description, though, he stops to ask,

> What forms are those, beneath the shaggy trees,
> In tattered tent, scarce sheltered from the breeze?
> The hoary father and the ancient dame,
> The squalid children, cowering o'er the flame?
> These were not born by English hearths to dwell.
> (29-30)

His chief concern, though, is not simply to provide a quaint description as the poem quickly takes a broader turn. Their complexion and attire, in addition to "bespeak[ing] an Eastern sire,"

> Bid us in Home's most favoured precincts trace
> The houseless children of a homeless race;
> And, as in warning vision, seem to show
> That man's best joys are dimmed by shades of woe.
> (30)

He appears ostensibly to be concerned primarily with the Gypsies' past and future: "Children of Nature, wandering to and fro, / Man knows not whence ye come, nor where ye go—" (31). By the end of the poem, however, it becomes clear that the Gypsies have provided Stanley with a convenient device through which he calls for holiness in the Christian Church.

Citing Hoyland, Stanley associates the arrival of the wanderers with a dark and evil period, noting, "The Gypsies first appeared in Europe about the commencement of the fifteenth century (*Hoyland*, p. 12), a period of such universal misery in Christendom as to give rise to a popular opinion that it was the season in which Satan was loosed" (31n). Charitably, though, he does not link the Gypsies themselves to that darkness, for they are largely benign: "No clang of

arms, no din of battle roared, / Round the still march of that mysterious horde" (31). Instead, "weary and sad, arrayed in pilgrim guise, / They stood and prayed, nor raised their suppliant eyes" (31). Upon their arrival, "at once in every land went up the cry, / 'Oh! fear us not—receive us—or we die!'" (32). Unlike many other English Christians, Stanley perceives no threat from the Gypsies, for "no lust of wealth, nor scent of distant war, / Nor wisdom's glory lures them from afar" (32). Likewise, the powerful need not fear because

> They claim no thrones—they only ask to share
> The common liberty of earth and air—
> Ask but for room to wander on alone
> Amid Earth's tribes unnoticed and unknown!
> (32)

In short, Stanley argues the Gypsies pose no danger to the hegemonic order of England.

Having dismissed the Gypsy threat, Stanley turns to his primary interest—the past and future of the Gypsies. Unlike many of his contemporaries, however, and unsurprisingly for the future Dean of Westminster, he considers their spiritual rather than their geographic or ethnic origins and destiny. Since the Gypsies remind one "that man's best joys are dimmed by shades of woe," Stanley questions why they wander and how they have arrived at their lowly state. He comes to the answer early in the poem: "'Tis the dread Curse—behind them and before— / That goads them on, till time shall be no more" (32).

Their "Curse" is that they, like the Wandering Jew, must wander as penance for some past sin, as they told "a tale of dark unexpiated crime" when they arrived (32). Clearly, the Gypsies are cursed, "for well might Fancy trace / The hand of God upon that sinful race." Since they began their penance, "cites have fallen and empires passed away," but "still the dark Wanderers meet us on our way; / Amid glad homes for ever doomed to roam / In lonely woe, themselves without a home!" (33). Stanley identifies that past sin specifically as their having

refused hospitality to the Holy Family on the Flight into Egypt, one of the earliest Continental legends for their nomadism:

> To that sweet islet came at day's decline
> A Virgin Mother with her Babe Divine;
> She asked for shelter from the chill night breeze,
> She prayed for rest beneath those stately trees;
> She asked in vain—what though was blended there
> A maiden's meekness with a mother's care;
> What though the light of hidden Godhead smiled
> In the bright features of that blessèd Child,
> She asked in vain—they heard, and heeded not,
> And rudely drove her from the sheltering spot.
> Then fell the Voice of Judgment from above,
> "Who shut Love out, shall be shut out from Love;
> "Who drive the houseless wanderer from their door,
> "Themselves shall wander houseless evermore;
> "Till He, whom now they spurn, again shall come,
> "Amid the clouds of Heaven to speak their final doom."
> (32-3)

Calling on the popular legend about the Gypsies' refusing hospitality to the Holy Family gives Stanley a convenient reason to explain their fall, for to occupy the station they have in 1837 England, surely they must have fallen.

Adding pathos to that fall, Stanley next imagines what the Gypsies must have been before the Holy Family fled into Egypt. He envisions for them greatness and power and asks if perhaps they were once the "wisest and mightiest of the sons of men":

> What if in yonder chief of tattered vest
> Glows the same blood that warmed a Pharaoh's breast?
> If in the fiery eye, the haughty mien,
> The tawny hue of yonder Gypsy Queen,
> Still dwells the light of Cleopatra's charms,
> The winning grace that roused the world to arms,
> That called Rome's legions to a watery grave,
> And bound Earth's lord to be a woman's slave?
> (36)

From asking whether or not this is, indeed, the Gypsy past, Stanley moves hastily to mourning that it is no longer the case: "Mizraim's king-craft" is now "shrunk to petty deeds of midnight theft," and "Egypt's wisdom only lives to pry / Through the dark arts of paltry palmistry!" (36).

Embedded in these same lines, however, lies a still more dangerous cautionary tale. A prominent Orientalist discourse involves the danger of sexual transgression (as in Crabbe's poem) and the feminized East. The Egyptian, Greek, and Roman echoes of these lines recall the sexual danger posed by feminized, seductive forces such as Cleopatra and Helen to the masculine Occident. The feminine and sexual threat of Helen led to the fall of Troy, while that of Cleopatra led to civil war in Rome between Marc Antony and Octavian. Furthermore, the Greek empire was galvanized by its ability to appropriate Helen. These lines, taken with the shifting emphases of the poem, suggest that the Gypsy Queen poses a similar cautionary tale to a British Empire and the English Church.

At this point, Stanley begins to shift his attention from the Gypsies to the Jews and the Christian Church, who seem to be the true objects of his interest. Having imagined this great Egyptian past of the Gypsies gives him the perfect transition to his consideration of the Jews:

> One only race of all thy great compeers
> Still moves with thee along this vale of tears;
> Long since ye parted by the Red Sea strand;
> Now face to face ye meet in every land;
> Alone, amid a new-born world, ye dwell—
> Egypt's lorn people, outcast Israel!
> (36)

Now both tribes have lost their early glory and wander the earth, homeless. He identifies their respective glories as secular and spiritual but finds a common reason for their current low estates:

> How fallen they, who shone so bright of yore,
> One skilled in human, one in holier lore—

> How dark their fate, who turns to uses base
> Earth's highest wisdom—Heaven's divinest grace!
> (37)

Both groups bear a curse for "turn[ing] to uses base" their gifts—for the Gypsies, "Earth's highest wisdom" and, for the Jews, "Heaven's divinest grace."

Having spent some time imagining a past for these two tribes and creating out of those imagined pasts reason enough for their current suffering, Stanley moves on to the Christian Church by exclaiming, "Wanderers, farewell! 'Tis not for erring man / The mystic rule of God's decree to scan," for "dark is the past." Instead, he determines to look forward where "in clear expanse / The Future spreads to Hope's imploring glance" (37). As he looks to this hopeful future, though, he hears "the thousand kindreds of His earth reply" that, like the Gypsies and Jews, they, too, have failed to maintain their position with Heaven:

> "We, too, are fallen—we too in deserts stray,
> "With bliss in sight—with home beside our way:
> "We, too, are deaf to messages of love,
> "Angels unheeded round our footsteps move:
> "This is a solemn world—a 'dreadful' spot—
> "The gate of Heaven—and yet we know it not!"
> (37)

He voices a lament for these groups that culminates in his comment on Christians, unrelated to the ostensible topic of the poem:

> Oh! weary days of promise long delayed—
> O glorious gifts with thankless scorn repaid—
> When will ye end? Oh, when shall man's lost race
> Among God's angels take its ancient place?
> When shall this vagrant tribe of unknown birth
> Regain her rank among the realms of Earth?
> When shall lost Israel seek his Father's throne,
> And hail a holier Zion than his own?
> When shall God's Church her final rest attain,
> Pure from all blemish, washed from every stain?
> (37)

In this way, Stanley has, by metonymic sleight of hand, mapped Jewish identity onto the Gypsies and Christian identity onto the Jews, creating analogous positions for each of them but, by order, emphasizing his call to holiness for the Church.

Implicit in this call, however, is a sinister threat. As Bhabha suggests, such acts of trompe l'oeil are an effort to create a "reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*." "In order to be effective," though, "mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (126). To threaten Christendom with heavenly homelessness, a fall akin to the Jews' and the Gypsies', Stanley calls on the myths of irreversible racial, religious, and ethnic subordination. The threat here is that, if the Church fails to live up to its holiness, it will experience the same sort of tribal damnation and become like the Gypsies and Jews. Under "the mystic rule of God's decree," the Church will be as outcast and downtrodden as the Gypsies and Jews assuredly already are—and perhaps even the rightful objects of societal persecution. "Dark is the past," like the skin of the Gypsies, and the Gypsies and Jews are stuck in it. If the Church wishes to have a future, it must not become like these damned peoples.

So thoroughly does Stanley blur the identities of each of these groups that, by the time he ends his poem, it is difficult to say precisely about whom he is writing. He cries, "Peace—faithless murmurers!" reminding that, "though to and fro Man's restless hopes be driven, / Still round us broods the changeless calm of Heaven," for Christ, who himself wandered in the wilderness, would still "call the wayworn Wanderers to His rest! / There the lost pilgrim shall no longer roam, / There the lorn outcast find a lasting home!" His final words work equally well as a Christian's imagined hope for the nomadic Gypsies or, what seems more likely from the shifting emphasis of the poem, an exhortation to the Christian Church to remain faithful, to ride

out the tempest of "restless hopes," and to look forward to a calmer, greater Hope with Christ. The hope needs to apply to the Church, for if Stanley consented to the future conversion of the Gypsies or Jews, his paradigm would tumble. The outcasts would achieve a future, and the threat to the Church would become hollow.

The European Ballad and the Twist on the Legend

While the legend that Stanley calls upon is certainly the better known account of the Gypsies' role in the *Riposo*, another version—just the opposite from its relative—became popular, at latest by the sixteenth century, on the Continent. In this account, rather than denying hospitality, a stationary Gypsy woman enthusiastically invites the Holy Family into her home by the Nile and adores the Madonna and Child. Anna Jameson notes that versions of this legend exist in Italian and German but probably came originally from the East (371).[5] She is aware of only one artistic representation of the legend, which she misidentifies as by Giorgione (Partington 1-2). The Italian version Jameson reads is entitled "*Canzonetta nuova, sopra la Madonna, quando si partò in Egitto col Bambino Gesù e San Giuseppe*," or "A new Ballad of our Lady, when she fled into Egypt with the Child Jesus and St. Joseph" (371-2), and her quotation of it is clearly from the same legend used by Prout, Alexander, and Ruskin.

Father Prout describes his Christmas of 1769 stay in Italy and the ballad sung by Marcella Centurioni, the daughter of his host. She knew the ballad, "*La Zingarella*," so well that Prout believed it "to be of her own composition" (*Notte Romane* 451). He claims to remember

[5] Jameson claims that the legend also exists in a Provençal version, translated by Kenyon, but that legend of the Gypsy Magi does not take place on the Flight into Egypt. As Millin's note above suggests, the Provençal ballad is located at the Nativity. Ruth Partington has noticed the difference between the two legends (8-9). H. A. Guerber expresses the same confusion in her 1896 *Legends of the Virgin and Christ* (104). Guerber also, drawing on the same Italian ballad used by Jameson, mistakenly claims that, rather than the Holy Family's visiting the Gypsy's home, the Gypsy woman visited them as they sojourned at Matarea, facts that may appear in other legends but are not the in one she cites (104).

only a portion of the piece, and as is common with Prout's "translations," his version, "The Flight into Egypt. A Ballad," is a translation in name only, for the Italian ballad serves as only a kernel for Prout's version and the argument he makes. That Italian fragment, though, is clearly the remnants of "*La Madonna e la Zingarella*" that Francesca Alexander, an American expatriate in Italy, gives in full in *Roadside Songs of Tuscany*. Ruskin bought this work from Alexander and eagerly edited and published it in England, providing lengthy commentary on Alexander's songs and illustrations.[6] For all three of these—Prout, Alexander, and Ruskin—placing the Gypsies in this sympathetic pose near the Holy Family disarms and reinscribes the exotic threat of the Gypsies by denying them a valid heritage and transforming them into proto-Christians.

Since Prout claims to recall only a fragment of the original, he has excuse to write less strictly according to the Italian ballad.[7] His verse is more whimsical, and the substance of the original is absent here, as his Gypsy woman makes no predictions of Christ's future but simply recognizes divinity in him. Much more than the Italian version or Alexander's truer translation, Prout's emphasizes the mystical alterity of the woman: he begins by describing, "Her robe was embroidered with stars, and her belt / With devices, right wondrous to see" (451). This simple description becomes more mystical and even somewhat infernal in its suggestion of necromancy:

> This Egyptian held converse with magic, methinks,
> And the future was given to her gaze;
> For an obelisk marked her abode, and a sphynx
> On her threshold kept vigil always.
> She was pensive and ever alone, nor was seen

---

[6] In a delightfully amusing comment, Constance Grosvenor Alexander, Francesca's cousin, recalls, "The book was published in 1885, with so many comments and italics and underscorings by Ruskin that it might almost have been called 'Roadside Songs of Ruskin-y'!" (105).

[7] I say "claims" because, more than most writers, Mahony, when writing as Prout, was a most unreliable source who actually needed no excuse to translate loosely. This is the man who, in his hatred for fellow Irishman Thomas Moore, wrote an entire article for *Fraser's* called "The Rogueries of Thomas Moore," in which he translated several of Moore's poems into Greek, Latin, and Old French, with the sole purpose of then accusing Moore of plagiarizing these ancient texts. He concedes, though, that Moore's ability to translate and plagiarize so well "'is the next best thing to having a genius of one's own'" (Mannin 160-1, 162).

In the haunts of the dissolute crowd;
But communed with the ghosts of the Pharaohs, I ween,
And with visitors wrapt in a shroud.
(452)

Emphasizing the old Gypsy woman's magical and Eastern nature situates her all the more firmly outside of the Judeo-Christian subjectivity critical to the remainder of Prout's poem.

The poem continues with the arrival of the Holy Family, switching roles with the traditional Gypsy, for here, the old woman is stationary, as the Family wanders. She offers them generous hospitality—a shed for the mule, a couch for the Virgin, and her own arms for the Babe. This version, much shorter than the original or Alexander's, ends as the Gypsy recognizes the identity of the Child. "Lull[ing] / On her bosom the wayfaring child," the old woman reads his palm:

When the gipsy anon in her Ethiop hand
Placed the infant's diminutive palm,
Oh 'twas fearful to see how the features she scanned
Of the babe in his slumber so calm!
Well she noted each mark and each furrow that crossed
O'er the tracings of destiny's line:
"WHENCE CAME YE!" she cried, in astonishment lost,
"FOR THIS CHILD IS OF LINEAGE DIVINE!"
(452)

Joseph explains that they "dwelt in the land of the Jew" until they were forced to flee "a tyrant, whose garment is dyed / In the gore of the children he slew," to flee into "the foreigner's land" (452). The Gypsy woman receives this news gleefully:

"Then ye tarry with me!" cried the gipsy with joy,
"And ye make of my dwelling your home:
Many years have I prayed that the Israelite boy
(Blessed hope of the Gentiles!) would come."
And she kissed both the feet of the infant and knelt,
And adored him at once;—then a smile
Lit the face of his mother, who cheerfully dwelt
With her host on the banks of the Nile.
(452)

Traditionally, the Magi mark the beginning of Christ's ministry to the Gentiles, but in the biblical account, they do not visit the Child until he is about two years old and back in Nazareth. Unlike with Stanley, who equates Gypsies with Jews, this old Gypsy woman then may serve the same purpose. By the end of the poem, her mystical Gypsy otherness has been subsumed by her adoration of Christ, and rather than specifically a Gypsy, she has come to represent all Gentiles as the first non-Jewish follower of Jesus. In this conversion legend, within just a few verses, her Gypsy identity has been erased and replaced with a more generalized alterity as a Gentile, and more importantly, even that identity is effaced in favor of her new role as an early Christian.

As with Kenyon's account, the original European ballad, translated more faithfully by Alexander, is relatively straightforward fare. While Kenyon embellishes his balladic exemplum with an argumentative prologue and epilogue, Alexander quite literally embellishes her tale with a series of three illustrations (Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3). So skillfully does she illustrate the ballad that one nearly need not read the poem to know precisely the tale. In a private lecture, attended by such notables as Matthew Arnold and Edward Burne-Jones, speaking only of her illustrations to "The Madonna and the Gypsy," Ruskin described them as

> fine gold which has been strangely trusted to me and which before was a treasure hid in a mountain-field of Tuscany. Since Leonardo da Vinci's flower studies, we can recall no drawings of the herb of the field equal to Francesca's for strength and delicacy, for truth, and the reverence that comes of truth: though she has, perhaps, somewhat to learn in expressing human form. . . . We know no modern drawing comparable to this. (Grosvenor Alexander 104)

While the flora adorning each illustration is fine, indeed, what is more relevant here is the figurative composition of the illustrations themselves. Though the ballad itself elides much of the exoticism Prout's emphasizes, the illustrations reassert the Gypsy's otherness. Her dress, turban, complexion, and broader features contrast strikingly with the Madonna's fair skin, lighter

Figure 3.1
Francesca Alexander, *The Madonna Entering the Gipsy's Hut* (*Roadside Songs of Tuscany*)

THE MADONNA
Entering the Gipsy's Hut.

By permission of Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia

Figure 3.2
Francesca Alexander, *The Madonna Teaching* (*Roadside Songs of Tuscany*)

By permission of Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia

Figure 3.3
Francesca Alexander, *The Gipsy Prophesying* (*Roadside Songs of Tuscany*)

By permission of Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia

hair, fine features, and traditionally modest dress (though, as Ruskin observes about her rendering of human form, it is difficult not to notice the hollowness of the Virgin's face and the dark circles under her eyes). With little alteration, this Gypsy figure could have come straight from an advertisement for Bizet's *Carmen*.

The postures of the illustrations are telling, too, with their simple captions. In the first, "The Madonna Entering the Gipsy's Hut," with the holy doves perched on the eaves above the Holy Family, the Gypsy quietly bids them welcome to her humble cottage.[8] The figures themselves are not striking here other than in furthering the plot and contrasting the identities of the Holy Family with that of the Gypsy. In the second illustration, however, "The Madonna Teaching," the image begins to be more provocative. Unlike the former drawing, this one has little adornment. The two women sit beneath a low beam roof—indeed, low enough that if they were to stand, they would have to stoop—with the light-haired Child on Mary's lap. The dress and complexion of the Gypsy still contrast with those of the Virgin, but what is most striking here is their poses. The Madonna sits, her body turned toward the viewer, as the Christ looks off into a corner. Only Mary's head is turned toward the Gypsy on the seat beside her. The Gypsy, on the other hand, is turned dramatically toward the Virgin in the pose of a supplicant, her clasped hands tightly close to her chest. The subordination of the Gypsy in this illustration is unmistakable. In the final illustration, "The Gipsy Prophesying," St. Joseph sits thoughtfully to the left, only partly visible in the frame. Again, the Child sits on the Madonna's lap, but this

[8] Probably quite by coincidence, the table leg just visible through the open door has a spiral leg, the only curved form visible in the room. The image of a spiral table leg is not necessarily a reference to the Solomon's columns in the Temple at Jerusalem or Bernini's columns at St. Peter's in Rome, apocryphally brought there by Constantine (or even the High Street porch for the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Oxford), though, placed in an illustration with the Madonna and Child, it is a tantalizing comparison. The spiral columns at these three sites mark them out as the "true" Church, the way in to God. In the case of St. Mary's, passing through these gates suggests entry into Mary in imitation of Christ, while taking the Eucharist suggests just the opposite—becoming a host to Christ's body just as Mary's womb was. In this way, according to Yrjö Hirn, the communicant and the Virgin are both sacred shrines, which is precisely the similarity Thomas à Kempis prays for in the *Imitatio* (106-68). Does the Gypsy's hut, then, become another sort of sacred shrine?

time, Christ's back is turned toward the viewer as he faces the Gypsy fully. His back is turned, for what is important here is the pose of the Gypsy, kneeling before the Mother and Child, one hand clasped over her heart, the other gently holding Christ's, as she prophesies all that lies before them. Again, the worshipful subordination of the Gypsy is the predominant idea visible in the illustration.

The prophecies the Gypsy makes are the main portion of the ballad. Unlike in Prout's account, here, the Gypsy recognizes divinity first in the Madonna, not in the Child: "Oh alight, dear Lady mine! / Something in thee seems divine!" (171). Upon hearing the Family are weary, she immediately offers rest:

> Though a gipsy poor am I,
> Yet to help you I would try:
> This my house I offer free,
> Though 'tis not a place for thee.
> (171)

Unlike Prout's Gypsy, this woman needs no information from Mary or Joseph; she reads much of their past in their faces. When she takes their palms, though, she sees even more of what lies behind, as well as what lies ahead. In addition simply to identifying the Babe, Alexander's Gypsy sees everything from the Annunciation to the Pietà. Curiously, however, unlike Kenyon's Gypsy Wise Men, Alexander's Gypsy says nothing of the Resurrection but ends only with the suffering Mother holding her dead son. Perhaps this difference corresponds to Alexander's artistic sensibility, for according to Jameson, traditional painted sequences of the life of the Virgin Mary end with the Crucifixion, "comprising all those scriptural incidents which connect her history with that of her divine son" (279).

Downplaying the exotic otherness of the Gypsy, the ballad explains much of her Gypsiness away. As for her seer powers, the Gypsy explains simply that "ever since the days of

old / All my race have fortunes told" and that "the good GOD destined me / Fortune-teller thus to be" (175, 191). Rather than any exoticness, this Gypsy conveys thoroughly non-threatening domesticity; the Madonna even refers to her repeatedly as "Sister." This Gypsy's identity is traded, even more thoroughly than Prout's, for an overtly Christian identity. She ends her dialogue with Mary with a thoroughly proto-Christian, even Catholic, prayer:

> 'Tis enough, thou weary art,
> Lady, but before we part,
> Unto this poor gipsy, pray
> Give an alms, if ask I may.
>
> Silver ask I not, nor gold;
> Though all wealth thy hand doth hold
> Star of light! For on thy breast
> Christ, th' omnipotent, doth rest.
>
> Grant me, by thy prayers, to win
> True repentance for my sin:
> That my soul may, soon or late,
> Enter through the heavenly gate.
> (199)

Alexander's old Gypsy woman is so utterly Christian that all traces of her Gypsiness have been erased except for the palmistry and humble poverty necessary to the plot.

This elision of Gypsy identity would seem like simple dogmatism were it not given dimension by Alexander's own tenets. To the end of *Roadside Songs*, Ruskin appends some of Alexander's letters to him, and one explains her theory of "the hidden servants":

> But is it possible, that it is only lately you have begun to know about the "hidden servants"? I keep thinking, how sad your life must have been, if you have not known them; for the *outside* of things in the world always seem to be so ugly! And now I understand in what way it is that you think the lives of those poor obscure people which I have written down for you may be useful to others: the Lord grant it may be so! But if it really is such a blessing to know about the hidden servants, I am sure you can find them all about you. Whenever one sees a very sweet, happy, peaceful face (as often happens) in a poor wretched house, or a hospital, or anywhere in the midst of trouble, or if one sees such a face belonging to a very aged or infirm person, all I can say is, that I have never known the sign

> fail—and I have tried it often—that man, or that woman, has been drinking of the "living water," and has no more thirst. (328-9)

As J. A. George notes, these words give "an important insight into why Francesca felt so much affection for the Italians, especially the poor amongst them: their very disenfranchisement marked them out as the ideal 'hidden servants'" (231). So important was this idea to Alexander that, in 1900, she published *The Hidden Servants and Other Very Old Stories*. In it, the title poem concludes,

> For he, who had thought on earth to view
> God's people only a scattered few,
> Saw now, in spirit, an army great
> Of hidden servants who on him wait.
> No saintly legends their names disclose,
> And no man living their number knows,
> Nor can their service and place declare.
> The hidden servants are everywhere!
> And some are hated, despised, alone;
> And some to even themselves unknown.
> But the Father's house has room for all,
> And never one from His hand can fall!
> (30)

This description, along with her letter to Ruskin, defines Alexander's idealization of the downtrodden and her feelings, as George points out, about "the spiritual and social significance of her own work" (230).

The old woman of "The Madonna and the Gypsy," then, like Prout's, has been shorn of her Gypsy identity in order to be reinscribed as a proto-Christian who, by her humility, hospitality, and poverty, is the very image of Alexander's "hidden servants." "It is easy, therefore," George points out, "to see why she would have wished to translate and preserve this particular folk legend—it was effective propaganda for her evangelical religious cause" (237). This Christianized figure, however, is complicated by Alexander's illustrations in which the old seer's Gypsiness is reasserted. In the ballad, as she inherits it, the danger of the Gypsy's

otherness is erased, but Alexander literally redraws it, emphasizing not only the woman's ethnic exoticism but also her subordination and submission to the fair-skinned Christian image. Because of the coordination of the verses with the illustrations, the old Gypsy woman achieves completely neither subjectivity nor objectivity; her alterity is stripped from her along with her Gypsy identity, but her reinscription as a benign proto-Christian retains its dark tinges— Bhaba's idea of "*the same but not quite*." In this way, Alexander's mimicry slips, "constructed around an ambivalence." In this way, Alexander has harnessed the Gypsy as an effective propagandistic tool: she is utterly proto-Christian but also utterly Other, thereby representing the idealized downtrodden "hidden servant." She has, therefore, objectified and idealized the woman not only as a racial, religious, or ethnic Other but also as a member of a special class of sufferers who serve God. Her effaced Gypsy otherness in the poem resurfaces in the illustrations, creating another form of alterity, the "hidden servant" marked out by adversity as well as her exoticism.

Following Prout and Alexander, Ruskin, the English appropriator of Alexander's work, provides yet another lens through which to view the Gypsy in this Italian ballad. As noted above, Ruskin's early attitudes toward both the Italians and the Gypsies were far from charitable. As for the Italians, in 1845, Ruskin wrote from Florence to his father, complaining, "The square is full of listless, chattering smoking vagabonds who are always moving every way at once, just fast enough to make it disagreeable and inevitable to run against them." He continues heatedly, "Take them all in all, I detest the Italians beyond measure. I have sworn vengeance against the French, but there is something in them that is at least energetic, however bad its principle may be, but these Italians—pah! they are Yorick's skull with the worms in it, nothing of humanity left but the smell" (*Works* 36: 48). As Giuliana Treves notes, "This hatred for the Italians—'a mortal corruption of the whole mind'—brought Ruskin to consider the problem of their

decadence. [. . .] So he set out to uncover Italy's moral diseases just like a doctor with a corpse in an anatomy class: not in order to find a cure, but simply to discover the cause of death" (67-8). Examining this record of Ruskin's feelings toward the Italians, George concludes, "Ruskin would continue to express his disapproval throughout the course of his writings. Unlike Francesca, who felt at one with the Italians, Ruskin clearly saw them as the Other. Their rejection of Protestantism troubled him" (231).

By the time he purchased *Roadside Songs*, though, Ruskin's attitude toward both the Italians and the Gypsies appears to have changed dramatically. As Constance Grosvenor Alexander, Francesca's cousin, points out, in an October 10, 1882, diary entry, Ruskin declared, "Well pleased with myself for having bought Miss Alexander's book, showing all I want to say about Italian peasantry" (93). Francesca Alexander's portraits of the Tuscan *contadini* are idealized and romanticized, indeed, so the fact that she shows "all I want to say about Italian peasantry" comports oddly with his earlier judgments on the Italians. By October 1882, on the other hand, Ruskin praises Alexander's "sympathetic conception of the reality of the sweet souls of Catholic Italy" (Grosvenor Alexander 100).

Similarly, perhaps under the influence of the late-century, romanticizing Gypsiologists, the tenor of Ruskin's discussions about the Gypsies has completely changed. As discussed in a previous chapter, Ruskin's 1837 Newdigate Prize entry on the Gypsies was scathing, the century's most damning verse treatment of the wanderers. By 1885, however, he expresses a stunningly opposite opinion. In "Notes upon Gipsy Character," his essay following Alexander's ballad in *Roadside Songs*, the distance Ruskin appears to have traveled since 1837 is startling. He begins his essay by comparing the indignation with which the English confront tales of a

> disreputable, red-cloaked vagabond who has cheated the kitchen-maid out of, say three half-crowns, or in gross cases, half a sovereign under the monstrous pretense

> of telling her fortune; while no indignation of scathing or scornful quality is ever expressed by any magisterial person against the well-dressed and entirely reputable vagabond, who, at the same instant, in the parlour, may be cheating her master out of all he has in the world, under the quite rational and amiable pretense of making his! (200)

Continuing his explanation of who truly poses the greatest danger to English society, he further notes "the constantly indignant use of the word 'Impostor' by the classes who will be then seen to have been themselves impostors on the largest and hollowest scale hitherto admired under the sky; and the similarly indignant use of the word 'Despot' by the nation which, of all others, has the most dexterous habit of domineering" (201). In light of his 1837 poem, the extremity of his conclusion is shocking:

> And it seems to me that, as compared with either of these two states of mind, or divisions of men, the Gipsy temper is by far honester than the one, and wiser than the other. To my thinking, he is, in the first place, quite the least of impostors now abroad. He proclaims to you, by his, or her, to both convenient, not immodest, not insolent, dress, that he belongs to an outcast tribe, yet patient of your rejection—unvindictive—ready always to give you good words and pleasant hopes for half a crown, and sound tinkering of pot or kettle for less money. He wears no big wigs—not white ties; his kingship is crownless, his shepherding unmitred; he pins on his rough cloak no false astrology of honour. Of your parliamentary machineries, are any a Gipsy's job?—of your cunningly devised shoddies, any a Gipsy's manufacture? Not against the Gipsy's blow you ironclad yourself;—not by the Gipsy's usury do your children starve. Honestest, harmlessest of the human race—*under whose roof but a Gipsy's may a wandering Madonna rest in peace?* (201-2; emphasis added)

Of course, Ruskin compares the respectable English thief to the "honestest, harmlessest of the human race" for a shocking juxtaposition. Nonetheless, the fact remains that, in Ruskin's estimation, the Gypsies have gone from godless subhuman to the very image of holy humility and the only reasonable source of hospitality for the Holy Family.

In even more direct contrast to his 1837 condemnation of the Gypsies' lawless worship of freedom (and, therefore, enslavement by it) and his lifelong suspicion of the possibility of liberty, Ruskin, in 1885, admires them for it: compared to "the herd of unthinking men," the

Gypsy stands out "in his acute, perseverant, uncontentious extrication of himself from the fetter, or the snare, of every physical and moral despotism, justly so called: and in his love and true attainment of liberty of soul and body in all the meanings and privileges of liberty that are rational and guiltless" (202). Furthermore, he expresses his "own surprise in reflecting how seldom the name of a Gipsy occurs in the public annals of serious crime" (203). Ruskin now praises and idealizes Gypsies for the very characteristics he earlier denounced.

Ruskin's shifting attitudes were a result partly, no doubt, of his own growing anti-capitalism. Perhaps, however, the Italian *contadini* and Gypsies have become palatable to him because, in Alexander's tales, he is not dealing with Italians and Gypsies since Alexander's sketches present neither real *contadini* nor real Gypsies but idealized Others whose alterity has been recast as something much safer, something merely superficial, for the sake of her evangelical agenda. Ultimately, Ruskin reads the Gypsy in the Italian ballad in such a way that he, too, denies Gypsies any real identity of their own, creating instead some form of Christian who is as unlike real Gypsies to one extreme as his 1837 Gypsies were to another. He concludes,

> I do not know under what impression of Gipsy birth or character this legend of the Madonna's entertainment by a Zingarella took possession of the Tuscan mind. [. . .] But the ballad is evidently not an ancient one, and I am inclined to think it merely expresses, to the farthest point, the sense of the general fact, evident through all the New Testament narrative, that the close and kindly intercourse of Christ with mortal friends, and their faithfully believing ministry to Him, took place oftener among strangers than with His own people, among the poor rather than the rich, and among those who were reprobate and despised, rather than among men had in honour or esteem. (203)

According to Ruskin, then, repeating Alexander's substitution of otherness, the Gypsies matter to this tale not because they are Gypsies but because they are "strangers," "poor," "reprobate and despised," and in the nineteenth-century British imagination, who better represents these characteristics of alterity more than the Gypsy? For Ruskin, the African, Asian, or Caribbean

native would not do, for they are too rare in Europe, therefore *too* otherly.[9] The Jew would not do because he is Christ's "own people." Absent the Jew, only the Gypsy is both same and Other, both completely natural to the British eye and completely exotic, so readily made "*the same but not quite*." To be fair, Ruskin's portrait of the Gypsies as entertainers and tinkers for pay is more historically accurate than Alexander's account. Nonetheless, as for Alexander, the Gypsy woman is more a convenient device than a Gypsy here, and by stripping her of all despised characteristics and stereotypes of Gypsies (aloofness, dishonesty, irreligiousness, rootlessness), leaving only reprobate poverty and the necessary plot device of palmistry, he creates, instead, another version of Alexander's "hidden servants" and also creates the ultimate representation of Christ's interaction with the "reprobate and despised, rather than [with] men had in honour or esteem."

iii. Running the Madonna to Death: Amy Levy's Gypsy Cipher

In 1816, Hoyland noted instances of "Gypsies being hunted like beasts of prey" (230). It is unclear whether he means literal hunting and killing or the more common sort of hunting that involved finding Gypsies, then transporting, banishing, or imprisoning them. In 1879, however, Amy Levy published a horrifying tale of the former sort. Just before going up as one of the first Jewish women to Cambridge, Levy published "Run to Death: A True Incident of Pre-Revolutionary French History" in *Victoria Magazine*. When she included it in 1881 in *Xantippe and Other Verse*, she dated the poem 1875, which means she wrote it when she was just fifteen years old. The poem tells the story of a group of French noblemen who, bored with their hunt, turn to go home but spy a Gypsy woman with her child. They set the dogs upon the woman, who, of course, runs, only to be caught and torn to pieces by the dogs as the noblemen look on.

[9] Legends did exist, however, that identified the Magi from Europe, Asia, and Africa, representing the races of man.

Repeatedly, the poem emphasizes the Gypsy woman's motherhood in references to "a woman and child," "child and mother," "the tender mother-bosom of that earth from which they came"; furthermore, she "sent a cry of grief to Heaven, closer clasped her child, and fled!" and "she holds her child above her, all forgetful of her pain" (368, 369). With such repetition, the poem calls to mind the image of the Madonna and Child, transmogrified from the traditional image of peace and love into this image of murder and horror. Rather than a Madonna and Child, sitting placidly and beatifically, the poem presents them as creeping along and later as crying in grief. In this way, unlike Kenyon, Stanley, Alexander, and Prout, Levy transforms not only the Gypsy but also the Madonna herself.

Levy's portrayal of the Gypsy woman is more humanely sympathetic and freer of stereotype than any of the century: there is no palmistry, mysticism, theft, turban, deceptiveness, or any other baggage fixed to the name Gypsy here. Even her description of the woman's physical features appears to be simply an objective observation. In her own way, then, eliding the woman's Gypsiness, she clearly renders this Gypsy as simply a person, a woman, a mother, and a victim, making her a readier parallel for other persecuted or oppressed people. The noblemen, turning to go home from their hunt, at first look down "at a 'something' which is crawling, with slow step, from tree to tree" (368). The narrator points out that this "something" is not "some shadow phantom ghastly" but

> [. . .] No, a woman and a child,
> Swarthy woman, with the "gipsy" written clear upon her face;
> Gazing round her with her wide eyes dark, and shadow-fringed, and wild,
> With the cowed suspicious glances of a persecuted race.
> (368)

The emphasis in the poem is not on her "swarthy" complexion but on her learned fear, the acquired "cowed suspicious glances of a persecuted race"—behaviors soon to be reinforced by the French noblemen.

The remainder of the poem emphasizes the pathos of these learned behaviors. First the speaker asserts the humanity and femininity of the Gypsy woman. She chastises the noblemen for their ungentlemanly treatment of the Gypsy, reminding them that she is still a woman even if lowly:

> O ye nobles of the palace! O ye gallant-hearted lords!
> Who would stoop for Leila's kerchief, or for Clementina's gloves,
> Who would rise up all indignant, with your shining sheathless swords,
> At the breathing dishonour to your languid lady loves!
> O, I tell you, daring nobles, with your beauty-loving stare,
> Who ne'er long the coy coquetting of the courtly dames withstood,
> Tho' a woman be the lowest, and the basest, and least fair,
> In your manliness forget not to respect her womanhood.
> (369)

While they would stoop to pick up a noblewoman's gloves or kerchief, the Gypsy woman is lower than the limits of their stooping.

When the dogs finally catch her, the Gypsy woman's chief response is not fear or shame but silent fury, and the noblemen's response is not so triumphant as the rest of the poem would lead one to expect. When the dogs reach her, the noblemen wonder, "Ha! at last! the dogs are on her! will she struggle ere she dies?" (369), but what they see is startling:

> See! she holds her child above her, all forgetful of her pain,
> While a hundred thousand curses shoot out darkly from her eyes,
> And a hundred thousand glances of the bitterest disdain.
> Ha! the dogs are pressing closer! they have flung her to the ground;
> Yet her proud lips never open with the dying sinner's cry—
> Till at last, unto the Heavens, just two fearful shrieks resound,
> When the soul is all forgotten in the body's agony!
> (369)

Unlike many other poems of the century, this Gypsy has no need of deathbed conversion or "dying sinner's cry." Her soul is not tortured; her only cry is from her "body's agony," as she holds her baby above her in a pose of both sacrificial sorrow and defiance. The proud humanity of the Gypsy appears to affect the noblemen, for "as they slow rode back those huntsmen neither laughed, nor sang, nor spoke, / Hap, there lurked unowned within them throbbings of a secret shame" (369). All traces of that possible shame, however, disappear as they return to their ladies and cry, "'Fairest ladies, give us welcome! 'Twas a famous hunt to-day'" (369).

These noblemen and their treatment of the Gypsy are not unique, however, for the speaker knows that the Gypsy has "often the pursuer fled before" and "felt ere this the shadow of dark death upon [her] brow" (369). Formal elements of the poem underscore the ongoing, habitual, and systemic persecution the marginalized experience at the hands of the hegemonic order. For example, the anaphora beginning the last stanza, in which the dogs kill the woman, repeats four times, simply yet poignantly, "Still she flees" (369). More subtly, Levy's metrical arrangement makes the same argument. The poem's versification is trochaic octameter catalectic, rarely used in English poetry but appearing most famously in Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven" and Alfred Tennyson's "Locksley Hall." This metrical form is arguably among the longest and (barring some unfortunate future invention of pyrrhic octameter) dullest in English verse. Poe, however, retains the weight but not the dullness of the verse by his use of refrains, caesurae, and internal rhyme, but for the most part, Levy's poem lacks these devices. Tennyson, on the other hand, relieves the scheme by his sharply rhyming couplets, but the rhyme of Levy's poem is easy to lose in the length of her lines, usually rhyming *abab* but not always. When the rhyme scheme is broken, it appears to be for no particular reason. Levy's lines, then, are left to drone on dully at length, belying the fast-paced hunt scene and horrors of which the poem tells.

From the perspective of the noblemen, such a meter is fitting. This tale is one wearily to drawl out after dinner, savoring each adjective. It is not an exciting, new event but, rather, just another hunt, albeit something of a "famous" one. Such persecution as this, whether literal or not, is not news; it is merely an anecdote. Of course, one must assume that the meter of the Gypsy's (or a Jewish woman's) account would be far different.

The poem's speaker also uses noble, poetic diction, largely, though not exclusively, from the point of view of the noble huntsmen who share the language register with her: "In the crowded castle courtyard the blithe horn proclaims the chase; / And the ladies on the terrace smile adieux with rosy lips" (367). When the literate hunters spy the "'something'" below them on the hill, they do not know "it" is a Gypsy until they read "the 'gipsy' written clear upon her face" (368). The level of the diction falls just slightly, as the meter is broken a bit more by caesurae, when the dogs fall upon the woman. During the death scene, the poem's pulse rises just barely detectibly, for the excitement of the moment of the kill reaches even the noblemen. The sedation following the murder, however, offers just the faint hope that the noblemen feel some shame, but the rhythms of the lines and the higher diction have returned by the time they reach the castle once again, assuring that the habitual persecution will continue.

Linda Hunt Beckman, in her recent and long-needed biography of Levy, points out accurately the difficulty of reading this poem without recourse to Levy's gender and Jewishness. She argues that "this powerful story situates Levy within the female tradition, for many nineteenth-century English women poets wrote poems that protested against the persecution of the weak by the strong." While the victims in these poems are almost always women, "their vulnerability was magnified by other aspects of their identity, and Levy's drawings of figures whose features set them off from the dominant culture indicate her awareness that as a Jewish

woman she was doubly marginalized" (*Amy Levy* 37). Undoubtedly, Levy's use of the Gypsy trope with the image of the Madonna becomes clear at precisely this intersection of womanhood and Jewishness. The Gypsy Madonna provides Levy with a parallel means by which to consider the plights of racial and religious Others as well as the plight of women. The figure becomes a substitution cipher so that, in many ways, where "Gypsy" appears, one may think, "Jewish woman." Without any of the markers of Gypsy in the poem, though the noblemen can read her identity in her face, the woman is left only with the ambiguous swarthiness. In this way, the Gypsy in the French countryside serves readily as the Jewish woman in London, both "with the cowed suspicious glances of a persecuted race."

Homi Bhabha's argument about the power dynamic involving "*a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" is important here and applicable to both Jews and Gypsies in English society. Echoing Bhabha's words, Brian Cheyette suggests that "it is the proximity of Jews within the European imperial orbit that made them *both* a powerful 'self' and a powerless 'other'" (12). Similarly, "as both progenitor and rejector of Christianity, the Jew is both inside and outside of the English national faith at the same time," and as Michael Galchinsky paraphrases Bhabha, "minorities who are both Other and the Same are, from the point of view of the hegemonic culture, simultaneously the most fascinating and the most dangerous. [. . .] A group that has one foot in and one foot out of the hegemonic order threatens to deconstruct the stable boundaries between inside and outside" (274). The threat posed by the Gypsies, however, is different from that posed by the Jews. The Jews live "among us," working right in London, sharing jobs and space with respectable, white Englishmen. On the other hand, there are no "Gypsies in the palace," for the Gypsies exist "out there" on the borders of society, in the

English countryside.[10] Both exist within English society and are, consequently, dangerous, but the Jews are closer to center, while the Gypsies are further to the margins, making one less exotic and, therefore, dangerous, while the other is more exotic and, therefore, dangerous.

Again, though, one comes to the persistent question: why Gypsies?[11] As so many other poets did for other subjects, though in far more sympathetic and less exploitative manner, Levy found in the Gypsies an apt tool parallel to her own Jewishness for exploring racial, religious, and sexual otherness. They are a tool, however, safely less personal for Levy. Interestingly, the poem predates what appears to be Levy's own Jewish awakening to matters important to Anglo-Jewry, "a major turning point in [her] relationship to her cultural and religious background" (Beckman, "Leaving" 194). In 1886, she wrote a series of essays for the weekly newspaper *The Jewish Chronicle* in which she addressed a variety of topics relevant specifically to Anglo-Jewry, criticizing the work of such writers as Matthew Arnold and George Eliot. Following, in 1888, she published her best-known and most controversial novel, *Reuben Sachs*, which has been read as both championing and deriding middle-class London Jews.

Despite the fact that in her Confessions Book, Levy answered the question "What characters in history do you most dislike?" with "the intolerant ones," Levy's early attitudes toward her fellow Jews were not entirely tolerant before this Jewish awakening (Beckman, *Amy Levy* 16). Levy's early cartoons, sketches, and writings demonstrate that she was acutely aware

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[10] The phrase "Gypsies in the palace" is too apt here to omit; I must, however, acknowledge it as the title of a popular 1985 song by Jimmy Buffett that employs many negative stereotypes of the Gypsies. The phrase, though, has come to have a life of its own in popular American culture, nearly independent of Buffett's song.

[11] In what is certainly no answer to this question but an interesting anecdote, Beckman tells of a Gypsy-like portion of Levy's family history. While the description fits all sorts of general tradesmen, it is also much like some descriptions of Gypsy caravans. According to the handwritten memoirs of Lucy Levy Marks, Levy's first cousin, "her own father, Nathaniel Levy, and his brothers (one of whom was Lewis [Amy Levy's father]), went to Australia 'at the height of the gold-digging fever,' establishing a small store in Melbourne as well as 'driving a wagon stocked with shirts, pants, socks,' and other necessities, which they sold to the miners in more remote parts of that country. Marks says that 'the miners, who had no "cash," paid with gold nuggets, thus laying the foundations of fortune' for Nathaniel, Goodman, and Lewis Levy" (12).

of her own identity as a London Jewish woman, and at times, that awareness manifests itself as "Jewish self-hatred." While many of these works are light and good-natured, Beckman asserts, "There can be no question [. . .] that Jewish looks, culture, and religion are perceived here as comic and vulgar" ("Leaving" 190). In one cartoon about her sister, "foreignness seems to be conflated with her demotion within the social hierarchy. Anxiety about whether they would be accepted as English and welcome in 'good' society caused highly-anglicized, affluent Jews like the Levys to be condescending toward Jews who were less assimilated and to be highly class-conscious" (190). Another sketch earlier than her *Jewish Chronicles* essays shows several women with grossly exaggerated features typically considered Semitic. They are ostentatious and "outstandingly ugly," so much so that Beckman wonders if Levy was familiar with Robert Knox's *The Races of Men* (1850) or works by other racial ethnologists, for "her sketch seems to explore the idea that Jews are people so racially distinct from non-Jews that they can almost be considered another species" (191, 192). This feeling seems to be true of an 1881 letter from Germany that Levy sent to her sister. In it, she complains, "The German Hebrew makes me feel, as a rule, that the anti-Semitic movement is a most just & virtuous one" (qtd. in Beckman 193).

Writing of Jews in 1875, then, may well have been too personal and may have too painfully reminded Levy of her own position in London society. Not until eleven years later did she begin to confront her own anxieties about herself as Jewish woman. The story of the hunted Gypsy woman, however, certainly would have resonated with one so accustomed to thinking in terms of insider and outsider. Like Levy herself, the Gypsy Madonna is doubly marginal to French society, for she is both Gypsy and woman, and in this figure, Levy finds someone even further outside than a London Jewish woman. As Sander Gilman argues in his book *Jewish Self-Hatred*, the outsider often feels a need to transfer "those qualities perceived as negative onto a

subgroup within the general category of the Other" (5), a tendency evident in Levy's description of the Jews in the German synagogue. Levy, then, is able to project her anxieties about the Jewish role in society onto a fitting parallel in the Gypsies, another "persecuted race." Levy was "highly aware of her marginalization," as Beckman argues, and "the contradictions in her identity prompted her to develop innovative literary strategies for the representation of people who, like her, were outside society's sense of self" (*Amy Levy* 7).

Why, though, does she locate the Gypsy woman in the posture of the Madonna? This metamorphosing of the Gypsy into the Madonna rather than placing her simply near the Madonna is what makes Levy's use of the figure so unlike that of earlier poets, for in the process, while reimagining the Gypsy, Levy reinscribes the Madonna herself. Levy was keenly aware not only of her own alterity in London society but also of the Christian dominance in the English landscape. For this reason, Cynthia Scheinberg posits, "Regardless of how we value Levy's artistic genius, much of her work asks readers to recognize how Christianity structured the very definitions of literary identity in Victorian England" ("Canonizing" 173). Levy, according to Scheinberg, "had keen insights on how non-Christian authors rupture the implicit alliance British poetic conventions maintained with Christian theology" (173). Both Beckman and Scheinberg have demonstrated that Levy was not particularly devout or overly interested in religious practice (*Amy Levy*, chaps. 2 and 6; *Women's Poetry* 193). She was, however, "fully aware of the force religious discourses—and especially the hegemonic weight of Christian discourse—had in English poetry; part of her literary project was to expose the inherently Christian assumptions that structured so much poetic discourse in her day" (Scheinberg, *Women's Poetry* 194). This "implicit alliance," or what Scheinberg elsewhere calls "'compulsory Christianity,'" though, is not limited to the literary marketplace (*Women's Poetry*

193). Todd Endelman notes the same alliance in social and legal institutions and that the Victorian era saw the "gradual dismantling of legal barriers that had prevented Jews from entering institutions of power and prestige within English society" by demanding "christological oaths that blocked the entry of Jews" (*Radical Assimilation* 74). Gradually, throughout the period, unconverted Jews saw these Christian barriers removed from their becoming freemen of London, livery members, lawyers, voters, municipal officeholders, Members of Parliament, and, in 1871, degree candidates at Oxford and Cambridge (74).

These advances were not without difficulty, for the Jew, like the Gypsy, presents multiple anxieties for a hegemonic order. Endelman acknowledges that, while the simple fact of being a Jew was no longer an insurmountable barrier to advancement in Victorian society, "the toleration that made possible the successful integration of English Jews was hostile to the notion of cultural diversity. Circles and institutions quite willing to tolerate Jews as intimate associates were not willing to endorse the perpetuation of a separate Jewish culture or to see any value in the customs or beliefs of the Jewish religion" (209). In a comment that applies equally well to the Gypsies, Scheinberg observes, "Because Jewish people are often identified and identify themselves through a unique intersection of racial, cultural, and religious characteristics, Victorian attention to Jewish identity was often a site of multiple and intersecting discourses of difference, including discourses of religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, and nationality" ("Canonizing" 175). Scheinberg continues,

> The increasing visibility, wealth, and political power of the nineteenth-century Anglo-Jewish community ruptured—quite radically—an assumption that national identity relied upon universally shared religious assumptions. For though other Christian religious denominations—Dissenters and Catholics in particular—had raised similar challenges to the notion of a universal religious identity, their challenges never threatened the beliefs that differentiate all Christians from Jews: namely, the acceptance of Jesus Christ as messiah, the belief that the New Testament and Christian history are connected to and necessarily transcend

> Hebrew scriptural authority and narrative, and finally and most critically, that these beliefs are accessible to all individuals through conversion. (175)

These shifting notions of religious identity present a significant obstacle to the efforts of "a system of belief predicated on the very erasure of Jewish identity" (177). Despite the best efforts at "erasure," though, "there is always a Jewish voice lurking in Christianity, namely, the voice of the Hebrew Scriptures, the historical narrative of Jewish identity upon which Christianity is based" (183). Undoubtedly, the megalith that most echoes that Jewish voice is the Madonna and Child, the chief Jews in Christendom.

In a social order interested in "erasure of Jewish identity," then, the Gypsy as Madonna complicates the role of the Gypsy (and, hence, the unconverted Jew) in society. As Jew, the Madonna underscores the Gypsy's otherness, but as Christian icon, she makes the French noblemen's actions even more barbaric and inhumane— and ultimately infernal. Scheinberg's analysis of Levy's poem "Magdalen" may also be applied to the Gypsy Madonna in "Run to Death." She argues that "Levy engages in what might be best termed 'anti-typology'" in her use of "a supposed Christian heroine": "rather than letting herself be appropriated by a hegemonic religious narrative that would 'convert' her experience into a symbol of Christian faith, Levy's Mary Magdalen resists both literal and metaphoric conversion, insisting instead that she speaks from a particular body that rejects any such symbolic or transcendent 'truth'" (*Women's Poetry* 223-4). Unlike the Gypsy women of Prout's, Alexander's, and Ruskin's conversion myths, the Madonna Gypsy faces her death without repenting her sinful Gypsiness: "her proud lips never open with the dying sinner's cry," and instead, she "holds her child above her, all forgetful of her pain, / While a hundred thousand curses shoot out darkly from her eyes, / And a hundred thousand glances of the bitterest disdain." Scheinberg notes this use of Christian images is not at all uncommon in Levy's poems. In fact, it is one of Levy's critical poetic methods:

> Often positioning certain symbols or moments in Christian discourse as central to a given poem, Levy rarely lets those symbols sit easily; likewise, the common knowledge of her Jewish identity, as marked by the Jewish name that Levy never replaced with a pseudonym, would bring to these poems an awareness of her Jewish identity. This awareness of Levy's Jewish authorship insists that a reader question the use of Christian images and see how Levy uses them often as a specific refusal of alliance with Christian literary identity. (*Women's Poetry* 227)

When turning this reading strategy to "Run to Death," the curious amalgam of Gypsy, Jew, and Christian in one central figure begins to become clear. At the intersection of Gypsy, Christian, and Jew, this "Jewish Gypsy" resists conversion to the hegemonic order of the French noblemen, stubbornly maintaining her opposition to them and the needlessness of her repentance. The curious French Gypsy substitute for the English Jewish woman reasserts Levy's own refusal to erase her own identity as woman and as Jew both in the literary and social structure of London.

iv. Lines through the Erasure

The religious otherness of the Gypsy seems a relatively obvious anxiety that English society must have felt about the wanderers. Hoyland and Crabbe exemplify the evangelical attitude one should expect to find when searching for this strand. What one finds in Kenyon, Stanley, Prout, Alexander, Ruskin, and Levy, on the other hand, is somewhat more surprising. Perhaps specifically because the Gypsies are so often considered irreligious altogether, these writers find in them a blank canvas on which to paint their various religious concerns. In these poems, the source of interest does not lie in the Gypsies' religion or lack thereof. Rather, the Gypsies, especially in their imagined relation to the Madonna, provide a fascinating and unexpected means by which the poets explore Christianity, the national religion of Britain—or, in Levy's case, a valuable lens through which to question and defy that same religious identity. To do this, however, the poets must not represent Gypsies but must, instead, engage in mimicry.

They efface Gypsiness in order to map Anglo-Christianity or -Jewry onto it, making the Gypsy "*a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*." In the process of mimicry, though, the faint lines of Gypsiness reassert themselves in the erasures of the poets' representation. These reinscribed Gypsies regain some control as, with or without the poets' consent, they shape and reshape both English religious identity and Gypsiness itself. As is the case repeatedly throughout the century, as the poets attempt to capture the Gypsies, the Gypsies, in turn, capture the British poetic imagination. Using the Gypsies to understand and explore anxieties about themselves, the British poets attempt to gain a grip on the Gypsy tool. The Gypsy, however, reciprocates and grips them right back.

Chapter 4

Arnold's Temporal Anthropology and Wordsworth: Time and Purpose among the Gypsies

Between 1849 and 1866, Matthew Arnold published four poems that were either specifically about Gypsies or made at least significant mention of them. "To a Gipsy Child by the Sea-Shore" first appeared in the volume of 1849 as "Stanzas on a Gipsy Child by the Sea-Shore, Douglas, Isle of Man." The penultimate selection of that volume was one of Arnold's finest early poems, "Resignation." In a critical passage, he meditates upon a band of Gypsies whom he and his sister meet while on a walk. Four years later, in the volume of 1853, Arnold published "The Scholar-Gipsy," a consideration of Joseph Glanvill's seventeenth-century tale of an Oxford student who ran away to live with the Gypsies. Then, thirteen years later, in the 1866 volume, Arnold published his elegy on Arthur Hugh Clough, in which he refers again to the Scholar-Gypsy of the Cumnor countryside. To write four different poems, separated by nearly twenty years, about such a marginalized group seems striking. We are left to wonder why Arnold returned to them again and again.

Attempting to answer the question "Why gipsies?" Antony Harrison has provided the only significant study that examines all four of Arnold's Gypsy poems together, and his New Historical approach establishes several important intertextual relationships (366). Harrison points out that the Stoicism of "To a Gipsy-Child by the Sea-Shore" is largely a reply to Wordsworth's "Intimations Ode." "Resignation," on the other hand, reinscribes Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and "Gipsies," and the Gypsy band of the poem serves as a contrast to the

detached ideal poet. Harrison also connects "The Scholar-Gipsy" and "Thyrsis" to the Victorian "Gypsy Problem" and Arnold's own struggle for cultural power.

Harrison's examination is provocative, especially in juxtaposing Arnold's Gypsies with their textual and historical influences. Tracking Arnold's use of the trope over twenty years, however, he overlooks the primary idea that binds the four poems together so closely. What, then, is the answer to the question that Harrison raises, "Why gipsies?" I argue that, throughout his career, Arnold uses Gypsies as a trope for Time. He is fascinated by their intermittently successful attempts to escape the temporal influences that so obsessed him. They are like the Gypsy in Eugene Lee-Hamilton's late-century play *The Fountain of Youth: A Fantastic Tragedy in Five Acts*. In that play, the Gypsy is the only figure who knows the location of the Fountain, the only one who holds the key to time. Though others have related these poems to the idea of time, commentators have largely overlooked the fact that this temporal theme is precisely the reason the Gypsies are present in these poems. Gypsies by tradition are considered placeless, homeless. They wander. They roam. In Arnold's four Gypsy poems, however, the wandering is not so much a geographical as a temporal placelessness. These Gypsies exhibit the characteristic that Arnold longed for himself, that of being outside of time.

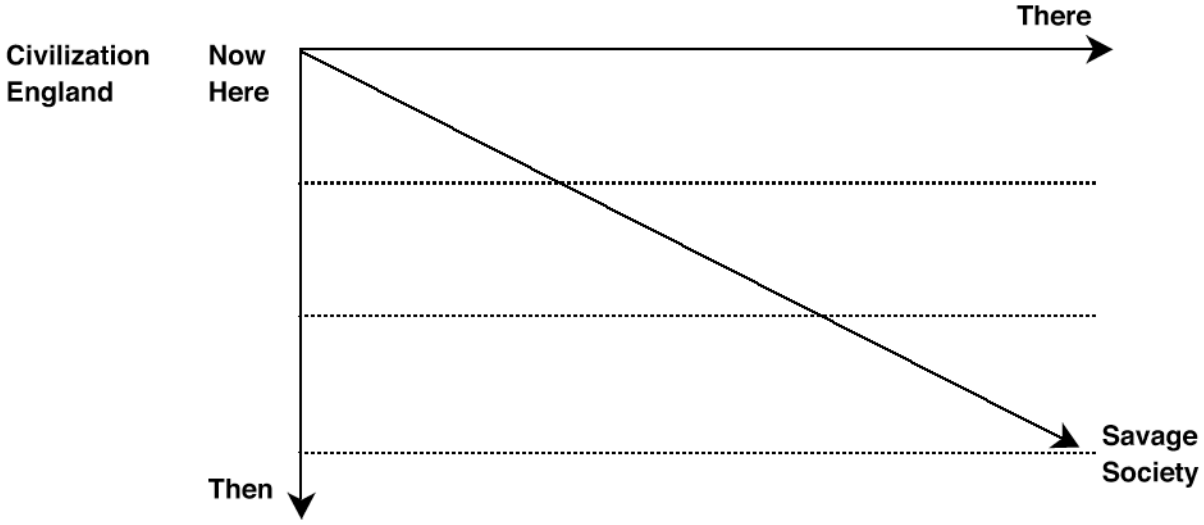
In his provocative *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, Johannes Fabian examines Time as a distancing agent employed by the anthropologist to maintain his or her object's alterity. This effort is a process Fabian calls a "Politics of Time" (xl). Looking at "the uses of Time anthropology makes when it strives to constitute its own object—the savage, the primitive, the Other," Fabian argues, "there is no knowledge of the Other which is not also a temporal, historical, a political act" (1). Fabian argues that "Time, much like language or money, is a carrier of significance, a form through which we define the content of relations

between the Self and the Other. [. . .] Time may give form to relations of power and inequality under the conditions of capitalist industrial production" (xxxix). He claims that anthropologists

> constantly need to cover up a fundamental contradiction: On the one hand we dogmatically insist that anthropology rests on ethnographic research involving personal, prolonged interaction with the Other. But then we pronounce upon the knowledge gained from such research a discourse which construes the Other in terms of distance, spatial and temporal. The Other's empirical presence turns into his theoretical absence, a conjuring trick which is worked with the help of an array of devices that have the common intent and function to keep the Other outside the Time of anthropology. (xli)

In this way, anthropology "seem[s] to be doing what other sciences exercise: keeping object and subject apart" (xlii). Fabian demonstrates these modern "oppressive uses of Time" graphically:

Table 4. 1. Modern time/space: distancing



Source: Fabian, *Time and the Other* (27).

This distancing, however, is antithetical to any attempt at real communication, for "Time in the sense of shared, intersubjective Time, is a necessary condition of communication" (42). Denying "coevalness in anthropological discourse," according to Fabian, is not an anachronism—a mistake or accident—but what he calls an "*allochronism*" (73-4, 32). To

achieve it, anthropologists employ "the moral-political connotations of ostensibly pure temporal terms, or [. . .] the temporal connotations of 'strictly technical,' classificatory terms" (73). For example, words like "savagery" simply "denotes a stage in developmental sequence. But no degree of nominalist technicality can purge the term of its moral, aesthetic, and political connotations. [. . .] As an indication of relationship between the subject and the object of anthropological discourse, it clearly expresses temporal distancing" (73). The word is "a marker of the past, and if ethnographic evidence compels the anthropologist to state that savagery exists in contemporary societies then it will be located, by dint of some sort of horizontal stratigraphy, in *their* Time, not ours" (73).

Read through the lens of the theory laid down by Fabian, Arnold's temporal treatment of the Gypsies takes on an anthropological aspect. Of course, Arnold does no such thing as suggest that the Gypsies are savages. Actually, rather than criticize them for their evolutionary backwardness, he praises their atemporality; nonetheless, he still denies to them "here and now," placing them "there and then." He does not maintain them as object by pointing to their racial, religious, or class alterity, but instead, he engages in *allochronism*, that temporal distancing produced by denying coevality to the Gypsies, by emphasizing their temporal alterity, although it is an alterity he claims to envy.

i. Arnold and Time

In the Preface to the First Edition of *Poems* (1853), Arnold explains his omission of "Empedocles on Etna" from the volume and describes what he was trying to do in the poem:

> I intended to delineate the feelings of one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers, one of the family of Orpheus and Musaeus, having survived his fellows, living on into a time when the habits of Greek thought and feeling had begun fast to change, character to dwindle, the influence of the Sophists to

> prevail. Into the feelings of a man so situated there entered much that we are accustomed to consider as exclusively modern; how much, the fragments of Empedocles himself which remain to us are sufficient at least to indicate. What those who are familiar only with the great monuments of early Greek genius suppose to be its exclusive characteristics, have disappeared: the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity have disappeared; the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust. (*Poems* 654)

In the melancholia of "a man so situated," not only do we hear Hamlet and Faust, but also, "we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement" of Arnold himself.

These comments on Empedocles's being caught between two times suggest to us a theme that makes many of Arnold's poems of a piece. This notion of wandering or being stuck between two extremes, two times, two choices finds its way into much Arnold criticism. Among the poems, we may think immediately of Tristram and the two Iseults, of "wandering between two worlds" in "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," or of the action and passivity of the Clough sonnets. From his life, we may also remember the opposing attractions of Marguerite and Flu or pose Arnold the poet versus Arnold the critic. Perhaps his greatest anxiety, however, is that of feeling the passing of time and of feeling caught between two eras. As his familiar theories on the Epochs of Expansion and Concentration attest, Arnold felt vividly conscious of the division between ages. As for his own situation, in September 1849, Arnold wrote to Clough,

> My dearest Clough these are damned times—everything is against one—the height to which knowledge is come, the spread of luxury, our physical enervation, the absence of great *natures*, the unavoidable contact with millions of small ones, newspapers, cities, light profligate friends, moral desperadoes like Carlyle, our own selves, and the sickening consciousness of our difficulties. (*Letters* 1: 156)

Arnold's keen awareness of "the times" is well explored in R. H. Super's fine *The Time-Spirit of Matthew Arnold*. This is the dilemma we witness especially in "Empedocles," "Dover Beach," and "Grande Chartreuse."

Even more personally, however, Arnold felt keenly the passage of time in his own life, manifested by his aging. According to Park Honan, one of Arnold's greatest fears was "a dead barren negative callosity," and he associated this inability to feel with the aging process (130). The ability to make us feel is what Arnold praises in Wordsworth in "Memorial Verses," but Arnold himself seemed notably unable to make himself feel. In 1853, he admitted to Clough, "I am past thirty, and three parts iced over" (*Letters* 1: 252), but one would be hard pressed to find a picture of what it is to age more dismal than in "Growing Old," in which growing old "is to spend long days / And not once feel that we were ever young," to "feel but half, and feebly, what we feel" (21-2, 27). Worse still,

> [Growing old] is—last stage of all—
> When we are frozen up within, and quite
> The phantom of ourselves,
> To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost
> Which blamed the living man.
> (31-5)

The passage of time, then, raised in Arnold a degree of melancholia for which many readers have blamed him, yet Arnold defends his sadness. To "the sciolists" of "Grande Chartreuse" who claim that his melancholia "is a past mode, an outworn theme" (100), Arnold pleads,

> Ah, if it be passed, take away,
> At least, the restlessness, the pain;
> Be man henceforth no more a prey
> To these out-dated stings again!
> The nobleness of grief is gone—
> Ah, leave us not the fret alone!
> (103-8)

Contra his detractors, Arnold insists that he does not actually desire the melancholia for which his poems are famous; he should certainly prefer to be free of it. No one is able to prove to him, however, that his *melancholia* is unwarranted. Furthermore, if he could "contend and cry" in order to lessen his grief (120), he certainly would, even though such a response did not save Byron, Shelley, or Senancour.

To the world that did not heed the cries of these poets, Arnold responds,

> Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,
> More fortunate, alas! than we,
> Which without hardness will be sage,
> And gay without frivolity.
> Sons of the world, oh, speed those years;
> But, while we wait, allow our tears!
>
> Allow them! We admire with awe
> The exulting thunder of your race;
> You give the universe your law,
> You triumph over time and space!
> Your pride of life, your tireless powers,
> We laud them, but they are not ours.
> (157-68)

Arnold wryly points out to those who criticize his melancholia concerning the age and the passage of time that he does not have the power to "triumph over time and space" even if they do. His plea carries with it the implicit suggestion that his detractors' time and space are qualitatively different from his: theirs are literal, technological, but his is philosophical. This philosophical triumph, though, is what he considers and longs for in his four Gypsy poems. In each, the Gypsies appear at first to be immune to the ravages of time; ultimately, however, in the face of the truth that is mortality, the speakers of the poems have to use a great deal of imagination to allow the Gypsies to retain that timelessness.

ii. Memory and Forgetting: The "Intimations" Ode and Arnold's "Gipsy Child"

According to Tom Arnold's unsigned obituary for his brother Matt in *The Manchester Guardian* (18 May 1888) and an undated letter by Tom, the event of "Gipsy Child" occurred on a family vacation to Douglas in the Isle of Man. On a crowded pier, Matthew Arnold and his brother saw a woman who "might have been a gipsy" and her child on her shoulder. In the obituary, Tom Arnold says, "Its pitiful wan face and sad dark eyes rested on Matthew for some time without change of expression," and he adds in his letter that, gazing on the child, Arnold became "completely abstracted" (*Poems* 22). After examining the frequent uses of the Madonna and Child image in other nineteenth-century Gypsy poems, it is difficult not to suspect it at work here, too, for the poem reads something like a painting of the Adoration. If that is the case, as with Amy Levy's "Run to Death," here a Gypsy mother with her baby in her arms represents one of the most central images in all of Christendom.

Unlike in Levy's poem, however, the focus here is the Child, not the Mother, and this Child is not an Italian Christ with cherubic visage and with grace and redemption is his hands but, rather, a Byzantine icon whose dolorous gaze stares out past eternity. According to Robin Cormack, Byzantine icons "were made to last for eternity, outliving humans, yet serving the beliefs and attitudes of their producers and audience in all sorts of ways." In order to be effective, "each icon had to maintain its power for century after century. [. . .] The consequent 'timelessness' of Byzantine art is one of its distinctive features" (2-3). While no evidence either within or without the poem suggests that Arnold had in mind the Byzantine art that, in many ways, seems so fitting to the Eastern exoticism connected to the Gypsies, this conception of the Byzantine icon is tantalizingly apt to Arnold's use of the Gypsy image in this poem. Here,

however, he does not create a religious icon "for century after century" but an icon of timelessness itself.

A more likely, if less exotic, source for this poem lies in Wordsworth. Arnold had, no doubt, read Wordsworth's 1807 volume, finding there both "Gipsies" and the "Intimations" Ode. As Kenneth Allott and other critics since have also observed, "Gipsy Child," in many ways, responds directly to the Ode (Arnold, *Poems* 23). Harrison argues that the later poem "reinscribes and transvalues" the earlier. One of the most important connections between these two poems that other critics have not noticed, though, is that both are concerned to a significant degree with the issue of time. In Wordsworth's poem, one experiences loss through the passage of time, but it is a loss of joy as "our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting" (58). "There *was* a time," therefore, when everything "to me did seem / Apparelled in celestial light"; "it is not *now*," however, "as it has been of yore" (1, 3-4, 6; emphasis added). The speaker feels "that there hath passed away a glory from the earth" (18), but the change is actually in him. The passage of time has separated him from the memory of his preexistence and his infancy when he still enjoyed union with the object, his preexistent unconscious and mother. Having lost this union, he now has Earth for a foster-mother. Earth, though, is not *the* mother, but a "homely Nurse," fostering the child's earth-bound mortality in the absence of the immortality of his pre-existent self (81). Her duty is to help her "Foster-child" "forget the glories he hath known," yet she fulfills this duty imperfectly "with *something* of a Mother's mind" (82, 83, 79; emphasis added). Now that he is a man, though, nature "speak[s] of something that is gone" (53). Father Time, like a sort of Lacanian Law, is what costs him this union:

> The Youth, who daily farther from the East
> Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
> And by the vision splendid
> Is on his way attended;

> At length the Man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day.
> (71-6)

The last quarter of the poem, the epode, consists of the speaker's seeking and finding the dubious solace of age:

> Though nothing can bring back the hour
> Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
> We will grieve not, rather find
> Strength in what remains behind,
> . . . . . .
> In the faith that looks through death,
> In years that bring the philosophic mind.
> (180-9)

The Wordsworthian child will never recover what he has lost, but he will find "abundant recompense" for that loss ("Tintern Abbey" 89).

In fact, the "Intimations" Ode and Arnold's "Gipsy Child" stand nearly as perfect examples of the often opposing adjectives of "Wordsworthian" and "Arnoldian" when describing tone and mood. Wordsworth's child feels sorrow at his exile from the joy of preexistence, but the Gypsy child's melancholia is worse than "some exile's mindful how the past was glad" (25). The Wordsworthian child trails "clouds of glory," for he comes "from God, who is our home" (63, 64); the Gypsy child, however, has "massed, round that slight brow, these clouds of doom" (4). Furthermore, his sorrow is more than "some angel's, in an alien planet born" (26). The only glories in this poem come from the child's "glooms that enhance and glorify this earth" and the speaker's observation that neither love nor labour "oblivion in lost angels can infuse / Of the soil'd glory, and the trailing wing" (20, 55-6).

Allott briefly notes that Arnold "adopts from Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode' the idea of the child's recollection of a prenatal happiness and of the fading of this recollection in the course of life, but gives it a tragic significance that is pointedly unWordsworthian" (23). The truth of

the poem, though, is nearly just the opposite of Allott's point: the past in this poem is not nearly so important as the future, for in a characteristic Arnoldian twist, the sorrow the Gypsy child feels seems to have much less to do with the *memory* of prenatal joy than it does with the *foreknowledge* of postnatal pain. This infant, at his young age, shares already that melancholia which speeds Empedocles into Etna. His is not the sorrow of one who has lost the joy of the past—rather, the sorrow of one who must endure the suffering of the future:

> Down the pale cheek long lines of shadow slope
> Which years, and curious thought, and suffering give—
> Thou hast *foreknown* the vanity of hope,
> *Foreseen* thy harvest—yet proceed'st to live
> O meek *anticipant* of that sure pain
> Whose sureness grey-haired scholars hardly learn!
> What wonder shall time breed, to swell thy strain?
> (37-43; emphasis added)

Unlike the Wordsworthian child, the Gypsy child is described by the speaker as "thou, whom superfluity of joy / Wafts not from thine own thoughts, nor longings vain" (9-10). Also unlike the earlier child, this child does not look back longingly at a maternal figure, either preexistent unconsciousness or a mother. Rather, the child turns to the speaker

> [. . .] half averse
> From thine own mother's breast, that knows not thee;
> With eyes which sought thine eyes thou didst converse,
> And that soul-searching vision fell on me.
> (13-6)

In this way, the child becomes, as Harrison observes, "at once muse and philosophical father of the man who speaks in this poem" (369), recalling Wordsworth's lines from "My heart leaps up," added in 1815 as an epigraph to the "Intimations" Ode. Significantly, however, in spite of this kinship with the Gypsy child, the speaker exhibits that poetic detachment called for in "Resignation," later in the same volume: "Glooms that go deep as thine I have not known: /

Moods of fantastic sadness, nothing worth" (17-8). The child has the pained knowledge and the afflicted wisdom of one who has endured much, of one who predicts the pain of "Growing Old."

Though "Gipsy Child," unlike the "Intimations" Ode, is primarily about foreknowing rather than remembering, a sort of memory still plays a role in the poem. The Arnoldian child is not going to escape his prediction of the suffering caused by the passage of time, although he will be blessed, not with a Wordsworthian joy, but with a degree of forgetfulness. He will forget his foreknowledge. The speaker consoles,

> Ere the long night, whose stillness brooks no star,
> Match that funereal aspect with her pall,
> I think, thou wilt have fathom'd life too far,
> Have known too much—or else forgotten all.
>
> The Guide of our dark steps a triple veil
> Betwixt our senses and our sorrow keeps:
> Hath sown with cloudless passages the tale
> Of grief, and eas'd us with a thousand sleeps.
> (45-52)

This "triple veil" will suffice to dull the sorrow the child feels now, and that is the virtue of remembering: to remember is to suffer, while to forget is to gain only a brief numbness. Forgetfulness will not erase the pain altogether, for

> Ah! not the nectarous poppy lovers use,
> Not daily labour's dull, Lethaean spring,
> Oblivion in lost angels can infuse
> Of the soil'd glory, and the trailing wing.
> (53-6)

As the years pass and wear on the forgetful Gypsy child, he may find moments of comfort, victory, and beauty, but still the speaker warns him,

> Once, ere the day decline, thou shalt discern,
> Oh once, ere night, in thy success, thy chain.
> Ere the long evening close, thou shalt return,
> And wear this majesty of grief again.
> (65-8)

The Gypsy child may find brief respite from the majestic grief of one who has fallen at the hands of time, but in the end, he will remember not a childhood innocence, but a sorrow that he knew in infancy as he lost his memory of preexistent joy and looked ahead to the suffering before him. In this way, Arnold subverts the Wordsworthian faith in joy. In "Gipsy Child," a brief forgetfulness of suffering is the answer to Wordsworth's "abundant recompense."

iii. Time, Purpose, and Detachment: Wordsworth's "Gipsies" and Arnold's "Resignation"

Park Honan suggests that Arnold's "Gipsy Child" "looks ahead to 'Resignation,' which treats the stoical gipsies and the poet's role in a more explicit, philosophically advanced manner" (89). In "Resignation," printed as the final poem in the same volume as "Gipsy Child," Arnold answers two more of Wordsworth's poems, "Tintern Abbey" and "Gipsies." "Resignation" is similar to "Tintern Abbey," as Allott and others have noted, in that the speaker addresses a beloved sister about his reflections on a second visit to a cherished place; as Allott also points out, however, Arnold's view of nature contradicts Wordsworth's (88). Wordsworth's speaker observes that

> . . . Nature never did betray
> The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
> Through all the years of this our life, to lead
> From joy to joy.
> (123-6)

Looking around him, Arnold's speaker, in contrast, ventures that the natural scenes which brought Wordsworth joy, "if I might lend their life a voice, / Seem to bear rather than rejoice" (269-70).

Absent that Wordsworthian joy, this sort of stoical detachment is the goal, too, of the ideal poet, who "bears to admire uncravingly," when "from some high station he looks down" on the places and people he meets (161, 164). He is not unfeeling but quiet, exhibiting the calm of the Greek Stoic or the Hindu mystic:

> Lean'd on his gate, he gazes—tears
> And in his eyes, and in his ears
> The murmur of a thousand years.
> Before him he sees life unroll,
> A placid and continuous whole—
> That general life, which does not cease,
> Whose secret is not joy, but peace.
> (186-92)

This is the virtue that Arnold, at about this time, recommends Clough find in the *Bhagavad-Gita*: "the Indians distinguish between meditation or absorption—and knowledge: and between abandoning practice, and abandoning the fruits of action and all respect thereto. This last is a supreme step, and dilated on throughout the Poem" (*Letters* 1: 89). Clough, though, apparently preferred "the fruits of action," for Arnold writes, "I am disappointed the Oriental wisdom, God grant it were mine, pleased you not" (*Letters* 1: 87). This whole line of thought, rising out of Arnold's reading of Hindu philosophy and his arguments with Clough, is reflected in much of the poetry of the 1849 volume, particularly in his sonnets to Clough, "Gipsy Child," and "Resignation."

Though Arnold's Wordsworthian objects in this poem are different from those in "Gipsy Child," his use of Gypsies is much the same. In "Resignation," as in "Gipsy Child," Arnold examines the idea of Stoicism, and in the passage about the band of Gypsies, he pointedly considers the attitude of the wanderers toward the vicissitudes of time. In this passage, as others have noted, Arnold echoes Wordsworth's 1807 poem "Gipsies"; Arnold's response to the earlier poem is, however, more than simply an echo but rather constitutes a critical reinscription.

As David Mayall and several others have discussed, in the early years of the nineteenth century, many felt that a people so unfettered as Gypsies posed a threat to both the financial and moral stability of English society. That most enthusiastic celebrant of the downtrodden who was also anxious about idleness and purposelessness, even Wordsworth published in 1807 a fairly scathing consideration of Gypsies. In "Gipsies," the Wordsworthian speaker is surprised that a Gypsy band has not broken camp since he last saw them twelve hours ago. The speaker exclaims,

> —Twelve hours, twelve bounteous hours, are gone while I
> Have been a Traveller under open sky,
> Much witnessing of change and chear,
> Yet as I left I find them here!
> (9-12)

In uncharacteristically damning fashion, the speaker ends with lines that reflect the concerns of "Resolution and Independence":

> —oh better wrong and strife
> Better vain deeds or evil than such life!
> The silent Heavens have goings on;
> The stars have tasks—but these have none.
> (21-4)

All creatures, both above and below, use their time to fulfill a purpose—all except the Gypsies.

Wordsworth's attitude toward the Gypsies' purposelessness and wastefulness of time is not unique, though his miserly feelings about "twelve hours" may be. In 1850, arguing the superiority of Saxon vagabonds over Gypsy, Jewish, and Celtic tramps, Robert Knox expresses economic resentment, exclaiming,

> The gipsy has made up his mind, like the Jews, to do no work, but to live by the industry of others. The tramping, vagabondizing Saxon makes a show of work. The gipsies as a race, and seemingly from instinctive feelings, have sworn as a race that they never will do any work whatever; and that, in so far as they are concerned, the great curse on mankind is to be wholly inoperative. I do most solemnly believe that, rather than labour, they would willingly starve—a character

> not uncommon amongst the Celtic race; the money they get by begging and telling fortunes they seemingly conceal; back from their hands again it never seems to return into society;—at least, I never heard of an instance of their purchasing anything. They have discovered the grand secret, that they can live by the labour of others. I suppose they look on the Saxon as some Celts do—the Saxon, to whom the soul-consuming, body-wasting labour is a natural instinct; him they look on as a mean-spirited, low-minded scoundrel, who would work the soul out of himself for a few shillings, instead of acting as they do—I mean the gipsy and the Celt—never doing any labour which they can get another to do for them; thus living a fine, dashing, do-nothing life, like a true-born gentleman. **This is the gipsy—a race without a redeeming quality**. (158-9; emphasis added)

Nonetheless, Wordsworth's attitude in the poem, though not uncommon, did not pass among his peers without critical comment. In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge indicted the Wordsworthian speaker for his surprise at finding the Gypsies still encamped twelve hours later. Coleridge complains that the speaker is overreacting, "without seeming to reflect that the poor tawny wanderers might probably have been tramping for weeks together through road and lane, over moor and mountain, and consequently must have been right glad to rest themselves, their children and cattle, for one whole day." The speaker has further overlooked that "such repose might be quite as necessary for them, as a walk of the same continuance was pleasing or healthful for the more fortunate poet" (2: 137). William Hazlitt's response was equally critical but much more amusing: in a footnote to "On Manner," published in his 1817 volume, Hazlitt observes, "We did not expect this turn from Mr. Wordsworth, whom we had considered as the prince of poetical idlers, and patron of the philosophy of indolence, who formerly insisted on our spending our time 'in a wise passiveness.' [. . .] We hate the doctrine of utility, even in a philosopher, and much more in a poet: for the only real utility is that which leads to enjoyment" (4: 45-6n).

Perhaps as a result of such criticism, in the 1820 edition, Wordsworth revised the ending of his poem, ostensibly making it milder, though perhaps more offensive to twenty-first century ears in its suggestions of genetic determinism. He adds,

> Yet, witness all that stirs in heaven or earth!
> In scorn I speak not;—they are what their birth
> And breeding suffers them to be;
> Wild outcasts of society!

These Gypsies waste time, but their squandering is not intentionally prodigal. Rather, according to these added lines, they are simply, by means of both nature and nurture, incapable of using time productively or of fulfilling any sort of goal: in short, "they are what their birth / And breeding suffers them to be."

The similarities to and differences from Wordsworth's poem warrant reading Arnold's passage in "Resignation" as a critical revision of the earlier poem. As in Wordsworth's poem, the Gypsies are in the same camp in which he has seen them before; unlike Wordsworth's band, however, these Gypsies have endured "long wanderings" since the speaker last saw them here (114). Where Wordsworth sees "the same unbroken knot / Of human Beings, in the self-same spot," Arnold notes, "In dark knots crouch round the wild flame / Their children, as when first they came." While Wordsworth's Gypsies are not affected by time (after a mere twelve hours), Arnold's Gypsies are. Like the speakers of "Tintern Abbey" and "Resignation," the Gypsies revisit a familiar place, for in their characteristic journeys,

> . . . often to some kindly place
> Chance guides the migratory race,
> Where, though long wanderings intervene,
> They recognise a former scene.
> (112-5)

Just as the speakers recognize the spot above Tintern Abbey or the path over Wythburn Fells, when the Gypsies "recognise a former scene,"

> Signs are not wanting, which might raise
> The ghost in them of former days—
> Signs are not wanting, if they would;
> Suggestions to disquietude.
> For them, for all, time's busy touch,
> While it mends little, troubles much.
> (122-7)

In addition to feeling a similar "disquietude," the Arnoldian voice, unlike the speaker of "Gipsies," recognizes kinship with these wanderers: "for them, for all, time's busy touch, / While it mends little, troubles much." The speaker avows this connection with the Gypsies elsewhere as well: "The gipsies, whom we met below, / They, *too*, have long roam'd to and fro" (108-9; emphasis added). Of course, the Gypsies do grow older: suggestive of Arnold's "Growing Old,"

> Their joints grow stiffer—but the year
> Runs his old round of dubious cheer;
> Chilly they grow—yet winds in March,
> Still, sharp as ever, freeze and parch.
> (128-31)

Arnold shows a keen awareness of the historical "Gypsy Problem" when he observes the changes the Gypsies must endure brought on by exurbanization and anti-Gypsy legislation:

> They must live still—and yet, God knows,
> Crowded and keen the country grows;
> It seems as if, in their decay,
> The law grew stronger every day.
> (132-5)

The passage of time and the events of the day conspire to "raise / The ghost in them of former days," providing them with "suggestions to disquietude"— the same sources of anxiety Arnold himself was so wont to feel.

Nonetheless, despite these similarities, the Gypsies are not entirely like the speakers of Wordsworth's and Arnold's poems. Arnold, like Wordsworth, attributes a certain lack of sensitivity to the Gypsies. In his way, Arnold's speaker stereotypes them as much as

Wordsworth's does, though, arguably, in a more benevolent way. Harrison notes Arnold's "partial identification with and incomplete passion for" the Gypsies and argues that "the speaker in this poem exposes his limited political understanding and inadequate social vision, urging the gipsies to recover the 'fragments' of their past in order to reconstitute their present and future lives as a 'placid and continuous whole'" (Harrison 372). Harrison is right in that Arnold's Gypsies appear racially unsuited for certain kinds of reflection.

Unlike Harrison, I do not see in the poem Arnold's urging a philosophical reformation for the Gypsies. On the contrary, unlike the Wordsworthian speaker, the speaker of "Resignation" envies the Gypsies their unconsciousness as a race:

> So might they reason, so compare,
> Fausta, times past with times that are.
> But no!—they rubb'd through yesterday
> In their hereditary way,
> And they will rub through, if they can,
> To-morrow on the self-same plan,
> Till death arrive to supersede,
> For them, vicissitude and need.
> (136-43)

"Signs are not wanting," but the Gypsies do not attend to the signs. Arnold's speaker does not argue as Wordsworth's does that the Gypsies are *incapable* of reflection as a race ("so might they reason, so compare"); rather, he says that, as a race, they simply do not consider the passage of time. This lack of awareness enables these timeless wanderers to escape, not the effects of time, but the awareness and costs of its passing: death will, indeed, arrive to the Gypsies, bringing an end to "vicissitude and need," but until then, they will simply "rub through" "in their hereditary way." While Wordsworth's speaker finds comfort and Arnold's finds unease in returning to the familiar place, the Gypsies find neither. Like Arnold, the Gypsies cannot find joy, for the passage of time brings only "suggestions to disquietude," but they are like the ideal

poet, who adds to their "resignation" a vision. The speaker of the poem imagines Fausta's words, "Not deep the poet sees, but wide" (214), and Arnold himself quoted the same words to Clough (*Letters* 1: 131). As U. C. Knoepflmacher notes, an understanding of "one's own position within the 'dizzying eddy' of life [. . .] can come only through detachment. It is achieved instinctively by gypsies plodding in their 'hereditary way'; it is achieved consciously by those higher beings who can discern through a special insight 'what through experience others learn'" (119). The Gypsies' allegedly unreflective detachment, though, is definitively different from that of the poet's meditation. The ideal poet, therefore, adds this consciousness that the Gypsies lack to the detachment they have attained, and together, their "secret is not joy, but peace."

iv. Re-imagining Immortality: Arnold's "The Scholar-Gipsy"

The first edition of George Borrow's *Zincali* appeared in 1841, between Arnold's first "Resignation" walk of 1833 and the second of 1843. A new edition also appeared in 1843, the year Arnold saw the band of Gypsies on his second walk. In 1844, the very next year, with these experiences and quite possibly with Borrow's book behind him, Arnold found Joseph Glanvill's *The Vanity of Dogmatizing*. C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry observe that it is certainly possible that Glanvill's book "partly affected this early poem of the lake region as it directly inspired the later tribute to the Oxford countryside" (69). Borrow's later *Lavengro*, in which the tales of a modern-day Gypsy-Scholar are told, appeared in 1851. In 1852, Arnold probably began composition of his first Oxford poem, which is both the seventeenth-century tale of a truant

Oxford lad and the nineteenth-century account of a modern-day Romany *Rai*, attempting to penetrate Gypsy culture in order to reveal its secrets to the world.[1]

Tinker and Lowry note that Arnold's omissions in his Glanvill summary reduce the sense of the supernatural in the tale:

> From the passage in Glanvill he also excluded the incident of the wonder-working powers of the gipsy, which is out of harmony with the pensive figure of the wandering scholar, which was taking form in his mind. The supernatural element is thus reduced to a minimum, so that nothing is made in the poem of the acquisition of the art of ruling 'the working of men's brains,' in order to bind them to what thoughts one will. (207)

Harrison agrees about the effect of Arnold's omissions, but he sees also a particular purpose to them. He points out that, in "Scholar-Gipsy," "in a distinct turn from his equivocal use of the gipsy figure in 'Resignation,' Arnold—some seven years after the initial composition of that poem—now presents the gipsy as an ideal Other, the speaker's imaginary hero" (373). Harrison sees the Gypsy as Arnold's hero because he sees the poem itself as "overtly ideological and political. Its subject is the attainment of power in the social world," an Arnoldian desire which Harrison explores at length. He argues, "By 1853, however, the [Gypsy] trope projects his realization that attaining power over men's minds requires not merely poetic detachment, but an often ostensibly self-contradictory stance of simultaneous estrangement from society and involvement with it" (379). Arnold abridged most severely, though, just that part of Glanvill's tale in which Harrison argues he was most interested. For example, Arnold leaves out the whole of the lad's demonstration of this power to his Oxford acquaintances (Glanvill 197-8).[2]

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[1] Glanvill's and Arnold's Gypsy scholar is, of course, not a Gypsy by race. Not until late in the nineteenth century, however, with the work of the Gypsiologists, did such a distinction become more common. At the time of Arnold's poem, and even today, grouping ethnic Gypsies and Gypsies by habit together is not at all unusual.

[2] Glanvill completely omits this tale from subsequent versions of his book (*Scepsis Scientifica* and *Essay against Confidence in Philosophy*). Stephen Medcalf, in his edition of all three versions, makes an interesting suggestion: "Perhaps by 1665 Glanvill had heard what is now thought to be the true version of the story: for Francois Mercure von Helmont, who left the University of Leipzig to live with the gypsies, to learn, not as far as we know telepathy,

Alternatively, I suggest that the Gypsy becomes this "ideal Other, the speaker's imaginary hero" primarily because he has fused the characteristics of the Resignation-Gypsies with those of the Resignation-poet. Arnold idealizes the Gypsy-Scholar not because of his ability to master the Gypsies' art "to rule as they desired / The workings of men's brains, / And they can bind to them to what thoughts they will" but because of his ability to achieve both detachment from others and from time.

Commentators have long noted the poem's meditation on time, but the argument that comes closest to my own here is William Ulmer's "The Human Seasons: Arnold, Keats, and 'The Scholar-Gipsy.'" Ulmer reconsiders Harold Bloom's assertion that "The Scholar-Gipsy" consists primarily of "the odes of Keats crowding out poor Arnold," noting instead "the radically revisionary nature of Arnold's indebtedness to Keats in this poem" (Bloom 154; Ulmer 261). According to Ulmer, Arnold's wanderer owes his initial appearance to Keats's Romantic natural magic but undergoes a significant transformation:

> In the Cumnor tableaux, Arnold leaves the scholar elusive and mysterious in order simultaneously to evoke and fend off the haunting presence of Keats: to preserve his own individual talent, Arnold must at first make the gipsy a figure whose looks, happily, he only half knows. In the visionary hinge of the poem, Arnold kills off the scholar-gipsy as John Keats so as to resurrect him as Matthew Arnold. [. . .] His "death" corresponds to the poet's renunciation of Keatsian dream. (254-5)

This is the manner in which "Arnold arrives at the social criticism of the latter section from the idyllic pastoralism of the former" (247). Keats's anxious relationship with time and his attempts to transcend it through natural magic become Arnold's own comment on the fragmentation of the modern world. Ulmer's argument is convincing; what he has not noted, however, is the role of

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but the language and customs of the gypsies, was inquiring after Glanvill's second book, *Lux Orientalis*, (1662) when he stayed in England in 1670 with Glanvill's preceptor, the Cambridge Platonist Henry More; an earlier connection seems not unlikely (1). At any rate, from *Scepsis Scientifica*, the story was removed" (Glanvill xiv).

the Gypsy himself in this commentary—a role available to the wanderer specifically because he has "become" a Gypsy.

In its third appearance, Arnold's Gypsy emblem underwent another significant evolution in "The Scholar-Gipsy." The seeds of this change, however, are found four years earlier in "Resignation." By 1853, the Scholar-Gypsy has combined the characteristics of the Gypsy band and the ideal poet, for he has seemingly achieved both the poetical and temporal ideals of the earlier poem. Discussing "Resignation," Tinker and Lowry first note the connection between the poet in that poem and the wanderer in "Scholar-Gipsy": "The young poet's power in the description of natural scenery, which was to come to perfection in the 'Oxford poems,' is here fully manifest; indeed, we have here, in solution, the elements which were to issue as 'The Scholar-Gipsy,'—the gipsies themselves, as well as the youthful, questing poet, watchful but aloof" (68). They draw special attention to the "Resignation" lines describing the poet:

> From some high station he looks down,
> At sunset, on a populous town;
> [. . . . . .]
> He leans upon a gate and sees
> The pastures, and the quiet trees.
> Low, woody hill, with gracious bound,
> Folds the still valley almost round;
> The cuckoo, loud on some high lawn,
> Is answer'd from the depth of dawn;
> In the hedge straggling to the stream,
> Pale, dew-drench'd, half-shut roses gleam;
> But, where the farther side slopes down,
> He sees the drowsy new-waked clown
> In his white quaint-embroider'd frock
> Make, whistling, tow'rd his mist-wreathed flock—
> Slowly, behind his heavy tread,
> The wet, flower'd grass heaves up its head.
> (164-85)

Tinker and Lowry point out that these are lines "which might, but for metrical differences, be transferred to the later poem," for "here is the pensive watchfulness of the gipsy-scholar, who

attains at last to a participation in that 'general life' which does not cease" (68-9). Although Tinker and Lowry do not note the fact, these lines could refer not only to the Scholar-Gypsy himself but also to the speaker early in the poem.

"The Scholar-Gipsy" is most easily examined in the order of its five sections: the three-stanza natural descriptions of the introduction; the ten-stanza vision of the Scholar-Gypsy; the one-stanza dismissal of that vision; the nine-stanza re-framing of the vision; and the two-stanza symbol of the Tyrian trader.[3] The poem begins with the speaker's pastoral description. In these lines, though, while he is describing the surrounding hills, we also learn something of the speaker himself. He begins the poem as a poetic idler: while the world goes on about him, he lies in the grass with "Glanvil's book" (31). He lies in his Bower of Bliss (29), watching and listening to the shepherd and reapers around him in the Cumnor countryside, and he approves of their labour. It is not, however, for him. He tells the shepherd, "Go, for they call you, shepherd from the hill; / Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes!" (1-2). Two stanzas later, though, he tells the shepherd, "Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field, / And here till sun-down, shepherd! will I be" (21-2). Echoing Keats' "To Autumn,"[4] he dreamily observes,

> Here will I sit and wait,
> While to my ear from uplands far away
> The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
> With distant cries of reapers in the corn—
> All the live murmur of a summer's day.
> (16-20)

While the shepherd tends his flocks and while the reapers work in the distant fields, the speaker will idle the day away, dreaming of the Gypsy-Scholar. His idleness is made possible only

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[3] In *Imaginative Reason: The Poetry of Matthew Arnold*, Dwight Culler argues that these five sections are even more easily understood as actually a threefold structure: "the structure is essentially threefold because its main movement is the vision, the loss of the vision, and its recreation in a different mode. It is the product, first, of the heart and imagination, then, of the senses and understanding, and finally, of the imaginative reason" (165).

[4] Kenneth Allott catalogues many such connections between the poem and Keats's odes (357-9).

because he does not feel the need to *use* the day, the hours. Unlike these laborers, he can lie here and free himself from time as he slips into a dream of an Oxford student who lived two hundred years earlier.

This idleness, though, while preventing him from labor, allows the poetic speaker to achieve an important characteristic: detachment. While the work of the world goes on, he is able to observe it and meditate upon it. His behavior is strikingly suggestive of the ideal "Resignation" poet leaning upon the gate, and he also resembles the even more aggrandizing description of the poet earlier in that poem:

> The poet, to whose mighty heart
> Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,
> Subdues that energy to scan
> Not his own course, but that of man.
> (144-7)

This "Resignation" poet, like the speaker in "The Scholar-Gipsy," is able to see the world's tides flow and the people of the world "from some high station," and he

> Exults—yet for no moment's space
> Envies the all-regarded place.
> Beautiful eyes meet his—and he
> Bears to admire uncravingly.
> (158-61)

The speaker of the Oxford poem, like this ideal poet, achieves this Stoic or Hindu detachment, admires the work of the world, but does not feel compelled to join it.

This detachment from the shepherd and reapers is all the more significant if one examines the shepherd more closely. In a letter to his brother Tom (15 May 1857), Arnold wrote,

> You alone of my brothers are associated with that life at Oxford, the *freest* and most delightful part, perhaps, of my life, when with you and Clough and Walrond I shook off all the bonds and formalities of the place, and enjoyed the spring of life and that unforgotten Oxfordshire and Berkshire country. Do you remember a poem of mine called "The Scholar Gipsy"? It was meant to fix the remembrance

> of those delightful wanderings of ours in the Cumner Hills before they were quite effaced. (*Letters* 1: 359)

Arnold's memories of this time and this place are tied up with his memories of his brother and of Clough. Tom Arnold and Clough, however, upon leaving Oxford took up lives of action, as they grew increasingly concerned by the events of the 1840s. Dwight Culler, in arguing for a threefold structure to the poem, notes the changes in where the poet situates himself throughout the poem. He observes that, in these first three stanzas, Arnold "is clearly not in the world. On the contrary, he is parting company with those shepherds, like Clough and his brother Tom, who are so agitated by the unrest of the late 1840's that they must engage in direct social action" (186). In these stanzas, Arnold is not only idling the hours away, but he is also escaping the times; he leaves the associates of his youth who have become laborers in the political unrest of the day, and he escapes to the idyllic "life at Oxford, the *freest* and most delightful part, perhaps, of my life."

At this point, in the fourth stanza, the speaker slips into his vision of the scholar in the present tense. The Gypsy-Scholar of the next ten stanzas is not unlike the speaker of the poem in the first three. He is so firmly fixed in the present that he is even more of a poetic idler than the speaker is. The words and phrases that reflect the Scholar-Gypsy's idleness are many: "forsook / His friends," "roam'd the world," "seated," "some lone alehouse," "trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet," "leaning backward in a pensive dream," "fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers," "sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown," "thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air," "hanging on a gate / To watch the threshers" (another echo of "To Autumn"), "eying, all an April-day, / The springing pastures and the feeding kine," "move slow away," "stray." The most telling phrase in these stanzas comes in the twelfth stanza: "waiting for the spark from heaven to fall" (120). In Glanvill's version of the tale, the scholar has a purpose; he is in active pursuit of a

goal. He wishes to discover the secrets of the Gypsy lore and to return to civilization with what he has learned. Here, though, the Gypsy is not actively doing anything. He is simply "waiting."

Indeed, in the first half of Arnold's poem, the scholar has been "waiting" for two hundred years, for he still idles about the countryside in the present tense, detached not only from civilization but also from even his Gypsy fellows. In fact, as Tinker and Lowry note, "the wandering scholar betrays an un-gipsylike disinclination to associate with his own kind, nor does he see enough of men to practise his art of subduing their thoughts to his own will" (208). For this reason, the speaker identifies himself with this immortal Scholar-Gypsy: "thus, from the opening of the poem to line 131, the poet is not in the world but is with the Scholar-Gipsy" (Culler 186). Like the Scholar-Gypsy, the speaker is idle and detached; he, therefore, feels kinship to his eternally youthful Gypsy brother.

Having detached himself from his peers, established himself and the Oxford truant as poetic idlers, identified himself with the scholar, and dreamt of an immortality in the present, the speaker creates an ideal, albeit fictive, existence for himself and his wandering friend. Unfortunately, in the fourteenth stanza, he comes to an alarming discovery. The speaker is startled to consciousness by the awareness that his vision of the Scholar-Gypsy is merely a dream. He repudiates the possibility of the immortality he has imagined for the Oxford lad:

> But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown
> Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
> And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
> That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls
> To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy-tribe;
> And thou from earth art gone
> Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid—
> Some country-nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
> Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
> Under a dark, red-fruited yew-tree's shade.
> (131-40)

In this stanza, the Scholar-Gypsy is the subject of a dramatic and jarring realization for the speaker. The scholar is long since dead, long since succumbed to the effects of time. The shepherds and reapers of the first three stanzas, those who labor in the world, are the ones who are still alive. And from this point on, the speaker no longer identifies himself with the Gypsy. Instead, in order to find some answer to the problem of time, the speaker must distance himself from this mortal being or try to find some way to salvage the scholar's immortality; thus, as Culler observes, "the descent which destroys the Gipsy changes the locus of the poem, and from line 131 on he is no longer with the Gipsy but is in the world" (186).

Even so, rather than discarding the Gypsy as an emblem of immutability, Arnold transforms him. In the very next stanza, Arnold makes his most important philosophical statement of the poem, one that he also makes elsewhere in his poetry. Having admitted the Gypsy's physical death, the speaker realizes,

> —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.
> Till having used our nerves with bliss and teens,
> And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
> To the just-pausing Genius we remit
> Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.
> (141-50)

These are the enervating effects of time described in "Growing Old," in which Arnold describes that to grow old is to "feel but half, and feebly, what we feel" (27). He makes the same argument in the Breton Iseult's section of "Tristram and Iseult":

> Dear saints, it is not sorrow, as I hear.
> Not suffering, which shuts up eye and ear
> To all that has delighted them before,
> And lets us be what we were once no more.

> No, we may suffer deeply, yet retain
> Power to be moved and soothed, for all our pain,
> By what of old pleased us, and will again.
> No, 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,
> In whose hot air our spirits are upcurl'd
> Until they crumble, or else grow like steel—
> Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the spring—
> Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,
> But takes away the power—this can avail,
> By drying up our joy in everything,
> To make our former pleasures all seem stale.
> (112-26)

The same dilemma exists in "Memorial Verses," a numbness caused by the world. As is the case in so many of Arnold's poems, in "Scholar-Gipsy," time and the world that the Gypsy child unconsciously dreaded remove from humans the ability to feel and to focus.

The Scholar-Gypsy, on the other hand, has not experienced this phenomenon because, although he has not achieved a physical escape from time, his philosophical escape has allowed him also a philosophical immortality. As William Ulmer notes, in this stanza, "the poet unquestionably addresses not time itself, an experientially neutral 'lapse of hours,' but a particular way of meeting the passing moments—one which leaves people frustrated and ennervated but not literally dead" (257). Time becomes not the individual ticks of the clock but the manner in which people face and use those ticks. Thus, time for the Scholar-Gypsy and the speaker becomes not a physical reality but a psychological perception.

The way one faces time, then, may cause one's victimization by it, but the Gypsy escapes society and its perceptions, thereby escaping a life laid waste by time or a death brought on by it: "Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?" (151). The Gypsy is unlike Arnold himself, about whom his father said, while Matt was at Rugby, "He does not like being alone. . . . He flitters about from flower to flower, but is not apt to fix" (Honan 41). Rather, the speaker tells the Scholar-Gypsy, "Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire; / Else wert thou long

since number'd with the dead! / Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!" (152-4). The scholar is "apt to fix." Despite his physical death, his fixity of purpose prevents the Gypsy's being "number'd with the dead," for although all of his contemporaries have died and although the speaker and his contemporaries will eventually succumb to time as well, the speaker tells the wanderer, "Thou possessest an immortal lot, / And we imagine thee exempt from age / And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page" (157-9).

Furthermore, neither the Scholar-Gypsy nor the speaker is an idler in the remaining stanzas. The speaker goes from lying in the grass, listening to the workers, and dreaming of the Gypsy to being a part of the world. He tells the scholar of "this strange disease of modern life, / With its sick hurry, its divided aims, / Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts," and encourages the Gypsy "fly hence, *our* contact fear!" (203-5, 206; emphasis added). Of course, the work of the world is ineffectual: we, the speaker says, "lose to-morrow the ground won to-day" (179). Even so, that ground is still won today; the speaker and the world are not idle. We are, however, unavailing, unfocused, and purposeless in our efforts, we "who fluctuate idly without term or scope, / Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives, / And each half lives a hundred different lives" (167-9).

In contrast, the Scholar-Gypsy no longer simply idles the time away for two-hundred-year-stretches and waits for the spark from heaven, for the waiting has become an active passivity:

> Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
> Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,
> Nursing *thy project* in unclouded joy,
> And every doubt long blown by time away.
> (197-200; emphasis added)

The Gypsy, after the revelation of stanza fourteen, now has a "project," and even that waiting has become goal-oriented. He is now focused, purposeful, effective. Culler describes this transformation well:

> In the vision he was a shy, romantic figure, elusive, diffident, and somewhat fey. He was a kind of odd fellow of the woods, dressed in antique hat, with "dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air." He was a poetic idler, a dabbler in nooks and crannies, swinging on gates and trailing his fingers in the stream. But in the non-mythical statement of the fourth section he is made of sterner stuff. Here he has "*one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire," the italics conferring on him a single-minded purposiveness which has been quite foreign to him hitherto, as if he knew exactly where that spark from heaven was and was going straight for it! [. . .] whereas previously he was a wanderer with the emphasis on the wandering, now he is a wanderer with the emphasis upon the goal. (188)

The Scholar-Gypsy no longer simply waits; now he quests, albeit passively.[5] In a pointedly effective reversal of Wordsworth's 1807 poem, therefore, in Arnold's poem, it is the Gypsy who has a clear goal, and the world, like Wordsworth's Gypsies, has no aim, no purpose, no "goings on."

Whereas, however, the speaker's loss of idleness leads to a loss of detachment as he returns to the world and suffers its purposelessness and ineffectiveness, he perceives the Gypsy's shift from idleness as leading to even greater detachment. He is no longer identified at all with either nature or with the speaker. In fact, much of the remainder of the poem is composed of the speaker's urging the Gypsy to steer clear of society altogether. He was already an unusually solitary character for a Gypsy, separate from both *Gajo* and Roma; now, though, the speaker pleads for him not even to hang on gates to observe humanity from a distance but, instead, to

> [. . .] fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
> For strong the infection of our mental strife,
> Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;

[5] In "Arnold's Passive Questers," David Eggenschwiler examines this "passive quester" in light of the pastoral tradition and argues that the focus of the quest is of little importance: "Instead of centering on questions of epistemology, Arnold emphasizes the quester's emotional state" (2). This emotional state involves the disinterestedness that Arnold so often advocates.

> And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
> Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
> Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
> Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,
> And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
> And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
> Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.
> (221-9)

The Gypsy's detachment, then, becomes doubly important. His detachment is an effort to find the spark from heaven, yet the speaker makes clear that the lad's detachment is crucial not only for his inspiration and enlightenment but also for his own survival. He is aloof both to achieve a timeless goal and to avoid a modern fate. In this way, he is, as Allott observes, "a Callicles miraculously preserved from turning into an Empedocles" (356).

Arnold re-emphasizes, then, that the Scholar-Gypsy's immunity to the effects of time comes from his detachment from society and even from the other Gypsies. Like the English Gypsies of Arnold's day, he is an Other to middle-class society. He is separate from the "bliss and teen" of the world, but unlike the nineteenth-century Gypsy, he is aloof by choice, not by ostracism and prejudice; he is a Gypsy by lifestyle, not by race. Thus, this Oxford lad, a studious lad, capable of reflection and consciousness, achieves by will a state similar to the one that the Gypsies of "Resignation" are capable of by heredity and instinct. Arnold's Oxford hero chooses the Gypsy life for a simple and noble reason: he is pursuing Truth and fleeing the disease of modernity, hoping thereby to achieve immunity to the effects of time. He is able to do this only through physical and philosophical detachment, which leads to his temporal transcendence. He goes to the Gypsies but is still not one of them. In this way, he is like the speaker of "Grande Chartreuse" who goes to the monastery for answers but still is no monk and must eventually leave the monastery to find Truth on his own. This temporal transcendence is, of course,

impossible in the physical realm: Arnold admits the mortality of his ideal, "in some quiet churchyard laid."

Roger Wilkenfeld argues that the wandering scholar is a poor model for Arnold's central argument about single-mindedness and transcendence. According to Wilkenfeld,

> The scholar-gipsy was not the most fortunate choice Arnold could have made as a model by which to criticize contemporary life because he was a real, historical man and a character in a tale. The real scholar-gipsy, who died so long ago, did not have, obviously, the one characteristic that makes the imaginary scholar a suitable model: immortality. This is Arnold's bind. He has to reject the real scholar, accept the imaginary scholar and thus criticize the real men and their real behavior in the mid-nineteenth century in the perspective of a figure who is a creature of his and Glanvill's imagination. Therefore, the scholar has to be argued into immortality. (124)

Risking, however, what might be considered a semantic quibble, I would argue that, through the imagination, Arnold does not transform the Gypsy lad so much as he transforms the nature of immortality itself.[6] In this poem, Arnold redefines what it is to transcend time, and in the process, he secures that transcendence for the wanderer and, at the same time, makes it theoretically available to himself and his contemporaries. As I have said, Arnold abridges the Glanvill material that emphasizes the power to "bind anothers" imagination (Glanvill 198). What he retains instead from Glanvill is the power of the Imagination, for the tale of the Oxford lad lies within a lengthy discussion of Cartesian philosophy and the nature of Impossibilities and Probabilities. Glanvill asserts that the Gypsy-lore the lad claims "will be reckon'd in the first rank of *Impossibles*: Yet by the power of advanc'd *Imagination* it may very probably be effected" (195-6).

Through the power of imagination, therefore, Arnold redefines the concept of immortality, making it no longer physical but psychological and philosophical. As Ulmer notes, "Arnold redefines the idea of immortal life as a metaphor for constant dedication and wholeness

[6] Ulmer also makes this distinction between transforming the scholar and redefining immortality (256).

of self. No other immortality is available in man's relentlessly temporalized existence. [. . .] The status of such immortality remains psychological, not ontological" (256). In the face of incontrovertible evidence that one cannot achieve a physical transcendence of time, Arnold is forced to seek an alternative for his 1853 Gypsy. In this way, even after acknowledging that the Gypsy-Scholar is long since dead, Arnold reclaims him as an ideal Other, a living touchstone for detachment, wholeness, focus, and transcendence of time against which Arnold can judge diseased contemporary society. He becomes more than just a dream for the speaker: he is now a living representative of the permanence that Arnold seeks.

v. Securing Immortality: Arnold's "Thyrsis"

Eight years after Arnold published "The Scholar-Gipsy," a jarring event took place in his life that caused him to revisit the ageless wanderer of the Cumnor hills. In the autumn of 1861, in Europe with his wife, Clough suffered a neuralgic fit, followed a few days later by a stroke which left paralyzed his eye, one leg, and finally his lungs. Arthur Hugh Clough died in Florence on November 13, 1861, and was buried there in the Protestant Cemetery (Honan 310).

At first, Arnold found it difficult to find what he ought to say on Clough's life and death; he knew, however, he would need to say something. A week after Clough's death, Arnold wrote to his mother,

> First of all, you will expect me to say something about poor Clough. That is a loss which I shall feel more and more as time goes on, for he is one of the few people who ever made a deep impression on me, and as time goes on, and one finds no one else who makes such an impression, one's feeling about those who did make it gets to be something more and more distinct and unique. Besides, the object of it no longer survives to wear it out himself by becoming ordinary and different from what he was. People were beginning to say about Clough that he never would do anything now, and, in short, to pass him over. I foresee that there will now be a change, and attention will be fixed on what there was of extraordinary promise and interest in him when young, and of unique and

> imposing even as he grew older without fulfilling people's expectations. I have been asked to write a Memoir of him for the Daily News, but that I cannot do. 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. (*Letters* 2: 101-2)

Upon her return to London, Arnold wrote to Mrs. Clough, "No one will ever again be to me what he was. I shall always think—although I am not sure that he would have thought this himself,—that no one ever appreciated him—no one of his men friends, that is—so thoroughly as I did" (*Letters* 2: 105). In January of 1862, after Mrs. Clough had sent some of Clough's unpublished verse, Arnold, sounding rather as if he was again breaking away to join the Scholar-Gypsy, wrote, "I cannot tell you how glad I am to have the lines you have sent me. I shall take them with me to Oxford, where I shall go alone after Easter;—and there, among the Cumner hills where we have so often rambled, I shall be able to think him over as I could wish. Here, all impressions are half impressions, and every thought is interrupted" (*Letters* 2: 121).

Presumably, this Easter visit to Oxford finally suggested to Arnold what he ought to say about Clough, for in his list of works to be composed in 1863, he wrote "Clough & the Cumner hill-side." He did not, though, cancel the title to indicate completion (Tinker and Lowry 215). "Thyrsis," Arnold's elegy to his friend, was probably written between 1864 and 1865, and it was completed by January 1866 (Allott 537). The poem, though, was not exactly what one might have expected. Although the poem is ostensibly about Clough, the real focus of the poem is the Oxford countryside and Clough's and Arnold's youth spent there. On April 12, 1866, the same month that "Thyrsis" was published, Arnold wrote to J. C. Shairp,

> "Thyrsis" is a very quiet poem, but I think solid and sincere. It will not be popular, however. It had long been in my head to connect Clough with that Cumner country, and when I began I was carried irresistibly into this form; you say, truly, however, that there is much in Clough (the whole *prophet* side, in fact) which one cannot deal with in this way, and one has the feeling, if one reads the poem as a memorial poem, that not enough is said about Clough in it; I feel this so

> much that I do not send the poem to Mrs. Clough. Still Clough *had* this idyllic side, too; to deal with this suited my desire to deal again with that Cumner country: anyway, only so could I treat the matter this time. *Valeat quantum*. (*Letters* 3: 35)

Arnold's sense is correct: "one has the feeling, if one reads the poem as a memorial poem, that not enough is said about Clough in it." This feeling, though, occurs only if one reads the poem as a memorial exclusively to Clough. If one reads "Thyrsis" as a memorial to the past shared with Clough, to lost youth, to an anxiety about time, then one could ask for little more in the poem, and Arnold made this explicit when, in 1867 and 1868, he added the Lucretian epigraph:

> Thus yesterday, to-day, to-morrow come,
> They hustle one another and they pass;
> But all our hustling morrows only make
> The smooth to-day of God.

From 1869 on, he dropped this epigraph, but he did copy the lines into his 1868 diary (Tinker and Lowry 214). Nonetheless, these lines draw attention not to Clough but to the centrality to the poem of Arnold's anxiety about time, and in the poem itself, the Scholar-Gypsy again makes an appearance in relation to this anxiety.

Philip Drew argues that the temporal connection between "The Scholar-Gipsy" and "Thyrsis" is so strong that the two are best read as one long poem, a diptych, or two movements of a single symphony, "'The-Scholar-Gipsy-and-Thyrsis'" (205, 206, 211, 220). In fact, he asserts, "It is not too strong to say that 'The Scholar-Gipsy' and 'Thyrsis' represent the most serious scrutiny of the meaning of Time since the Mutability cantos" (222-3n). Drew further insists that

> The melancholy in the poem [. . .] is what the poem is all about—the feelings of man at the passage of time, the fear that life is no more than an inevitable process of decay and disintegration, an inert world created by reference to inert poetic traditions, the personal and the cultural dismays interpenetrating, and the limited scope of the dramatic action reflecting the limited choices available to modern man. (218)

In this way, Drew compares Arnold's poems to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* fifty-odd years later. In "Thyrsis," though, as in "The Scholar-Gipsy," Arnold does not simply acknowledge and describe the fear attending mutability and mortality, but he also employs the Gypsy emblem in an effort to find an answer to the human dilemma of time. In both Cumnor poems, he succeeds by an imaginative redefinition of immortality so that he, Clough, and the Gypsy scholar can together transcend temporality.

From the very first line of the poem, the effects of time are the primary focus of "Thrysis": "How changed is here each spot man makes or fills! / In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the same" (1-2). This subject is further emphasized through the speaker's recognition that, although he remembers the country, the country no longer remembers him and through the traditional *Ubi Sunt* stanza (121-40). The speaker is stricken with the grief that time has laid waste to his friend. The passage of time and the inevitability of death have removed Thyrsis and his song from the world. Arnold asserts that Clough lost his youth and died because he left Oxford for social duty (although, actually, it was religious scruples): "He went; his piping took a troubled sound / Of storms that rage outside our happy ground; / He could not wait their passing, he is dead" (48-50). The speaker compares Thyrsis to the cuckoo, "too quick despairer," whose "parting cry" comes before midsummer, the best part of the year (61, 57). Unlike the cuckoo, though, Thyrsis will never return:

> But Thyrsis never more we swains shall see;
> See him come back, and cut a smoother reed,
> And blow a strain the world at last shall heed—
> For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd thee!
>
> Alack, for Corydon no rival now!—
> (77-80)

The speaker also acknowledges time's effects on himself. "Time, not Corydon, hath conquered" Thyrsis, but Time also conquers Corydon. Just as Time has seduced Thyrsis into the world and quieted his tune, Time has also deprived the speaker of his own song and of his detachment, driving him from Oxford against his will:

> Ah me! this many a year
> My pipe is lost, my shepherd's holiday!
> Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart
> Into the world and wave of men depart;
> But Thyrsis of his own will went away.
> (36-40)

Although Clough left Oxford by choice, the same fate, the same effect of time that took Clough awaits Arnold, whether he wills it or not:

> Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night
> In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.
> I see her veil draw soft across the day,
> I feel her slowly chilling breath invade
> The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with grey;
> I feel her finger light
> Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train;—
> The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,
> The heart less bounding at emotion new,
> And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again.
> (131-40)

Again, this sounds a great deal like the complaints of "Growing Old," the complaints of one who dreads the passing of time and the onset of age, not for what it brings but for what it takes away. Time takes away the ability to feel, the ability to hope, the ability to be resilient in the face of the adversities of life, for now, "long the way appears, which seem'd so short / To the less practised eye of sanguine youth" (141-2). He finds now that "the mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth" are much higher than they seemed in youth (144), and he discovers that his strivings seem vain: "unbreachable the fort / Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall" (146-7). The speaker

feels now that "strange and vain the earthly turmoil grows" (148). In this way, the speaker of "Thyrsis" sounds rather like the speaker of "The Last Word," who exclaims,

> Creep into thy narrow bed,
> Creep, and let no more be said!
> Vain thy onset! all stands fast.
> Thou thyself must break at last.
>
> Let the long contention cease!
> Geese are swans, and swans are geese.
> Let them have it how they will!
> Thou art tired; best be still.
> (1-8)

The changes mentioned in the first two lines of the poem, however, are not natural but are those that time-bound humans have effected. The crucial question to which the entire poem seeks an answer, though, comes just a few lines later: "Are ye too changed, ye hills?" (6). In his grief for his lost companion, the speaker has returned to the Cumnor hills, "the old haunt," hoping for the consolation of immutability (103). As in "Scholar-Gipsy," the speaker seeks assurance that there exists at least some form of invulnerability to time, and he seeks that assurance in the country surrounding "that sweet city with her dreaming spires" (19). Here, nature, so long as it is untouched by humans, seems untouched also by time. Even in winter, a time of age and of death, the speaker notes "the youthful Thames" and observes that "this winter-eve is warm" (15-16). Oxford has not changed; the speaker has. He cannot find his way not because the countryside itself is different but because "some loss of habit's power / Befalls me wandering through this upland dim" (22-3).

This disorientation allows for the primary quest of the speaker—to find "the signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs" (14). When he discovers that his memory of the countryside is no longer fresh, the speaker wonders, "Now seldom come I, since I came with him. / That single elm-tree bright / Against the west—I miss it! is it gone?" (25-7). Just as the Scholar-Gypsy was

the central emblem of the earlier Oxford poem, the signal elm is the center of this one, and like the wanderer, it is a symbol of permanence, of security from time. This important tree "crowns / The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames" (12-13). As Gypsies are from the ancient East, the signal elm is "against the west" (27), the youth the speaker is attempting to revisit. When he realizes that, unlike the shepherds of Sicily, he cannot convince Proserpine with his song to release Thyrsis because she does not know Cumnor, he offers, "Well! wind-dispersed and vain the words will be, / Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour / In the old haunt, and find our tree-topp'd hill!" (101-3). This urgent quest is part of what ties this elegy to the earlier one. Allott recognizes that "the search for the tree in the poem is a repetition of the scholar-gipsy's quest" (540n.). This search is for Truth, a truth capitalized by its immutability.

The tree further links "Thyrsis" to "Scholar-Gipsy" because the Gypsy's survival is inextricably tied up in the signal elm's. The speaker explains that the value of the elm lies not in itself but in its relationship with the Gypsy-Scholar: "We prized it dearly; while it stood, we said, / Our friend, the Gipsy-Scholar, was not dead; / While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on" (28-30). The tree itself signifies that immutability is possible simply because it verifies that the Oxford lad still wanders. When the speaker realizes that the signal elm still stands, he is assured that, even more than two hundred years later, the Scholar-Gypsy still roams. This explains the ecstasy of the speaker's discovery when he exclaims, "The Tree! the Tree! / I take the omen!" (160-1). Upon his admission, "I cannot reach the signal-tree to-night, / Yet, happy omen, hail!" (165-6), Drew argues that spotting the tree is not "offered as a triumphant climax. Arnold does not reach the tree. In fact he recognises that he cannot reach it '*tonight'* (i.e. before he dies); what the epiphany does grant him is the assurance that the tree was not imaginary, that the vigour, certainty and happiness of youth are realities, even though he can no longer recover

them" (215). One may, however, suggest just the opposite: while he does not "reach the signal-tree to-night," the tree is significant, not in itself, but in its role as an omen, an omen that the Scholar-Gypsy lives and that victory over time is possible. He has secured immortality for the wandering lad, albeit an oddly vulnerable one given its reliance on the continuance of the tree. Now he must turn to Clough and himself.

As in the earlier Oxford poem, however, this ecstasy is sobered by reality, and that reality is, in turn, transformed to allow again for a modified form and understanding of immortality. The elm tree stands, but Clough is dead. As when the dreamer realizes in the 1853 elegy that the Scholar-Gypsy has been long since dead, the speaker here realizes,

> Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our tree is there!—
> Ah, vain! These English fields, this upland dim,
> These brambles pale with mist engarlanded,
> That lone, sky-pointing tree, are not for him.
> (171-4)

Clough is dead; perhaps the tree, then, does not signify that Arnold's hopes are possible. This realization, though, is followed immediately by a creative concession that allows Clough to go on:

> To a boon southern country he is fled,
> And now in happier air,
> Wandering with the great Mother's train divine
> (And purer or more subtle soul than thee,
> I trow, the might Mother doth not see)
> Within a folding of the Apennine,
>
> Thou hearest the immortal chants of old!—
> Putting his sickle to the perilous grain
> In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian king,
> For thee the Lityerses-song again
> Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing.
> (175-85)

Thyrsis has attained, like the Scholar-Gypsy, a philosophical and psychological immortality since a physical one is impossible. "Wandering" (like the Gypsy) with Demeter, he now hears the victory song of Daphnis who, with Hercules's help, defeated Lityerses, the champion corn-reaper. In its traditional reaping and autumnal associations, this is a victory over the age and death of the year, the assurance that Keats's autumn contains no gathering swallows. Clough, through death, has achieved a form of immortality, even if it is not a physical one, for he is now in a place where winter never comes.

Having situated Clough in a modified immutability and having acknowledged that "round me too the night / In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade," Arnold now has to find a way to achieve immunity to time himself. He has not died, so he cannot enjoy the sort of immortality that he has imagined for Clough. He again identifies himself, therefore, with the Scholar-Gypsy. In the very next stanza after describing the effects of time that he feels in his own life—the aging, the loss of vitality, the loss of hope, the loss of elasticity of heart and mind—the speaker takes a significantly different tone, one that is, in fact, nearly identical to the tone the speaker uses to address the Scholar-Gypsy in the earlier poem. Here, though, he refers to himself:

> But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss
> Of quiet!—Look, adown the dusk hill-side,
> A troop of Oxford hunters going home,
> As in old days, jovial and talking, ride!
> From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they come.
> Quick! let me fly, and cross
> Into yon farther field!—'Tis done; and see,
> Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify
> The orange and pale violet evening-sky,
> Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree!
> (151-60)

Only after fleeing contact with the world, after flying from others as he urged the Gypsy to do in 1853, only then does the speaker achieve the detachment necessary to escape time, and the

"omen" for his success is that he is finally allowed to see the signal elm. This discovery provides for him the hope he has lost as he has aged, and he declares,

> There 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.
> Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,
> Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!
> (191-97)

The Scholar-Gypsy's immortality restores to the speaker the hope that had become, with age, "less quick to spring again." The hope, however, is not simply that the Gypsy has achieved timelessness but that the speaker can, too: "Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay, / Woods with anemonies in flower till May, / Know him a wanderer still; then why not me?" (198-200). While it is possible to read these lines as the speaker's desire to "know [the Scholar-Gypsy] a wanderer" the way the fields and woods do, one can also read them as the speaker's desire to be known as a wanderer himself like the Gypsy. The speaker can hope that such invulnerability to time is available to him as well because, like the Scholar-Gypsy, he has left the world to join in the quest. He first seeks the signal elm, and finding it reminds him that he seeks also the spark from heaven: "A fugitive and gracious light he seeks, / Shy to illumine; and I seek it too" (201-2). The search itself provides the desired immunity to time, for

> . . . the smooth-slipping weeks
> Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired;
> Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,
> He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone;
> Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired.
> (206-10)

Again, then, as in "Scholar-Gipsy," we find that detachment and single-mindedness are the keys to immortality.

In the final stanzas of the poem, having achieved his own immunity to the effects of time, Arnold re-visits Clough's. He has established Clough's psychological and philosophical immortality achieved through death. Now, though, he returns in these last stanzas to make clear that Clough's is also the immortality of the Scholar-Gypsy, achieved through the same quest:

> Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wast bound;
> Thou wanderedst with me for a little hour!
> Men gave thee nothing; but this happy quest,
> If men esteem'd thee feeble, gave thee power,
> If men procured thee trouble, gave thee rest.
> (211-15)

Clough, like Arnold and the Scholar-Gypsy, was on the quest for Truth; he left Oxford, though, too soon, and his song "learnt a stormy note / Of men contention-tost, of men who groan" (223-4). Finally, Clough "was mute" (226). Nevertheless, because he had once been on the quest, Clough is allowed by the speaker a similar form of detachment:

> Yet hadst thou alway visions of our light,
> And long with men of care thou couldst not stay,
> And soon thy foot resumed its wandering way,
> Left human haunt, and on alone till night.
> (227-30)

According to the speaker, Clough left the Cumnor hills for social duty, but he later left the world to wander again like the Gypsy, achieving detachment at last. In the end, though, Clough becomes for Arnold not simply a fellow achiever of immunity to time. Rather, taking on the function of the Scholar-Gypsy himself, Clough becomes the voice of inspiration and hope for Arnold, urging him on his quest so that Arnold may keep the immortality he has gained with Clough and the Scholar-Gypsy:

> Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here!
> 'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,
> Thyrsis! in reach of sheep-bells is my home.
> —Then through the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar,
> Let in thy voice a whisper often come,

To chase fatigue and fear:
Why faintest thou? I wander'd till I died.
Roam on! The light we sought is shining still.
Dost thou ask proof? Our tree yet crowns the hill,
Our Scholar travels yet the loved hill-side.
(231-40)

By thus transforming the definitions of immortality and by changing the laws of time from the physical to the philosophical and the psychological, as in "The Scholar-Gipsy," Arnold secures for the Scholar-Gypsy, for Clough, and for himself the assurance of immunity to the effects of time.

vi. "There and Then"

Arnold was anxious throughout his poetic life about the effects of time. He was concerned about the ticks of the clock and the pages of the calendar that saw his own youth passing while old age and death approached rapidly. This anxiety appears in many of his poems and his letters. For this reason, Arnold sought a central emblem for the possibility of escaping time, and he found it in one of the most discussed topics of the nineteenth century—Gypsies. In Arnold's four Gypsy poems, the Gypsy represents a continually evolving image in relation to time, one that early belies his anxiety and, later, one he learns to manipulate in order to assuage his fears. In "To a Gipsy Child by the Sea-Shore," the Gypsy possesses special foreknowledge of the suffering caused by time. He knows the future, and it brings him sorrow. He may find brief respite, but he cannot utterly escape it. In "Resignation," published in the same volume, the Gypsies possess no special knowledge; quite the contrary, they are unreflective altogether, not considering time's passing at all. Thus, they escape the suffering and "disquietude" the Gypsy child feels. They have ample opportunity to consider the "signs," but they do not, thereby achieving "not joy, but peace." In "The Scholar-Gipsy," on the other hand, the Gypsy achieves

both the special knowledge of the Gypsy child and the detachment of the Gypsy band in "Resignation." The detachment of the Scholar-Gypsy, however, is not merely philosophical but physical and fanciful as well. He has physically detached himself first from civilization and then from the Gypsies themselves. In this way, he achieves a greater escape from the vicissitudes of time than do the earlier Gypsies. Finally, in "Thyrsis," Arnold uses the Scholar-Gypsy once again, finding him still alive through the existence of the signal tree and finding in him a means to immortality for both himself and for his recently-deceased Clough.

In this way and in these uses, this race with no acknowledged cultural history—whose past was obscure, whose future was uncertain, and even whose present was imposed on them and in spite of them by others, whose actions seemed detached from all of these considerations (to the chagrin of both their detractors and their benefactors)—this race recommended itself to Arnold as a much-needed emblem of the possibility of escape from "vicissitude and need." Finding in them this assurance, Arnold turns to them again and again, seeking the strength to face the time he felt was passing him by so quickly. He ostensibly seeks to join his Gypsies outside of time. The only sort of timelessness he is able to achieve, however, is an imaginative philosophical immortality, not a "real" one. Arnold does not appear to be interested in the Gypsies as Others but only as signifiers of timelessness. Nonetheless, in relegating the Gypsies to a position outside of time and in being unable completely to join them there, Arnold reinforces their alterity. He keeps them comfortably "there and then" rather than "here and now," object rather than subject, thereby undermining any true possibility of achieving what he desires.

CHAPTER 5

ATTEMPTING HISTORY IN ELIOT'S *THE SPANISH GYPSY*

i. Eliot's Annunciation

In 1864, as George Eliot ascended the great stairway of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco in Venice, before she climbed the second flight, someone pointed out to her a painting by Titian, an Annunciation. The painting had hung in just this spot from at least 1557, opposite Tintoretto's *Visitation*.[1] This was not the first time Eliot and George Lewes had climbed these stairs. On her previous 1860 visit, she admired the Tintoretto frescoes, created under the patronage of the Confraternity at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco (*Journals* 364). She says in her "Notes on the Spanish Gypsy and Tragedy in General," though, that it was not until her 1864 return to San Rocco that she finally saw the Titian (Cross 3: 42). In that painting, she saw the quietly reflecting Virgin, kneeling at her *prie dieu*, eyes downcast on her prayer book, as a martially garbed Gabriel animatedly delivers his holy message and as the Dove descends on a ray of light from God. Perhaps the painting struck Eliot immediately, but in her journal, "Italy 1864," she writes of Tintoretto's frescoes on Christ with no mention of the Titian. Like the Titian, the Tintorettos at San Rocco are naturally of a religious hue, consisting largely of frescoes from the life of Christ, including an Annunciation. Why she does not mention in her journal the painting she later describes as so singular in her "Notes on the Spanish Gypsy" is a mystery. Why this particular Annunciation instead of, say, the Tintoretto on the same subject hanging

[1] Indeed, the painting hung in this very spot until May 1915, when it was removed to protect it during World War I. It now stands on an easel in the Sala di Capitolo (Biadene and Yakush 213-17).

nearby is also a matter for speculation. Nonetheless, as a sort of cognitive *pentimento*, at some time (by the time she wrote her "Notes," though perhaps not in the Scuola or while writing her journal), that Titian began to grip Eliot's imagination in such a way that much of *The Spanish Gypsy* may be read through Titian's canvas.

Perhaps no commentator on *The Spanish Gypsy* has failed, at least briefly, to acknowledge a relationship between the Virgin Mary and the poem by noting Eliot's own explanation of the poem's genesis. In his three volumes on his late wife's life, John Cross says that Eliot left "four or five pages of MS. Headed, 'Notes on the Spanish Gypsy and Tragedy in general." The pages are undated and possibly unfinished, but the essay, according to Cross "completes the history of the poem" (3: 41). Eliot says, in the essay, that the poem's subject came to her upon her second visit to San Rocco. Though she had, of course, seen other Annunciations, this time,

> it occurred to me that here was a great dramatic motive of the same class as those used by the Greek dramatists, yet specifically differing from them. A young maiden, believing herself to be on the eve of the chief event of her life—marriage—about to share in the ordinary lot of womanhood, full of young hope, has suddenly announced to her that she is chosen to fulfil a great destiny, entailing a terribly different experience from that of ordinary womanhood. She is chosen, not by any momentary arbitrariness, but as a result of foregoing hereditary conditions: she obeys. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." Here, I thought, is a subject grander than that of Iphigenia, and it has never been used. (3: 42)

One can nearly describe Eliot's response to the painting as her own simultaneous annunciation, for Titian's work brings to her an epiphanic moment of her own.

Her vision, though, is not one of holy service. Her reaction to the painting is striking, significant not only because of its later influence on the poem but also because it is radically unlike traditional reactions to the Annunciation. Seeing the Annunciation, both the narrative and its representation in art, as tragic is not unique. While by far the most common response is to see

it as a moment of triumph—the visitation of the divine upon the mortal, the beginnings of redemption, the foreshadowing of the Resurrection—many have also seen in it the seeds of tragedy, the tragedy of Christ's Passion and even the more human tragedy of a mother's losing her son. Intriguingly, though, the tragedy Eliot sees in the Titian is not of these sorts; rather, she sees the tragedy of a woman whose life is being hijacked by God, a woman who is forced to choose between personal duty and societal duty, between "two irreconcilable 'oughts'" (Cross 3: 45). Ultimately, because of "foregoing hereditary conditions," Mary must obey and answers, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord" (3: 42; Luke 1: 38). Stripping the tragedy of its religious elements, Eliot instead makes Mary's a mythic and human tragedy. She empties the devotional painting of everything it is ostensibly about and imbues it with personal, secular meaning.

Upon returning home, Eliot set out "to give the motive a clothing in some suitable set of historical and local conditions" (3: 42-3). The only context that would suit her needs, however, was "that moment in Spanish history when the struggle with the Moors was attaining its climax, and when there was the gypsy race present under such conditions as would enable me to get my heroine and the hereditary claim on her among the gypsies." The choice specifically of Gypsies is intriguing, and ignoring other possibilities, such as class or religious differences, Eliot explains it thus: "I required the opposition of race to give the need for renouncing the expectation of marriage. I could not use the Jews or the Moors, because the facts of their history were too conspicuously opposed to the working out of my catastrophe" (3: 43). This notion of race and "hereditary conditions" is important to Eliot, as she shows repeatedly in her novels, most notably *Daniel Deronda*. As for the Annunciation, she explains, "I saw it might be taken as a symbol of the part which is played in the general human lot by hereditary conditions in the largest sense, and of the fact that what we call duty is entirely made up of such conditions" (3: 43). The

tragedy in such situations, she argues, occurs because, "without the immediate intervention of feeling which supersedes reflections, our determination as to the right would consist in an adjustment of our individual needs to the dire necessities of our lot, partly as to our natural constitution, partly as sharers of life with our fellow-beings" (3: 43-4). This dilemma of being caught between "two irreconcilable 'oughts,'" both equally right and compelling, is the definition of tragedy and, according to Eliot, the foundation for *The Spanish Gypsy*.

As early as September 6, 1864, Eliot had begun a drama on the subject of the Spanish Gypsy, but because of the stress and depression she experienced in constructing her drama and at Lewes's urging, she abandoned it to write *Felix Holt*. The idea would not release her, though, as she wrote to Frederic Harrison on August 15, 1866, "I am going to take up again a work which I laid down before writing 'Felix.' It is [. . .] an attempt at a drama, which I put aside at Mr. Lewes's request. [. . .] Now I read it again, I find it impossible to abandon it: the conceptions move me deeply, and they have never been wrought out before. There is not a thought or symbol that I do not long to use" (*GE Letters* IV: 301). By October 15, she had decided to recast it as a long dramatic poem rather than a drama. Just two years after the appearance of Matthew Arnold's "Thyrsis," she finished the poem on April 29, 1868, publishing *The Spanish Gypsy*, by far the longest and the last significant Gypsy poem of the century and perhaps the most underappreciated work of her career (*Journals* 129, 132).

Sylvia Kasey Marks considers several issues of genre and context to explain why modern readers have not shown the interest in the poem that they have in the novels. Still, Marks concludes that the poem is "artistically less successful" than the novels, and to her, the poem's value appears to lie mainly in that, "from a thematic perspective, it is certainly an important reference point from which to reflect on her earlier novels, as well as to anticipate those which

follow the poem" (186). Nonetheless, the same keenness of thought and many of the concerns one finds in the novels exist also in the poem. To a greater extent than any other single poem of the nineteenth century, *The Spanish Gypsy* explores the Gypsies in terms of race, religion, freedom, and responsibility (all themes, of course, that do appear again and again in Eliot's novels). Critical attention to the poem has centered on those issues, but the critics who have focused on race and religion have done so mostly in terms of the Jews and *Daniel Deronda*, seeing the poem largely as herald of that novel's coming.[2] Focusing on Sephardo or seeing Fedalma's dilemma as simply foreshadowing of Deronda's, some have even completely elided the Gypsies' presence in the poem to talk instead about Eliot's late-career concern for the Jews. The larger group of readers, those who have focused on freedom and responsibility, have done so primarily in terms of gender, seeing the poem as part of Eliot's ongoing exploration of woman's role and woman's duty, particularly as they pertain to renunciation.[3]

One of the few exceptions to these trends is Deborah Epstein Nord, who explores Fedalma specifically as a Gypsy woman, seeing, as I do, a significant intersection between race and gender in the poem. Nord argues that, in *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *The Spanish Gypsy*, "gypsy figures mark not only cultural difference but a deep sense of unconventional, indeed aberrant femininity," for the Brontës and Eliot, feeling "their own anomalousness and their deviance from acceptable modes of feminine thought, behavior, and appearance. [. . .] found in the gypsy an image that would express in a self-consciously literary way their feelings of an almost racial separateness" (190). Considering the Freudian "family romance" played out in foundling plots, in which a male character of a lower social standing

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[2] See Brenda McKay, "Race and Myth: *The Spanish Gypsy*"; and Joss West-Burnham, "Fedalma—'The Angel of a Homeless Tribe': Issues of Religion, Race and Gender in George Eliot's Poetic Drama, *The Spanish Gypsy*".

[3] See James Krasner, "'Where No Man Praised': The Retreat from Fame in George Eliot's *The Spanish Gypsy*"; Sylvia Kasey Marks, "A Brief Glance at George Eliot's *The Spanish Gypsy*"; Victor Neufeldt, "The Madonna and the Gypsy"; Julia Ritter, "Annunciation as Renunciation: Filling Maternal Absence in *The Spanish Gypsy*."

finds out that he is really the child of socially superior parents, Nord asks "how the female version of family romance differs from the male" (192). If the male version "involves the fantasy of social aggrandizement and aspiration," she observes, "we also have to ask what the fantasy of lowly or stigmatized birth (to go back to George Eliot) might mean in the woman writer's narrative." Nord's idea is provocative:

> As Eliot's meditation on *The Spanish Gypsy* suggests, a stigmatized birth not only destines the woman for a higher calling, it frees her from the cultural and literary requirements of the marriage plot. To imagine oneself a gypsy is to escape, in some sense, from conventional femininity; it is also to claim kinship with those who mirror and explain one's anomalousness. The gypsy's habitual swarthiness becomes a marker not simply of foreignness, of non-Englishness, but of heterodox femininity as well. (192)

As evidenced by the dancing spectacle in the Plaça and Silva's subsequent rebuke, Fedalma feels constrained by "conventional femininity" and comes to see Zarca's revelation as a release from that convention. She soon finds, however, that, in order to be released, she must "adopt instead the masculine purposefulness of her father" and become his "younger self" (3: 384, 204). Nord concludes, "Like a father to his daughter, the gypsy is a visible, charismatic, and, indeed, necessary presence that remains always just beyond the limits of respectable and satisfying emulation" (207).

These commentators have all quite rightly granted the poem a place in the larger movement of Eliot's works but, with the exception of Nord, often at the expense of the poem itself. As Eliot's longest poem and the only of her works to focus on the Gypsies, *The Spanish Gypsy* deserves to be explored as a thing, to a large degree, *sui generis*. Partly isolating the poem, for the moment, then, allows the theme to surface that both encompasses these others and relates specifically to the Gypsies. The Gypsies do not only, as Nord suggests, lie "just beyond the limits of respectable and satisfying emulation," but they also lie just beyond history. The

concern with history and the historical permeates this poem, taking in these other readings of gender, religion, race, and responsibility. The poem reveals the Gypsies as a people denied the currents of history, and taken together with the Annunciation that was so striking to Eliot, they become a substitution cipher as the most ready parallel to the tragedy of women. Particularly, as a woman and a Gypsy, Fedalma stands doubly marginalized outside of history as what Christina Crosby calls "the unhistorical other of history" (1).

ii. History's Promises and History's Costs

Matthew Arnold's own anxieties are at the root of his four Gypsy poems, as he focuses on the Gypsies' otherness to Time, free of Time while still subject to "a Politics of Time" (Fabian xl). In Eliot's long poem, however, her focus is not so much on their being outside of time as it is on their being outside of history. Before considering this notion in *The Spanish Gypsy*, a better understanding of these terms is crucial. Discussing time and history is difficult because they are so easily conflated. Dealing with one term without the other is nearly impossible. On a fundamental level, they are alike in their perceived linear progression. They are akin causally as well: one may say that time is the abstract agent that effects material history. In other words, history derives from time.

On the other hand, the two are not really synonymous or causally related if one considers the distinction between "Natural Time" and "Historical Time." In *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Reinhart Koselleck argues that "the generality of a measurable time based on Nature—even if it possesses its own history—cannot be transformed without mediation into a historical concept of time" (xxii). This Natural Time is what gives such pause to Arnold: the changing of the seasons, the growth of a child, the aging of a parent, the passing

of one's own youth. Unlike this Natural Time, though, "historical time, if the concept has a specific meaning, is bound up with social and political actions, with concretely acting and suffering human beings and their institutions and organizations" (Koselleck xxii). Natural Time is largely ontological, the progression bound only by tenses—*was, is, will be*. Historical time, on the other hand, is the progression bound by the minutiae of moments, events, and people. The "fact" of history lies not just in the verb tense but also in all the modifiers that give that verb specific context in the institutions and movements of humankind.

In this way, Arnold's Gypsies, though outside of time, are not without a history: although they perhaps do not feel the vicissitudes of time, they have a lore, a secret, a tradition. Eliot's Gypsies, however, are keenly aware of time, for the past, present, and future are recurring concerns throughout the poem to both Fedalma and Zarca. They do not, though, have a history. To create a tradition, a national inheritance, a racial consciousness for his people is precisely Zarca's goal. Ultimately, however, their attempt to form a Gypsy nation-state in Africa and to enter the national-historical will fail as already, by poem's end, the Gypsies are beginning to move away from Zarca's dream.

How then does one become historical, and how is one made unhistorical? In *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, Johannes Fabian observes,

> According to a famous remark by Karl Popper, 'The historicist does not recognize that it is we who select and order the facts of history' (1966 2:269). Popper and other theorists of science inspired by him do not seem to realize that the problematic element in this assertion is not the constitution of history (who doubts that it is made, not given?) but the nature of the *we*. From the point of view of anthropology, that *we*, the subject of history, cannot be presupposed or left implicit. (xl)

Anthropology is not alone in needing to ask who precisely is "the we" of history? The "nature of the we" and the nature of the implicit "they" are what Christina Crosby explores in her

thoroughly intriguing book *The Ends of History: Victorians and "the Woman Question."* According to Crosby, those who make history, particularly during the nineteenth century, are men. Looking at the intersection of the century's "passion for 'history' and faith in historical explanation of all sorts" and its "fascination with 'women,' the ceaseless posing of 'the woman question,'" Crosby argues that

> in the nineteenth century "history" is produced as man's truth, the truth of a necessarily historical Humanity, which in turn requires that "women" be outside history, above, below, or beyond properly historical and political life. Constructing history as the necessary condition of human life, as so many nineteenth-century texts do, ensures that "man" can emerge as an abstraction, can know himself in history, find his origin there and project his end—but only if there is something other than history, something intrinsically unhistorical. "Women" are the unhistorical other of history. (1)

Met then with history as "both an epistemological and an ontological principle, the determining condition of all life and therefore of all knowledge,"[4] "man" is faced with both positive and negative "ends of history," and those ends carry with them significant sociopolitical corollaries. Negatively, "as a finite being, 'man'—in this sense a particular modern concept—is disqualified from immediate self-presence; he cannot know himself simply through reflection because he is inscribed in a history that precedes and exceeds him, which, in fact, determines his mode of being." History is also positive, though, "for history is the evidence of the collective life of humanity, and the positive end of history, its purpose, is to reveal man to himself, show where humanity has been and where it is tending. History is, thus, first a displacement and then a reconfirmation, at a more profound, more abstract level, of man himself" (1-2). In this way, man finds for himself a home, a place in the world both before a personal birth and after a personal death; history, then, becomes "intelligible" and "the way to feel at home, no longer alien" (5). "Indeed," she continues, "the intelligibility of history, the fact that this invisible force

[4] As Crosby notes, Michel Foucault makes this particular argument more extensively in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*.

can be read in its effects, transforms it from the end of man, his dissolution in finitude, to the end towards which he aims." As an example, Crosby quotes Matthew Arnold in his attempt to escape the fragmentation of which he so often complained: "'the deliverance consists in man's comprehension of this present and past. It begins when our mind begins to enter into possession of the general ideas which are the law of this vast multitude of facts'" (5).[5]

History, therefore, becomes "a secular guarantee of order and meaning, of the necessary relations of origins and ends, and above all, of the man who enters into possession of himself through the possession of this history" (5). Identifying the result of these negative and positive "ends of history" is Crosby's fundamental aim:

> Producing "history" as the truth of man [. . .] necessarily entails constituting various categories which relate to history in quite different ways. "Women" is such a category, a collectivity that is positioned outside of history proper, identified rather with the immediacy and intimacy of social life. "Savages" and all "primitive" men are another; either they stand at the threshold of history, or, like the Jews of Orientalism, are the outmoded remnants of an historical "moment" now past. "The poor," too, are like "savages," barbaric but capable of development. In these ways, "man," that generic, universal category typifying everything human, is in fact constituted through violently hierarchical differences. "Women" must be radically other to history and to men; "primitive" men must be barely human, potentially but not actually historical. (2)

White men, then, are the ones who "are constituted as historical subjects and find 'man' in history by virtue of locating women elsewhere," hence "the ceaseless asking of the woman question" (2, 3).

The remainder of Crosby's book supports her thesis with case studies, the first of which is a chapter on Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* "because, of the various texts, it is driven most powerfully to produce 'history' and to speak the truth of 'man'" (6-7). Rejecting Eliot's own "humanist thesis" for what she aims to do in the novel, Crosby argues that, in "its famous double plot [. . .] the Jews represent what Eliot calls the 'ideal forces' of history, while women (most

[5] Matthew Arnold, *On the Classical Tradition*, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1960), 20.

notably Gwendolen and Deronda's mother) are shown to be essentially unhistorical" (8, 7). In the novel, Gwendolen is sacrificed by Deronda for the sake of his newfound Zionism, and Deronda's mother is forced, against her own wishes, to serve that Zionism by revealing to Deronda his heritage. It is not women alone, though, to whom "Eliot must do violence [. . .] to ensure the historical humanity of man," for the Jews themselves must transform into something nearly unrecognizable for the sake of History. "To make the Jews represent historical 'man,'" Crosby contends,

> Eliot must imagine Judaism as an idealism and conceptualize the Jews as the incarnation, the embodiment of history. She assimilates the Jews to a Greco-Christian philosophical tradition; more precisely, she transforms Judaism into a kind of Hegelianism, making Mordecai, her Jewish prophet, speak Hegelian concepts while referring to Jewish literature, the Talmud, the Midrash, the Kabbala, the Bible. Most importantly, she makes Mordecai a Zionist. If history is to be transcendental, Judaism must be Zionism and Israel must be a nation again, for in Eliot's Hegelian terms, unhistorical time becomes history only through the abstraction of a national life, the corporate existence of a nation-state. (7)

What Eliot does to women in *Deronda* is more obvious, however, than what she does to Jews, for women are "radically excluded while the Jews are sublated, cancelled, *and* preserved in the totality of history" (7). This, as I shall demonstrate, is precisely the model that Eliot previously followed in *The Spanish Gypsy* with Fedalma and the Gypsies.

As Crosby argues, "to ask 'what is history?' yields little, for [. . .] that question is idealizing in its assumption that history is some thing in itself, that it is substantive, unified, to be known through its attributes. The question presupposes its answer." Rather, we must "ask 'how is the concept of history produced?' shift[ing] the focus to the ways in which 'history' comes into being. And this leads to related questions: [. . .] What does 'history' guarantee, and at what cost? The guarantees are generally much more evident than the costs" (145). Crosby argues that, in the nineteenth century, history primarily guarantees unity. In *Daniel Deronda*, for

example, the production of history promises the unity of all humankind, but it does so at the cost of the female characters in the novel and of Judaism itself.

The promises are different in *The Spanish Gypsy*. Here, rather than the unity of all people, history makes two guarantees: to Fedalma, it offers a larger role and freedom from the restrictions of domesticity; to Zarca and the Gypsies, history offers a place for a placeless people, the unity of nationhood for the Gypsies—if only the Gypsies can force their way in from the outside. Ultimately, however, as their fates become intertwined, neither Fedalma nor the Gypsies can force their way into the unities and bounds of history written by European man.

iii. Fedalma: The Unhistorical Woman

Early in *The Spanish Gypsy*, Fedalma repeatedly makes clear her feelings of restriction and her desire for freedom and a larger role in the goings-on of public events. She associates herself with the confined, the caged, and the insignificant but longs to be like the free and the effective. Her love for Silva is consuming, and she grieves having to forgo her marriage, but she desires a largeness that domesticity does not allow her.

The earliest indication of this dilemma comes with her public dance in the Plaça. Our first glimpse of Fedalma occurs during the performance of Roldan, Pablo, and Anibal, the "misanthropic monkey" (1: 214).[6] She dances to Roldan's music, "sole swayed by impulse passionate, / Feeling all life was music and all eyes / The warming quickening light that music makes" (1: 245). As Nord notes, the poem specifically compares her "dance religious" to that of Moses's sister, Miriam, and "the dance foretells Fedalma's own role in the exodus of her people from bondage and helps to conflate Jews and gypsies in a manner that is crucial both to the poem

[6] In the absence of line numbers, citations of the poem refer to book and page number in the Lucien Jenkins edition, the only twentieth-century edition of the poem.

and to the direction Eliot's interest in nationalism and identity will later take" (203).[7] Rather than this Old Testament antecedent, however, Father Isidor sees a New Testament: when he describes her behavior to Silva, he calls her "a lewd Herodias," for "she has profaned herself" by "flaunting her beauties grossly in the gaze / Of vulgar idlers" (1: 260, 261).

When Silva rebukes her for going out in public without him and for dancing in the Plaça, Fedalma expresses her desire for a larger sphere, explaining, "I only went / To see the world with Iñez—see the town, / The people, everything. It was no harm" (1: 265). During her dance, though, the borders between the public and the private become blurred in her unitarian perception: "The joy, the life / Around, within me, were one heaven: I longed to blend them visibly" (265). Nord argues that,

> With Fedalma's dance Eliot embodies the crucial and, for her, necessary link between an unconventional and uninhibited femininity and the possibility of woman's dedication to a good beyond and larger than herself. Dancing before the gaze of the crowd signifies no lack of sexual modesty but an inborn impulse to dedicate herself to 'life in unison with a multitude,' to suppress her individuality—and her personal desires—and to submerge herself in a collective identity. (204)

Fedalma's excited description of her experience to Silva bears out this collective vision:

> Oh! I seemed new-waked
> To life in unison with a multitude—
> Feeling my soul upborne by all their souls
> Floating within their gladness! Soon I lost
> All sense of separateness: Fedalma died
> As a star dies, and melts into the light.
> I was not, but joy was, and love and triumph.
> (1: 266)

Fedalma is enraptured by the feeling that she has escaped the personal and the private and has somehow entered into the larger stream of the universal movements of humankind. The people

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[7] For more on the connections between Jewish and Gypsy nationalism in the poem, see Bernard Semmel, *George Eliot and the Politics of National Inheritance*; and Michael Ragussis, *Figures of Conversion: "The Jewish Question" and English National Identity*.

in the Plaça, too, feel this transformation, for during her dance, "the crowd / Exultant shouts, forgetting poverty / In the rich moment of *possessing her*" (1: 249; emphasis added). The freedom Fedalma seeks begins to have whispers of a different kind of confinement.

Fedalma's longing for freedom from her life as a Spanish noblewoman appears also in the repeated image of jewels. Jewels first appear in the poem when Silva, expecting their expeditious marriage, presents Fedalma with a casket of jewels. She recognizes that "these gems have life in them" (1: 273). After Silva departs, however, Fedalma's expectation of freedom through marriage to affect the larger world disappears immediately. She turns to ponder the casket of jewels and, as she thinks of her impending marriage, sees herself in them:

> Yes, now that good seems less impossible!
> Now it seems true that I shall be his wife,
> Be ever by his side, and make a part
> In all his purposes . . . .
> These rubies greet me Duchess. How they glow!
> Their prisoned souls are throbbing like my own.
> Perchance they loved once, were ambitious proud;
> Or do they only dream of wider life,
> Ache from intenseness, yearn to burst the wall
> Compact of crystal splendour, and to flood
> Some wider space with glory? Poor, poor gems!
> We must be patient in our prison-house,
> And find our space in loving.
> (1: 280)

The life she earlier saw in the gems, she now sees as confined, longing, like herself, for a "wider life," a larger influence.[8]

James Krasner reads Fedalma's longing as ambition, the ambivalent wish for artistic fame that he discusses in terms of Eliot's own life. One can read these desires, though, as something larger than artistic ambitions. Fedalma wishes to be involved in the broader currents of humankind and the historical movements of societies. Just as Silva is fastening the jewels on

[8] This scene and Fedalma's thoughts on looking at the jewels echo curiously the similar scene early in *Middlemarch*, as Dorothea and Celia look at their casket of inherited jewels.

Fedalma, she hears the Gypsy prisoners outside the window and "the sound of fetters." She exclaims,

> O horrible,
> To be in chains! Why, I with all my bliss
> Have longed sometimes to fly and be at large;
> Have felt imprisoned in my luxury
> With servants for my gaolers. O my lord,
> Do you not wish the world were different?
> (1: 274)

She determines, though, that she can be an agent of change for the world once she has married; she declares, "I shall beg much kindness at your hands / For those who are less happy than ourselves.— / Oh I shall rule you!" (1: 275).

Ironically, the jewels that remind Fedalma of her confinement also herald her freedom from the domestic and her first steps toward the historical. Among the other gems lies a necklace that is immediately familiar to her. Juan identifies the jewel as "the Gypsy's necklace" that belonged to the warrior Fedalma had seen earlier in the Plaça (1: 282). In fact, in his early conversation with the commoners at the inn, Juan had already connected Zarca's necklace with Fedalma: describing Zarca, Juan recalls,

> He had a necklace of a strange device
> In finest gold of unknown workmanship,
> But delicate as Moorish, fit to kiss
> Fedalma's neck, and play in shadows there.
> (1: 236)

Recognizing that their fates are somehow intertwined, Fedalma determines immediately to defy Silva and somehow free the Gypsy chief. When Zarca later appears in her chambers, revealing her identity, he explains that, as a child, she played with the necklace as it hung around his neck before she was stolen by the Spanish. Further connecting Fedalma with jewels, he does not regret his stolen necklace but his stolen child: "I lost you as a man may lose a gem" (1: 297). In the

poem, the necklace becomes the symbol of the Gypsy leader and the Gypsy hope. Throughout the remainder of his life in the poem, Zarca wears the necklace "with the Gypsy badge of the flaming torch" (4: 422). After his death, as Fedalma prepares to take ship to Africa, she wears it, "bearing wide upon her breast / Her father's golden necklace and his badge" (5: 441). Fedalma has convincingly taken up the mantle of Gypsy leadership as she attempts to take on her father's role in her people's lives.

Like her dance and her jewels, birds also reflect Fedalma's desire for a wider life and a larger sphere of influence. Several times in the poem, she is compared to a bird. When Captain Lopez tells of Silva's engagement to the seemingly parentless Fedalma, he describes her as "a bird picked up away from any nest" (1: 225). When she describes Zarca's effect on her in the Plaça, Silva teases her for "such bird-like tremors when that savage glance / Turned full upon you in your height of joy" (1: 269). These comparisons between Fedalma and birds are apt, for she herself recognizes in herself the bird's desire for flight and freedom. After her dance in the Plaça, Silva questions the force of his wishes on her, and she answers,

> That depends
> On what the wish may be. You wished me once
> Not to uncage the birds. I meant to obey:
> But in a moment something—something stronger,
> Forced me to let them out. It did no harm.
> They all came back again—the silly birds!
> (1: 264)

In a significant exchange, after Silva tries to draw her attention away from the necklace and the casket of jewels, Fedalma makes her most unambiguous declaration of the tension between her domesticity and her desire to be birdlike in her freedom:

> FEDALMA. 'Tis true
> My mind is too much given to gauds—to things
> That fetter thought within this narrow space.
> That comes of fear.

DON SILVA. What fear?

FEDALMA. Fear of myself.
For when I walk upon the battlements
And see the river traveling toward the plain,
The mountains all screening the world beyond,
A longing comes that haunts me in my dreams—
Dreams where I seem to spring from off the walls,
And fly far, far away, until at last
I find myself alone among the rocks,
Remember then that I have left you—try
To fly back to you—and my wings are gone!

[. . . . . .]

FEDALMA. It is a hateful dream, and when it comes—
I mean, when in my waking hours there comes
That longing to be free, I am afraid:
I run down to my chaimber, plait my hair,
Weave colours in it, lay out all my gauds,
And in my mind make new ones prettier.
You see I have two minds, and both are foolish.
Sometimes a torrent rushing through my soul
Escapes in wild strange wishes; presently,
It dwindles to a little babbling rill
And plays among the pebbles and the flowers.
Iñez will have it I lack broidery,
Says nought else gives content to noble maids.
But I have never broidered—never will.
(1: 276-7)

Fedalma longs for freedom from the mundanity of her life as a Spanish noblewoman, but that desire frightens her, so she escapes the wish by retreating further into domesticity. Even so, there are limits to how deeply she is willing to go, for she refuses ever to embroider like a proper noblewoman.

These bird images and Fedalma's desire for a wider life again come around to the Gypsies. When Juan tells Fedalma who Zarca is, he tells her that the chieftain is "a Gypsy, too, /

Suckled by hunted beasts, whose mother-milk / Has filled his veins with hate." Fedalma responds,

> I thought his eyes
> Spoke not of hatred—seemed to say he bore
> The pain of those who never could be saved.
> What if the Gypsies are but savage beasts
> And must be hunted?—let them be set free,
> Have benefit of chase, or stand at bay
> And fight for life and offspring. Prisoners!
> [. . . . . .]
> They may well hate a cage, like strong-winged birds,
> Like me, who have no wings, but only wishes.
> I will beseech the Duke to set them free.
> (1: 283)

She can imagine only that the Gypsies, like birds and like herself, would long to be free. Zarca, too, acknowledges the difference between caged birds and free birds, between low and noble: as he tries to convince her to take her Gypsy destiny, he says that to stay as a Spanish noblewoman would be to "doff all the eagle plumes / And be a parrot, chained to a ring that slips / Upon a Spaniard's thumb" (1: 309). The most significant bird image in the poem, however, comes at the moment of Zarca's arrival in Fedalma's room, tying Fedalma to the Gypsies irrevocably, a scene I shall discuss more fully later.

Throughout the poem, these motifs—the dance, the gem, and the bird—remind us repeatedly that, in her domestic world, in the realm of the private and the personal, Fedalma feels confined, caged. She longs for freedom not just for the sake of freedom (though she acknowledges all living things hate a cage) but in order to have a larger effect, a broader destiny, a greater responsibility. Echoing John Ruskin's 1837 Gypsy poem's attitude toward freedom, however, the notions of responsibility and destiny call into question the possibility of the liberty Fedalma seeks.

iv. Fedalma: The Unhistorical Madonna

During his interview with Don Silva, when Father Isidor assails Fedalma as a pagan whose "blood / Is as unchristian as a leopard's," Silva contests, "Say, / Unchristian as the Blessed Virgin's blood / Before the angel spoke the word, 'All hail!'" (*SG* 1: 259).[9] As Kimberly VanEsveld Adams notes, Silva's passionate defense is ironically correct. Mary simply cannot be a Christian before the Annunciation and Christ himself; in the Gospels, she is a Jewish maiden responding to a higher calling. Likewise, "Fedalma, responding to her father's call to be exceptional among women, remains where the Prior has situated her, outside the Church" (209). Appearing more even than the images of the dance, the gem, and the bird, though, the image of the Madonna and the Annunciation complicates our understanding of Fedalma's desire for influence. Anna Jameson notes that the Annunciation is "of all the scenes in the life of Mary the most important," and so it is with Fedalma (281). This idea of an Annunciation for the Gypsy woman—particularly in its relation to the Titian painting—is crucial to the poem, as is the role of the Virgin Mary, in order to understand the ways in which Fedalma and the Gypsies stand outside of history.

The Madonna herself shares that place outside of history. Nearly every one of her characteristics positions her outside of history by her exceptionality. For example, touching on the controversial doctrine of perpetual virginity, one of the Virgin's characteristics is that her body "defies the ravages of history, both personal and general" (Lootens 51). Marina Warner points out that "the Vatican is still pondering whether the Virgin Mary experienced death at all, and whether the traditional and widespread faith in her perpetual virginity—her unbroken hymen—*post partum* (after birth) as well as *in partu* (during), is necessary" (xxiv).

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[9] Intriguingly, Father Isidor's comparison to a leopard echoes John Knox's image that he uses to describe the unalterable inferiority of Gypsies (Knox 161; see chapter one above).

As Fabian and Crosby have pointed out, historicity is granted, not assumed. Mary is unhistorical because she has been made so by Church tradition and the characteristics attributed to her. The Council of Ephesus did not declare her "the Mother of God" until the year 431;[10] the doctrine of the Assumption was not official until 1950; Pope Pius IX accepted the centuries-old doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in 1854. Nonetheless, according to Warner, in the depiction of the Catholic Church and of the imagination, Mary

> is presented as a fixed immutable absolute, and the historical process that changes the character of the Virgin is seen merely as a gradual discovery of a great and eternal mystery, progressively revealed. Mary did not become Mother of God at Ephesus in 431; nor was she assumed into heaven in 1950, when it first became an article of faith: these things always were. Indeed, the disregard of historical accretions with regard to the Virgin is so complete that it gives rise to tautology: the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception requires belief that Mary existed from all eternity, a fully-fledged concept in the eternal mind of the creator. (335)

This is what Warner calls the process of "emptying history from the figure of Mary" (335).

Regina Coeli (Queen of Heaven) and *Theotokos* (God-bearer), Mary stands, therefore, outside of history. She becomes an "unhistorical other" by virtue of her near deification and removal from all human history by her adherents. This approach to the Virgin takes many forms and, as Lootens and Adams demonstrate, becomes complicated, indeed, during the nineteenth century. Lootens argues that the Madonna herself is the model behind the Victorian "Angel in the House" and the ideal Positivist women, whom she calls "Comtean honorary great men" (52, 47). The Virgin becomes thus "a central reference point for widely ranging attempts to define feminine virtue" (53). Following this "impossible ideal," the domestic Angel and Comtean Woman "is mother, sister, and daughter all at once: she is Everywoman—and, of course, no

[10] The fifth-century Nestorius claimed that, as a mortal woman, Mary could not be the "Mother of God" but only the Mother of the human Christ. The Council of Ephesus condemned the Nestorian view as heresy. Afterward, the traditional depiction of the Madonna and Child thus became "the representation of official doctrine" (Hall 323).

woman" (Warner 337; Lootens 54). The narrator of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Pendennis* opines,

> What one sees symbolized in the Roman churches in the image of the Virgin Mother with a bosom bleeding with love, I think one may witness (and admire the Almighty bounty for) every day. I saw a Jewish lady, only yesterday, with a child at her knee, and from whose face towards the child there shone a sweetness so angelical, that it seemed to form a sort of glory round both. I protest I could have knelt before her too, and adored in her the Divine beneficence in endowing us with *the maternal storgé, which began with our race and sanctifies the history of mankind*. (qtd. in Lootens 55; emphasis added)

Thus, Lootens concludes, "like Mary (or the anonymous Comtean holy women), this angelically sweet mother is history's sacred 'unhistorical Other'" (55).

The Blessed Virgin was a part of George Eliot's life in some everyday sorts of ways. George Lewes's nickname for the childless Eliot was Madonna. Also, in her journals, from June 21, 1859, onward, she often noted important events like completing a novel, essay, or poem with three words: "Magnificat anima mea! ['my soul doth magnify the Lord']", the beginning of the Virgin's hymn, the *Magnificat* (*Journals* 79n). The Madonna is, however, as many commentators have noted and as her "Notes on the Spanish Gypsy" makes obvious, important also in Eliot's work. The Marian image runs throughout her entire literary career, and the icon's significance evolved over the years but is never more meaningful than in *The Spanish Gypsy*.

The 1864 visit to Venice was not the first time a Madonna had stricken Eliot so forcefully. In their long stay at Dresden in 1858, Eliot and Lewes saw Raphael's *Madonna di San Sisto*, usually called the Sistine Madonna (Figure 5.1). Their Positivist friends had long before taken the painting "as a symbol of Humanity" (Wright, *frontispiece*), and it became a favorite, central image of the Positivists. When Eliot and Lewes finally saw it in person, they were stunned. Eliot says that she "sat down on the sofa opposite the picture for an instant; but a sort of awe, as if I were suddenly in the living presence of some glorious being, made my heart

Figure 5.1
Raphael's *Madonna di San Sisto*

By permission of Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister of Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

swell too much for me to remain comfortably, and we hurried out of the room. On subsequent mornings we always came, in the last minutes of our stay, to look at this sublimest picture" (Cross 2: 58). Two days later, upon revisiting it, Lewes himself recalled that he looked at it "till I felt quite hysterical" (qtd. in *Letters* 2: 471n). Eliot later wrote, "All other art seems only a preparation for feeling the superiority of the Madonna di San Sisto the more. We go three days a week to the gallery, and every day after looking at other pictures, we go to take a parting draught of delight at [. . .] the *Einzige* Madonna" (*Letters* 2: 471-2).

Speaking of "the Marian revival in Britain," Tricia Lootens observes that, "by midcentury, the Virgin's status served as an explosive focal point for religious and ethnic tensions within Victorian England. [. . .] There was thus nothing simple about nineteenth-century English fascination with and resistance to veneration for the Mother of God" (53). This complexity is certainly true of Eliot's Madonna figures. Adams argues that Eliot "focused [. . .] on the Madonna as Virgin and Mother, seeing her as a figure at once intellectually self-reliant and fulfilled by her family relationships. As such, the Madonna represented the self-perfection and completion that ordinary women would achieve when freed from social restraints" (1). Rather than being limited by her domesticity, Eliot's "domestic Madonna's purity. [. . .] in fact tended to give women independence and the power to act, especially in unconventional ways" (9). In this manner, along with a small group of other nineteenth-century women writers, Eliot was "quite unusual among [her] English speaking and Protestant contemporaries in seeing feminist possibilities in the Madonna" (2). Adams makes compelling argument for the varying degrees of "Madonna-ness" in the adult Maggie, the transformed Romola, the widowed Dorothea, and the "body-denying Virgin" Dinah (161, 152). *Daniel Deronda*, however, lacks a Madonna, according to Adams, which "suggests the unworthiness of Christianity to serve as a

model for other religions or claim precedence over them" (219).[11] On the other hand, *The Spanish Gypsy* has, in Fedalma, a Madonna who is a Christian image to Silva, a heretic to Father Isidor, and a dark goddess to the Gypsies and Moors who see the oppressive Christian Madonna as "Our Lady of Pain" (218-20; 208-9).

In these late works, Eliot's treatment of religion, and hence the Madonna, indeed, changes. Her earlier Positivist approach, "which stress[es] the philosophical indefensibility of ancestral religions such as Judaism," has given way to a more hereditary, or Lamarckian, view of religion as a form of "racial inheritance" (196). The Virgin, therefore, ceases to represent "female self-definition and does not empower women. Instead, she is controlled by men and functions in a feminist critique of the limitations imposed on women" (197). This approach to the Madonna corresponds to Fedalma's part in *The Spanish Gypsy*. Throughout the poem, the men in her life define Fedalma's role. To Father Isidor, she is an unchristian temptress; Silva "enshrines / Her virgin image" in order to "guard her from the world" (1: 226); Zarca declares she must "be the angel of a homeless tribe" (1: 302). Her choice is to be either the wife of a Spanish nobleman and to live a life circumscribed by noble proprieties or to take part in "awful spousals" to her hereditary people and to become, like Mary, one of the "mothers of a people's virtue" (3: 390, 394). Either way, her choice results in fetters.

At this point, it is helpful to return more fully to Titian's *Annunciation* (Figure 5.2). The Titian contains the three items requisite for every Annunciation: the Angel, the Virgin, and the slanted light ray and/or Dove (both here). Painted probably in the early 1530s, it has hung in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco at least since October 31, 1555 (Panofsky 29). Compared to the tumultuous, dramatic Annunciation Titian completed in 1562, this painting is quiet, with the only

[11] I have silently corrected simple, obvious, and uninteresting typographical errors in my sources throughout this chapter. I have not corrected any errors of significance.

Figure 5. 2
Titian's *Annunciation*

By permission of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Venice.

significant movement coming from the messenger. Typical of early Cinquecento Annunciations, the angel Gabriel is situated on a cloud, indicating his heavenly origins (Hall 19), but he is not quite the usual Archangel. As Erwin Panofsky notes, this Gabriel appears to embody Classical references: he is poised and garbed like a Classical Victory and booted like a Classical Mercury (29). Like Zarca, the one who brings the news to Mary, in Titian's painting, is a warrior, a god. In both the painting and the poem, the warrior-god calls the maid away from marriage and to her hereditary duty. The Virgin's posture, on the other hand, is just the opposite of Gabriel's. While he is in motion, in agitation even, she is completely still. Captured in the moment of quiet acceptance, Mary looks down at the open book in front of her. The Dove of the Holy Spirit flies at the top of the ray of light.[12]

The three figures are, however, not the only points of interest in the painting. Titian, who often painted his architectural framework or setting before adding the figures, provides two axes in the painting, a vertical and a horizontal. The horizontal balustrade crosses the center of the painting, separating the figures from the landscape and establishing the stage where the action occurs between the Angel and Virgin. The end of the colonnade creates the vertical axis, which draws the attention to a *pentimento*, a still life added later as an afterthought (evident because the lines of the floor tiling show through the still life). At the bottom lies a workbasket, an allusion to the apocryphal story of Mary's childhood at the Temple of Jerusalem, spinning and weaving (Hall 19). The apple and fig leaf refer obviously to Mary as the *Nova Eva*, the New Eve, a

[12] Apparently overlooking the faint image of the dove at the top of the painting, Krasner correctly identifies the bird on the floor as a partridge but then also identifies the partridge with the Holy Spirit, treating it as interchangeable with the traditional dove (57).

reference made in other Annunciations, though it appears more often in Immaculate Conceptions.[13]

The most debated item in the painting is part of this still life, a bird on the floor. Some critics have alternately identified it as a guinea fowl or a quail, which is often equated with manna and, therefore, with the Eucharist, or it may represent maternal and marital devotion and happiness. Jameson calls it a "tame partridge," "frequent in the Venetian pictures," which "expresses [Mary's] tenderness" (295, 59). Panofsky, the father of modern iconographic studies, agrees. A great fan and scholar of Titian, he claims that ornithologists have assured him the bird is actually a red-legged partridge.[14]

One problem with painting an Annunciation is dealing with the fact that it is a series of moments in time, and paintings of the event usually depict just one of those moments. One may depict the moment that Gabriel "came in unto" the Virgin, as she looks startled or frightened, and says, "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God" (Luke 1: 28, 30). Another may depict the moment when the Archangel tells Mary of her destiny, as she looks thoughtful but not alarmed. The last may depict the moment after Gabriel has told his news, as she looks resigned

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[13] Interesting in relation to matters of time and history, Immaculate Conceptions often hang in funerary settings like private chapels because of Mary's timelessness. In fact, some theories of the Immaculate Conception hold that Mary must have preceded time to have escaped Original Sin, a prelapsarian Eve rather than simply a purified Eve. An inscription sometimes found in Immaculate Conceptions is "'Dominus possedit me in inition viarum suarum . . .' (Prov. 8: 22), a typological reference [. . .] to the idea of predestination: 'The Lord created me the beginning of his works, before all else that he made, long ago'" (Hall 326-7).

[14] Eliot read Jameson and would have, therefore, been familiar with Jameson's reading of the partridge. Panofsky, however, offers another provocative interpretation of the bird, probably unknown to Eliot. Often read as a symbol of lasciviousness, the bird can take on positive attributes through the negative connotations: the partridge can "symbolize the Incarnation itself: the female [partridge] was believed to be so full of sexual desire that it was able to conceive by the wind that had passed a male, or even by the latter's mating call. But this very fact was susceptible of a positive interpretation: a partridge bearing the motto AFFLATU FECUNDA ('fruitful by a breath of air') could illustrate that the Virgin conceived by the Holy Spirit; and since the Virgin Mary, through the angelic salutation, 'conceived through the ear' (quae per aurem concepisti), the partridge could visualize the phrase AUDITA VOCE FECUNDA ('fruitful by hearing a voice')" (30). The partridge, therefore, represents fertility, a fertility catalyzed by a very particular sort of aural conception. This method of conception, one might attribute both to the Madonna and to Fedalma, as Zarca tells her of her heritage and her destiny.

or determined, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1: 38). The Titian, however, is unusual in that it depicts these moments combined in one image: Gabriel is animated at the moment of intrusion, as if he has just entered with a flourish; the pose of Mary, her eyes averted, suggests the calm humility of later acceptance.[15] The painting itself defies time and history by collapsing tenses into one symbolic image.

Of course, the partridge is not the only bird present in Titian's painting. The dove is also present, as in most Annunciations. A slant of light, coming from heaven, often with a dove in the light, represents the divine origin of Gabriel's message. As it falls on the Virgin, it usually symbolizes the conception itself, the actual intersection between the divine and the human. As mentioned above, the most significant bird image in *The Spanish Gypsy* appears at the moment of the Fedalma's annunciation, filling the role of the dove, though in a markedly different way. Just moments before he enters Fedalma's chambers for the first time, Zarca ties a message under a bird's wing and throws it through the window. When it falls dead on Fedalma's floor, she reads the message, written in the bird's own blood: "*Dear child, Fedalma, / Be brave, give no alarm—your Father comes!*" (1: 295). James Krasner notes an unsettling connection between the Titian and the poem: "The parallels [between Titian's and Eliot's Annunciations] are obvious enough, but the variations are disturbing. That Zarca's first dramatic act should be to kill a small creature that could easily have been spared makes him seem repellant; the jarring contrast between dead bird and Holy Spirit makes him seem infernal" (57).

Even more notably, the symbolic medium for Fedalma's "conception" as the destined Mother of the Gypsies is a dead, limp bird, hurled through the window with its own blood as a divine message. Zarca has called her from her private, personal history to come serve heredity,

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[15] Fascinatingly, if one reads the partridge through Panofsky's symbology, the partridge then represents the intermediating moments.

to enter into a larger historical movement, but his call is associated from the outset with death, as was the call to the Virgin. The bird image that most connects the Gypsies, Fedalma, and their intertwined destinies lies dead on the floor, suggesting none of the freedom and largeness of life that is elsewhere in the poem associated with birds. In fact, it suggests just the opposite: this annunciation is doomed to failure, and Fedalma and the Gypsies will not achieve that wider influence and place within history. As with Francesca Alexander's Gypsy prophecies, there will be no resurrection, and there will be no redemption.

Eliot's *Spanish Gypsy*, then, is related to Titian's painting in many ways, some of them obvious from Eliot's essay and some not so obvious, and all of them related to the unhistorical position of Fedalma and the Gypsies. Like the Madonna and this "Marian Woman" (Lootens 55), those around Fedalma hold her to an unattainable ideal, and her attempt to achieve that ideal by being the Holy Mother of her people is doomed to fail. According to Eliot, this annunciation cannot succeed. Not only does Eliot's essay on the poem's genesis establish Fedalma's Madonna-ness, but also, the poem itself repeatedly draws us back to the relationship. In particular, Don Silva engages in Mariolatry. Describing Silva to the other low characters in the drama, the minstrel Juan makes him sound like the Red Crosse Knight in his devotion to the Virgin:

> Don Silva's heart beats to a loyal tune:
> He wills no highest-born Castilian dame,
> Betrothed to highest noble, should be held
> More sacred than Fedalma. He enshrines
> Her virgin image for the general awe
> And for his own—will guard her from the world,
> Nay, his profaner self, lest he should lose
> The place of his religion.
>
> (1: 226)

While he is in seclusion in the Gypsy camp, his Marian devotion to Fedalma is his strength: "She was within him, making his whole self / Mere correspondence with her image" (4: 413). Silva meditates upon Fedalma's "virgin image," which strengthens and ennobles him, purifying him in her service.

The most noticeable correspondence between Fedalma and the Virgin, however, is in her role as both bride of the Gypsy destiny and mother of the Gypsies. As Eliot points out in her "Essay on the Spanish Gypsy," Gabriel calls Mary "on the eve of the chief event of her life—marriage—about to share in the ordinary lot of womanhood" (Cross 3: 42). The Madonna cannot engage in a traditional personal marriage, but she can take part in a larger, symbolic marriage. Like the tradition of Christ as the bridegroom of the Church, a tradition sprang up in the Middle Ages of Mary as "the divine bride," married to her followers, and in a move that Warner calls sublimation, "the Virgin is still considered the special patroness of priests and the guardian of their celibacy" (155-6, 157). Provocatively, Warner concludes, "The Queen of Heaven became the staple antidote to love on earth. She was feminine perfection personified, and no other woman was in her league" (159).

Likewise, once Fedalma renounces her earthly love and marriage to Silva, she is represented repeatedly as wedded to the Gypsies' destiny. Rather than being the frequent metaphor of freedom, she becomes, like Zarca, the personification of absolute, irrevocable hereditary duty. In the pivotal final lines of Book I, when she essentially tells Zarca, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord," she declares, "I will wed / The curse that blights my people" (1: 314). Shortly after, finishing her letter to Silva, she affirms, "Father, now I go / To wed my people's lot" (1: 315). Zarca corrects her, "To wed a crown" (1: 315). When Silva comes to find her in Zarca's camp, she describes her annunciation not as a call away from marriage but a call to it:

she tells him of "the solemn message, calling me away / To awful spousals, where my own dead joy, / A conscious ghost, looked on and saw me wed" (3: 390).

Her spousals, whatever else they are, are not supposed to be barren. In marrying her "people's lot," Fedalma becomes queen and mother of her people. Her father tells her that her destiny as his child is to be "a queen in Africa" and to free her people, and when she makes her decision, he invites her, "Come, my Queen" (1: 308, 315). Throughout the poem, thereafter, whenever a Gypsy (or Juan, who accompanies them) refers to her, she is called their queen. Zarca describes Fedalma's loyalty to her people as "the sacred ties / That bind [women] in high fellowship with men, / Making them mothers of a people's virtue" (3: 394). After Zarca's death and her final meeting with Silva, Fedalma has become *Mater Dolorosa*:

> [. . .] Fedalma walked
> Tearless, erect, following the dead—her cries
> Deep smothering in her breast, as one who guides
> Her children through the wilds, and sees and knows
> Of danger more than they, and feels more pangs,
> Yet shirks not, groans not, bearing in her heart
> Their ignorant misery and their trust in her.
> (5: 439)

In short, Fedalma has renounced her role as personal, physical bride and mother to be collective, spiritual bride and mother. Failing again to enter history, she will, however, be a barren mother.

Fedalma's motherhood, the result of her annunciation, is destined to fail. In her explanation of the poem's genesis and of tragedy, Eliot refers to "the renunciation of marriage where marriage cannot take place without entailing misery on the children" (Cross 3: 46). As Zarca explains to Fedalma, her marriage to Silva cannot succeed without her completely forsaking her kinship with the Gypsies. He foresees misery for the children of a marriage between Fedalma and Silva. The poem, on the other hand, shows the misery entailed on the Gypsies because of Fedalma's marriage to the Gypsy lot.

v. The Gypsies: The Unhistorical People

Fedalma, then, remains firmly situated outside of history despite her efforts on behalf of the nationalistic movement of the Gypsies. She renounces personal history for the sake of hereditary history, stepping into the stream of nation-building. This stream, however, is only marginally more historical than the woman's life of private domesticity, for the hereditary here involves a people who are positioned with her outside of history. Crosby argues that exotic Others are closer to history than women because they have at least the potential to become historical, and the poem, indeed, suggests as much as the Gypsies are taking ship for Africa. *The Spanish Gypsy*, though, keeps these potential historical figures out by making clear that their destiny, intertwined with Fedalma's, is failure.

Returning to the question asked by Antony Harrison of Arnold's Gypsy poems, however, "why Gypsies?" one finds part of an answer in Eliot's "Essay on the Spanish Gypsy": Eliot says that she "required the opposition of race to give the need for renouncing the expectation of marriage. I could not use the Jews or the Moors, because the facts of their history were too conspicuously opposed to the working out of my catastrophe." Connecting this issue of race with gender, she goes on to explain,

> Now what is the fact about our individual lots? A woman, say, finds herself on the earth with an inherited organisation: she may be lame, she may inherit a disease, or what is tantamount to a disease: she may be a negress, or have other marks of race repulsive in the community where she is born, &c, &c. One may go on for a long while without reaching the limits of the commonest inherited misfortunes. (Cross 3: 46-7)

Both being a woman and these "marks of race," Eliot tellingly identifies as "the commonest inherited misfortunes," or as Nord puts it, "such an inheritance" as being a woman or a racial Other "is tantamount to deformity" (207).

Eliot does not explain exactly how the fact of Jewish history barred her, but although the story of the Jews is, like the Gypsies', one of wandering pariahs, perhaps she might have said more accurately the fact that the Jews *have* a history prevents "the working out of my catastrophe." Exploring the "politics of national inheritance" in Eliot, Bernard Semmel considers the Gypsies and the Jews:

> There were two pan-European nationalities, the Gypsies and the Jews, who seemed to be excluded from the prevailing ambition to achieve national self-determination. Both were pariah groups, assumed to be antisocial, and often accused of being enemies of mankind. Throughout their histories in Europe they had been wanderers. Their host nations periodically forced them to leave countries they had assumed to be their homelands. Most Jews believed they were joined to their fellow Jews by religion, not nationality. A return to Jerusalem was at this time a messianic hope or a consoling metaphor, not a program of action. And *Gypsies, it was generally understood, did not even possess the Jewish consolation of a brilliant past: they lived only in a present* in which, their enemies charged, they cheated and stole, and in which, consequently, they were feared and reviled. (104; emphasis added)

As Semmel points out, the Gypsies have no past, and as the poem suggests, they have a less than promising future. They have only a present, but even that is defined largely by "their enemies." To the flow of historical time, the Gypsies are denied access.

Semmel asserts that "most Jews believed they were joined to their fellow Jews by religion, not nationality," and it is this lack even of religious history that first suggests the Gypsy position in the poem. In a poem that focuses on a Madonna figure for her people, the Gypsies' standing outside of sacred history is intriguing. Before Fedalma meets Zarca, she tells Juan of seeing him in the Plaça: "I thought he rose / From the dark place of long-imprisoned souls, / To say that Christ had never come to them" (1: 268). She has read Zarca with uncanny accuracy, for this is precisely how Zarca describes the Gypsies. When he reveals her identity to her, Fedalma asks if she is, indeed, part "of a race / More outcast and despised than Moor or Jew." The Gypsy chieftain explains his tribe's position outside of history, both sacred and secular:

> Yes: wanderers whom no God took knowledge of
> To give them laws, to fight for them, or blight
> Another race to make them ampler room;
> Who have no Whence or Whither in their souls,
> No dimmest lore of glorious ancestors
> To make a common hearth for piety.
> (1: 299)

He reviles Fedalma's life as a Spanish Christian, for it is a life in which she "adores a God who took no heed of Gypsies" (1: 310). The Gypsies have not been able to take a place in history by force because no god has cared for them or fought for them, securing to them a place among nations and peoples.

Since no god has given them a history, however, Zarca intends to do it himself. He complains that the Gypsies are "no favourites of heaven or of men," and "because our race has no great memories, / I will so live, it shall remember me / For deeds of such divine beneficence / As rivers have" (1: 300). Without a history, without "great memories," without any sense of "divine beneficence," Zarca himself has had to seek his memories among other people:

> I have been schooled—have caught
> Lore from the Hebrew, deftness from the Moor—
> Know the rich heritage, the milder life,
> Of nations fathered by a mighty Past.
> (1:300)

Zarca has learned from Jews, from Muslims, and wishes to create a racial memory, a history for the Gypsies.

In order to create history, though, Zarca must first define a faith, but for the Gypsies, it cannot be a supernatural faith because no God has cared for them. Thus, when Fedalma asks bitterly, "The Gypsies' faith? / Men say they have none," he redefines the faith *of* Gypsies as a faith *in* Gypsies, a faith in heredity and a shared status outside of the compassion of gods and men:

> Oh, it is a faith
> Taught by no priest, but by their beating hearts:
> Faith to each other: the fidelity
> Of fellow-wanderers in a desert place
> Who share the same dire thirst, and therefore share
> The scanty water: the fidelity
> Of men whose pulses leap with kindred fire,
> Who in the flash of eyes, the clasp of hands,
> The speech that even in lying tells the truth
> Of heritage inevitable as birth,
> Nay, in the silent bodily presence feel
> The mystic stirring of a common life
> Which makes the many one: fidelity
> To the consecrating oath our sponsor Fate
> Made through our infant breath when we were born
> The fellow-heirs of that small island, Life,
> Where we must dig and sow and reap with brothers.
> Fear thou that oath, my daughter—nay, not fear,
> But love it; for the sanctity of oaths
> Lies not in lightning that avenges them,
> But in the injury wrought by broken bonds
> And in the garnered good of human trust.
> (1: 301)

While Reverend Hoyland asserted the irreligiousness of Gypsies, Zarca inverts the freedom from religion so that religion becomes an inescapable hereditary certainty. This faith is what makes Fedalma's remaining with Silva impossible, and it is what ultimately dooms Silva's attempt to remain with Fedalma. When Silva enters the camp and asks to marry Fedalma, Zarca reaffirms this creed, declaring,

> Such light change
> You call conversion; but we Zíncali call
> Conversion infamy. Our people's faith
> Is faithfulness; not the rote-learned belief
> That we are heaven's highest favourites,
> But the resolve that being most forsaken
> Among the sons of men, we will be true
> Each to the other, and our common lot.
> (3: 395)

Casting a shadow over Silva's later return to Christianity at the end of the poem, the Gypsy warrior argues bitterly that, on this point of conversion, the Gypsy faith, even without a god, is superior to Christianity:

> You Spanish Catholics,
> When you are cruel, base, and treacherous,
> For ends not pious, tender gifts to God,
> And for men's wounds offer much oil to churches:
> We have no altars for such healing gifts
> As soothe the heavens for outrage done on earth.
> We have no priesthood and no creed to teach
> That she—the Zíncala—who might save her race
> And yet abandons it, may cleanse that blot,
> And mend the curse her life has been to men,
> By saving her own soul.
> (3: 397)

No gods, no priests, no sacrifices can atone for the sin of transgressing this hereditary, blood-based faith. In their faithfulness to their tribe rather than to some god who cares nothing for them, the Gypsies become as "beautiful as disinherited gods" (1: 311).

As Moses led the Jews, as Mohammed led the Muslims, as Jesus led the Christians, so, too, must someone lead the Gypsy faith, a mortal god who is willing to fight for the Gypsies and to create "great memories" for them. The poem repeatedly represents Zarca as this figure. Fedalma first identifies him in this way. Having just determined to meet her destiny as a Gypsy queen, she says defiantly,

> Let Spaniards all,
> Christians, Jews, Moors, shoot out the lip and say,
> "Lo, the first hero in a tribe of thieves."
> Is it not written so of them? They, too,
> Were slaves, lost, wandering, sunk beneath a curse,
> Till Moses, Christ, and Mahomet were born,
> Till beings lonely in their greatness lived,
> And lived to save their people.
> (1: 303)

Zarca shares this view of himself. Referring to his "five hundred men / Whom I alone can save, alone can rule, / And plant them as a mighty nation's seed," Zarca compares his men to the early followers of these other figures, "vagabonds who clustered round one man, / Their voice of God, their prophet and their king" (1: 311). Later, on the eve of his attack on Bedmár, Zarca once more affirms these ideas:

> Catholics,
> Arabs, and Hebrews, have their god apiece
> To fight and conquer for them, or be bruised,
> Like Allah now, yet keep avenging stores
> Of patient wrath. The Zíncali have no god
> Who speaks to them and calls them his, unless
> I, Zarca, carry living in my frame
> The power divine that chooses them and saves.
> "Life and more life unto the chosen, death
> To all things living that would stifle them!"
> So speaks each god that makes a nation strong.
> (4: 418)

After Zarca's death, on her final parting with her beloved Silva, Fedalma restates Zarca's singularity and the culpability of the two lovers: "We / With our poor petty lives have strangled one / That ages watch for vainly" (5: 448).

vi. "The Gypsy's wandering tomb"

Drawing largely on a lyric tradition, other poets of the nineteenth century saw in the Gypsy figure a means by which to consider various forms of freedom. John Clare and John Ruskin use the Gypsy to consider the larger idea of freedom itself. John Kenyon, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Father Prout, Francesca Alexander, and an older Ruskin use the Gypsies' supposed freedom from religion to examine Anglo-Christian and Anglo-Jewish religious identity, while Arnold envies their freedom from time. In the only thoroughly narrative Gypsy poem of the century, Eliot, on the other hand, reverses all of these concepts. Rather than free

like Clare's Gypsies, Zarca and Fedalma are bound by an absolute, irreversible hereditary duty. Rather than free from religion, Eliot's Gypsies *are* a hereditary religion. Most significantly, though, rather than free from time like Arnold's Cumnor Gypsy lad, the Gypsies in Eliot's poem are bound by time in multiple ways, yet excluded from history.

Eliot explores women's varied attempts to step into the larger currents of society and even of history repeatedly and with different results in characters like Maggie, Dinah, Dorothea, Romola, and even Gwendolen. She never finds a more fitting parallel, though, than in the Gypsies, read through the canvas of the Annunciation. Understood in this way, the Gypsies' fate does not suggest that Eliot felt optimistic about women's ability to enter history. Under Fedalma's leadership, the Gypsies offer Eliot the most ready parallel to the tragedy of women, as they fail to enter the national-historical and find their way to their African destination. Of course, Zarca had anticipated a need for a successor, having elicited the earlier promises from Fedalma. As he lies dying in her arms, he reminds her of her oath to lead the Gypsies after his death and demands the Gypsies' promise to follow her:

> I held my people's good within my breast.
> Behold, now I deliver it to you.
> See, it still breathes unstrangled—if it dies,
> Let not your failing will be murderer. . . .
> Rise, tell our people now I wait in pain . . .
> I cannot die until I hear them say
> They will obey you.

The Zíncali swear as he asks, "We will obey! Our Chief shall never die! / We will obey him—will obey our Queen" (4: 436). Nonetheless, as the dead bird in Zarca's annunciation to Fedalma foreshadowed, Fedalma's and the Gypsy's now-intertwined destinies will ultimately fail. In the Gypsy queen's last appearance in the fourth book of the poem, just after the Gypsies have sworn to follow her, the new leader is left "following the dead" (5: 439). The Gypsy dream

of entering the historical, along with Zarca, is dead. He is a failed Moses, a failed Mohammed, a failed Christ, a failed god. This Christ will not be resurrected.

The rest of the poem suggests that the Gypsies and Fedalma will not achieve a place in history but will drift namelessly away. The new Zíncali leader herself foresees this failure and dreads that she will be unable to fulfill "her father's hope, / Which she must plant and see it wither only— / Wither and die. She saw the end begun" (5: 442). As two bands of her followers have already ignored her leadership and become mercenaries for the Moors, she knows that

> In a little while, the tribe
> That was to be the ensign of the race,
> And draw it into conscious union,
> Itself would break in small and scattered bands
> That, living on scant prey, would still disperse
> And propagate forgetfulness. Brief years,
> And that great purpose fed with vital fire
> That might have glowed for half a century,
> Subduing, quickening, shaping, like a sun—
> Would be a faint tradition, flickering low
> In dying memories, fringing with dim light
> The nearer dark.
>
> (5: 442-3)

She and the Gypsies have lost all—her lover, their king, even their hope. The woman and the people who, with violence, seek to force their way into history are, in turn, treated violently by the poem. In the end, all has so failed that Fedalma is left with

> No dread, but clear assurance of the end.
> My father held within his mighty frame
> A people's life: great futures died with him
> Never to rise, until the time shall ripe
> Some other hero with the will to save
> The outcast Zíncali.
>
> (5: 448)

Fedalma cannot enter historical time as the leader of peoples, for she cannot take her father's role. Her failure is already plain before her. Likewise, the Gypsies cannot enter history through

nationhood, for their failure, too, is plain, as they will "disperse / And propagate forgetfulness," leaving only "a faint tradition, flickering low / In dying memories."

When Zarca first comes to Fedalma and reveals the Gypsies' and her destiny, she realizes she must renounce all she has held dear and asks him,

> O father, will the women of our tribe
> Suffer as I do, in the years to come
> When you have made them great in Africa?
> Redeemed from ignorant ills only to feel
> A conscious woe?
>
> (1: 313)

As Eliot says of Titian's painting, "here [. . .] is a subject grander than that of Iphigenia." The renunciation of the individual for the collective, the sacrifice of the private for the public, the attempt to move from the personal into the historical are, for her, to be "redeemed from ignorant ills only to feel / A conscious woe." She finds, however, that, in spite of that suffering, the failure to cross those boundaries is not merely woe or pain but death. The poem's final notes sound the knell to Zarca's and Fedalma's dreams of history and a larger influence on the movements of the world as the poem's violence is complete upon those who try to enter a history that excludes them. Fedalma tells Silva that, rather than becoming a Madonna, one of the "mothers of a people's virtue" (3: 394), she is barren, for the Gypsies "are orphaned." This annunciation has failed. She herself is "but as the funeral urn that bears / The ashes of a leader" (5: 448, 449). As the poem ends, Fedalma is not the Zíncali leader, for she and the Gypsies are followers of a dead and dying dream. Walking to the ship, she can only "follow now / Her father's body." From this symbolic Madonna's womb comes not salvation, not redemption, not a resurrection, but, rather, "the Gypsy's wandering tomb" (5: 452).

CHAPTER 6

TOWARD GYPSY SELF-IDENTIFICATION

In 1850, Robert Knox, one of the early racial ethnologists whose scientific racism was one of the paths to the twentieth century's racial catastrophes, published *The Races of Man*, a section of which is dedicated to the Gypsies. Knox, a physician, Lecturer on Anatomy, and Corresponding Member of the National Academy of Medicine of France, explains of the Gypsies,

> Their ancient history is utterly unknown: in the meantime, the climate of Britain has had much less effect on them than on surrounding Cheviot; swarthy in complexion, with dark long eyes, black hair, a somewhat oval face, an Eastern physiognomy, neither Jewish, nor Coptic, nor Arab; mouth larger than in the European; nostrils somewhat expanded; stature moderate. [. . .] Let me state to you calmly the facts I have myself witnessed, the few observations I have made on this race, which we in ignorance call singular, merely because their animal nature, their instincts, their whole views of life and its objects, differ essentially and eternally from ours. That they remain as they are in physical form, is simply because. [. . .] They do not intermarry with other races; this is the grand secret. To Saxon and white races they have the same horror that the Saxon has for the Negro; the singularity, then, applies as well to one as the other; in fact, there is nothing singular in it, seeing that it merely amounts to the dislike which one race bears to another. (151-2)

Discussing the Foucauldian discourse of knowledge and power, Edward Said argues, "Knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control" (36). By the knowledge he has acquired through a small handful of anecdotes, Knox enacts this central tenet of Orientalism. Cataloguing the Gypsies' characteristics and explaining away the singularity of their otherness, while, at the same

time, firmly entrenching that alterity, he is able simultaneously to reduce Gypsy otherness to a subset of physical attributes and behaviors and to frame that otherness as "unaltered and unalterable" (150). Thus, he is able to pronounce that the Gypsies are simply not singular but that they still "differ essentially and eternally" from "us."

In 1868, the Gypsyologists were hitting their stride, making the Gypsies more and more a matter for scientific inquiry, the province of the "*–ologies*"—philology, anthropology, sociology, ethnology. Curiously, however, after Eliot's extended poetic treatment of the subject in that year, and coinciding with the appropriation of the subject by the scientific community, the number of poems dealing with the Gypsies in any substantive way fell off considerably. Amy Levy's is among the few remaining to the century. Why? Positing the reasons a poet has written something is, of course, easier than speculating why he or she has not. In the former case, one may go to the poem for evidence to support the theory, but where does one go to prove the latter? One possibility, though, is that, as the Gypsies became the province of specialists, they lost, to a degree, their artistic appeal. They had become a matter of the intellect more than of the imagination. Perhaps the Gypsiologists' work had, in the famous Keatsian phrase, gone only to "unweave a rainbow" ("Lamia" 2: 237). In establishing their Foucauldian power over the Gypsies, had they stolen the poetry from the figures?

In reference to the Gypsies, the Gypsiologists and racial ethnologists, though, are not the only ones engaged in this knowledge/power discourse. After a fashion, this act is precisely what the nineteenth-century writers of Gypsy poems do, too. Through a variety of appropriations, adaptations, elisions, illustrations, and reinscriptions, they make the Gypsy eternally, in Homi Bhabha's phrase, "*a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (126). They draw the Gypsy figure close, while simultaneously distancing themselves from it. In this way,

the poets find the Gypsy a most malleable tool, able to be tropologized in a seemingly endless variety of ways. Because Gypsies, like Jews, according to Cynthia Scheinberg, "are often identified and identify themselves through a unique intersection of racial, cultural, and religious characteristics," the Gypsies become "a site of multiple and intersecting discourses of difference, including discourses of religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, and nationality" ("Canonizing" 175). They become a screen onto which the poets project cultural anxieties about freedom, religious identity, time, purpose, gender, and history.

As a result, however, while the nineteenth-century poets are enacting the knowledge/ power discourse, a curious phenomenon takes place: the Gypsies gain a sort of covert cultural power denied to them in more overt forms, for they and their identity become unwitting arbiters of nineteenth-century history. Gladly suspecting that the Gypsies are "dying out," Knox exclaims,

> "Nati consumere fruges" was the expressive phrase of Horace: it were vain to attempt one more apt. Regret them not. Athens, and Corinth, and Syracuse, and Rome, live within our remembrance; their fame must endure whilst men having pure reason inhabit the earth; but were Central Africa, from the edge of the Sahara to the Cape of Storms, sunk under the ocean wave, and with it the gipsy race, what should we lose?—nothing which can or ever will adorn humanity; no inventions nor discoveries, no fine arts, no sublime thoughts, nothing to distinguish man from the brute. (156)

Knox, of course, underestimates Gypsy (and Central African) cultural influence, but especially, he fails to see their major influence on his own century. The Gypsies paint one history of the period, albeit with white British brushes. They become one means by which nineteenth-century anxieties about these issues may be understood, and though the poets exercise manipulative control over Gypsies, the Gypsies, in turn, exercise a sort of manipulative power over the century. Despite the poets' effacement of Gypsiness, some Gypsiness remains and continues to do cultural work.

Roma identity, however, both in the nineteenth century and after, has been incompletely drawn, for although the Gypsies are painting a history, the paint again flows through those same hegemonic bristles. In such a way that he may as well be describing the Gypsiologists themselves, Said notes,

> The Orientalist can imitate the Orient without the opposite being true. What he says about the Orient is therefore to be understood as description obtained in a one-way exchange: as *they* spoke and behaved, *he* observed and wrote down. His power was to have existed amongst them as a native speaker, as it were, and also as a secret writer. And what he wrote was intended as useful knowledge, not for them, but for Europe and its various disseminative institutions. (160)

The work of nineteenth- and even twentieth-century poets, philologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and ethnologists has all gone to contribute one major history—the hegemonic representation of the Other's identity. These writers write "not for [the Roma], but for Europe and its various disseminative institutions." As Said continues, "in the system of knowledge about the Orient, the Orient is less a place than a *topos*, a set of reference, a congeries of characteristics, that seem to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imaging, or an amalgam of all these" (177). We have quotations, fragments, citations, imaging, illustrations, songs, and paintings to record Gypsy identity. What is needful, however, is a consideration of Gypsy voices themselves.

Michael Galchinsky has compared representations of Jewish identity to those of women's identity. He recalls that, in the 1980s, "feminists frequently turned from the study of how male writers represented women to ask what women writers have had to say about themselves." These feminist scholars "recognized that reinvigorating the old canonical discourses by reinterpreting them was not sufficient: they needed to listen in the historical silences for the voices of actual women who could tell their own stories from their unique perspectives."

Likewise, Galchinsky argues, "critics of minority literatures seem to have followed a similar path: gather evidence of a canonical discourse of the Other, reinterpret that discourse using a cultural studies approach, and then revive and recover neglected and forgotten sources." In this way, "the minority ceases to be a 'figure' for someone else's anxieties, or a foil against which the hegemonic culture can define itself, and becomes the author and interpreter of his or her own subculture's story" (276).

The Roma have no written language of their own, no archives, and few written records in other languages (Liégeois, *Gypsies* 17), yet a few known Gypsy writers existed in the nineteenth century and certainly more in the twentieth and twenty-first. Having heard the hegemonic voices, scholars must listen next to these. In this way, the Roma can cease "to be a 'figure' for someone else's anxieties, or a foil against which the hegemonic culture can define itself." If we are able to unearth these forgotten works, many of which have been preserved by earlier Romani *Rai* like John Clare and the later members of the Gypsy Lore Society, the Rom "becomes the author and interpreter of his or her own subculture's story."

In 1888, in *Grass of Parnassus: Rhymes Old and New*, Andrew Lang published "Pen and Ink" in the voice of a late Gypsy, expressing some of the late-century worries about the passing of these dark wanderers:

> Ye wanderers that were my sires,
> Who read men's fortunes in the hand,
> Who voyaged with your smithy fires
> From waste to waste across the land,
> Why did you leave for garth and town
> Your life by heath and river's brink,
> Why lay your gipsy freedom down
> And doom your child to Pen and Ink?
>
> You wearied of the wild-wood meal
> That crowned, or failed to crown, the day;
> Too honest or too tame to steal

You broke into the beaten way:
Plied loom or awl like other men,
And learned to love the guineas' chink—
Oh, recreant sires, who doomed me then
To earn so few—with Pen and Ink!

Where it hath fallen the tree must lie.
'Tis over late for *me* to roam,
Yet the caged bird who hears the cry
Of his wild fellows fleeting home,
May feel no sharper pang than mine,
Who seem to hear, whene'er I think,
Spate in the stream, and wind in pine,
Call me to quit dull Pen and Ink.

For then the spirit wandering,
That slept within the blood, awakes;
For then the summer and the spring
I fain would meet by streams and lakes;
But ah, my Birthright long is sold,
But custom chains me, link on link,
And I must get me, as of old,
Back to my tools, to Pen and Ink.

Conscious no doubt of the material realities of the literary marketplace, Lang, in this poem, equates pen and ink with constriction, as opposed to the Gypsy freedom of yore. This pen and ink, however, is one of the ways Gypsy identity may be freed from the chains of hegemonic writings. Excavating and exploring that work one of the logical next steps of this study. For this reason, my hope is that this project, rather than closing the subject of Gypsies in nineteenth-century Britain, can serve to open it further both to myself and other "Gypsy Scholars."

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