ADOPTED COLORS: DOMESTICITY AND FOREIGN NATIONALISM IN
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING AND GEORGE ELIOT

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ADOPTED COLORS: DOMESTICITY AND FOREIGN NATIONALISM
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The dissertation explores the trope of lost and recovered children in the narratives of nationalism by Victorian women writers excluded from political participation. Bringing together the narratives of fragmented family and divided allegiance, my project focuses on how women writers constructed an imagined connection with other people's nationalism by subverting deracinated fantasy to explore the tensions between the individual and racial inheritance.

Examining the cultural construction of Italians, Gypsies, and Jews in the British nineteenth century, this dissertation investigates the "timeless" fantasies of artistic freedom, liberation, and tolerance associated with landless "dark Others" that contrast with their historical marginalization in England. What appeal to Barrett Browning and Eliot, are not escape from racial inheritance, but the pressing duties of the lost child to preserve history and identity, as she negotiates a role of political leadership that constrains her private choices.

Inspired by the struggle of her adopted country to overthrow Austrian rule, Elizabeth Barrett Browning envisioned a national future of Italy in Casa Guidi Windows. Following the fictionalized travel writing of Anna Jameson and Arthur Hugh Clough that attempts to avoid politics in favor of art, I argue that by constructing kinship through Anglo-Italian literary tradition, Barrett Browning advocates the Italian revolutions of 1848 as liberal politics demanding English
sympathy through spiritual inheritance. Conversely, Gypsies shed their “spiritual appeal” to become racial figures, through the rise of Gypsy ethnography, popularized by George Borrow and later the Gypsy Lore Society, who mapped the linguistic and racial origins of the English Romany. The claim to race and history provides no solution for survival in Eliot’s long poem The Spanish Gypsy. Although Fedalma’s interstitial role does not bridge Gypsy and Spain, in Eliot’s last novel Daniel Deronda, the adopted child's claim to racial memory depends on the disinherited daughter. Deronda's origins are legitimized through his reunion with his mother, but the process of inheriting Judaism rests on the tradition of Jewish women writers such as Grace Aguilar, who argued for women’s religious education. The "exotic Jewess" Mirah resists conversion and reconstructs racial identity through the memory of her mother's spiritual instruction.
Hyowon Kim was born and raised in Seoul, with a brief stopover in Los Angeles that marked her beginnings as a third culture kid. After an Erasmus exchange year at Leiden University, the Netherlands, she finished her undergraduate work in English at Yonsei University, South Korea (1999). With a scholarship from Fulbright and the KAEC, she began her graduate work at Cornell University, where she received her MA (2003) and Ph.D. (2007). She lives in Leiden.
To my mother and father,
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

[…] You gather up
A few such cases, and, when strong, sometimes,
Will write of factories and slaves, as if
Your father were a negro, and your son
A spinner in the mills. All's yours and you,--
All, coloured with your blood, or otherwise
Just nothing to you.

(Aurora Leigh, Book 2 192-8)

What Romney Leigh denounces in his cousin Aurora’s poetry is not the lack of “serious” political topics--American slavery, English mill workers, child labor--but how she must imagine them as her own kin and family, before she can sympathize with their cause. The roles of kinship Aurora imagines can only limit her poetry; her sympathy can only hinder the scope of her understanding. When he follows her literary example, by marrying Marian Erle as a charity project, he proves his case disastrously in point. In Elizabeth
Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh* (1856), the poet’s ambition is met with a reformer’s skepticism, and despite Aurora Leigh’s fledgling ambition to be more than a “poetess,” in what is a similar outline of Barrett Browning’s ambitions, her entry into the public sphere is dismissed as too feminine. Romney Leigh goes on to say, “mere women, personal and passionate,” are better suited for “doating mothers, and chaste wives.” They take the place of household gods as “sublime Madonnas, and enduring saints,” but cannot emerge beyond the domestic imaginary: “We get no Christ from you,—and verily/ We shall not get a poet, in my mind’ (222-5). For Romney Leigh, the personal does not bespeak the political. Identifying with the personal voice, with its excess of familial ties is exactly what is brought to task. Wearing the face of the cause is a clear marker of lesser creative energies, of limited social awareness. To the half-Italian, half-English, female poet, Aurora, her cousin Romney’s pronouncement on her poetry is doubly damning. She struggles with belonging to neither cold England nor passionate Italy, but lays claim to both. The allegiances are never equally balanced. Italy, in the end, as other English poets discovered before her, is the land that “inspires” her.

These connections, however, between the separate spheres, between domesticity, politics, and the national family, generate a personal, emotional response to the abstract idea of nascent nation. Writing to limit, not expand, the boundaries of women’s place in politics, Anna Jameson nevertheless identifies the vital connection women writers found in the politics of nation:

A woman’s patriotism is more a sentiment than a man’s – more passionate: it is only an extension of the domestic affections, and her *la patrie* is only an enlargement of *home*. In the same manner, a woman’s idea of fame is always a more extended sympathy, and is much more of
a presence than an anticipation. To her, the voice of fame is only the echo – fainter and more distant – of the voice of love.¹

Love and home are the weaker counterparts to the steely logic of king and country. In this dynamic, a woman’s softer domestic affections, for her father, her husband, and her child become the basis for a woman’s patriotism, augmented a thousand-fold. Instead of dividing the separate spheres, Jameson’s binaries overlap in a comparison of degrees, “more passionate” as well as “fainter and more distant.” Further, the etymological suggestions of _la patrie_ point to the rhetoric of national genealogy: the fatherland, the mother-tongue, mothers of the nation, and sons on the battlefield. The structures of private relations are imposed upon the symbolic language of nationalism, and women enter the national sphere under the cover of myths, as sublime Madonnas and mothers of nations. Here, in the arguments for barring women from the public sphere, we find the motives and methods that drew them into the politics of nation.

What, then, summoned English writers to answer the call of nations that were not their own? What sustained this involvement, and how did they maintain their place in a struggle that required the affiliation of birth? The two most prominent women writers of the nineteenth century, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and George Eliot were admired for their “masculine” intellect, as “exceptional” women who broached the divide of public and private spheres. In their writing, the “exceptional” role for women is inextricably bound to the grander calling of nation, where the literal and figurative place of the family becomes central to exploring the tensions between the nationalist rhetoric of

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¹ Anna Jameson, _A Commonplace Book of Thoughts, Memories, and Fancies_, (London: Longman, 1854) 72.
liberation and the liberation of women. In George Eliot’s *The Spanish Gypsy* and *Daniel Deronda*, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Casa Guidi Windows*, the nations in question are not England, nor are they nations at all, but attempts at nation-building. In his exasperation, Romney Leigh contains Aurora (and women’s writing) in the confines of the private sphere, and Aurora impatiently disregards this limitation in favor of the wider world, as did women writers negotiating their place in a the public arena. Their voice in politics required a justification, a just cause that warranted their fervent and ambitious participation. The space of politics extended action beyond the limits of domesticity, but Imperial England of their birth did not require rescue, nor did it offer a moral imperative for ambitious women to act on its behalf.

The marginal, the downtrodden, and the disenfranchised, however, merited a cause they could champion, through the imaginative sympathy of women’s writing that Romney deplores, one that finds father and son in a wider spectrum of race, class, and nation, claiming “[a]ll’s yours and you,—/ All, coloured with your blood.” Instead of circumscribing poetry within the home, however, this imagined kinship extends farther outward, generating political force by employing exactly what is condemned as the shortcoming of women’s poetry: personal pathos. Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s earlier political poems appeal for social reform through the sympathetic voices of children and mothers, speaking for and as one of them. “Cry of the Children” (1843) couches political protest over child labor in mines and factories in “the child’s sob” that “curseth deeper in the silence,” in anything but silence. In “A Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” (1849) she repeats the heated declaration “I am black, I am black” through a slave mother escaping with her “white-faced child.” In the dramatic flight and marriage of her personal life, Italy became
"dearer" to Elizabeth Barrett Browning than England, and increasingly the international attention to Italian nationalism became an urgent cause for her political poetry. Other people’s nationalism rallied a fervent, moral necessity for English writers whose own nation did not elicit sympathy. At worst, England was cast as a dominant power, at best, a casual observer who only assessed the heroic struggles of others.

Instead, both Eliot and Barrett Browning aligned themselves with marginalized, outcast voices, displaying a marked sympathy with “dark Others” whose place within England disrupted the boundaries of the English nation and family. In *The Spanish Gypsy* and *Daniel Deronda*, the notoriously nationless and landless, the Gypsies and the Jews, emerge from the margins of folktales, ghettos, and borderlands, to play central roles as the unlikely agents in their own nation-building. Eliot’s national heroines, Fedalma, Romola, and Mirah, all try on the mantles of lost daughters, mothers, queens, and saints, domestic roles that resonate with mythic narratives of nation. The figures at the center of these national narratives do not belong unequivocally to the nascent nation, to their newly discovered race, or to one family; they are foundlings, lost and adopted children, divided between multiple allegiances. As women, citizenship was a moot point in terms of conscription or suffrage to demonstrate national affiliation. Yet, gender does not exclude Eliot’s lost Gypsy child Fedalma from leading her people into a Promised Land in Africa. Mirah’s narrative complements Deronda’s search for identity, and Mirah herself receives the cultural inheritance of Judaism.

What is striking when we examine these national narratives is how they portray the desire to extricate oneself from, as well as lay claim to, the bonds of family, race, and national history. The family, as a figurative lynchpin for
women and nation, does not offer the cause of nationalism as an irresponsible whim, nor does it become solely a process of appropriating another identity to achieve self-fulfillment. The Italians and the Gypsies, removed from a specific history, present a timeless fantasy of liberation and of freedom, but what appeal to Barrett Browning and Eliot are not escape and irresponsibility, but the pressing bonds and the duties of the individual to preserve racial history and identity. These narratives of fledgling nations parallel the individual foundlings discovering their identity. National and personal identity becomes fraught with self-examination: Deronda’s Jewish origins, Fedalma’s Zincali origins, and the English traveler forging a literary and spiritual origin in Italy. Reading Clough’s *Amours de Voyage* alongside Barrett Browning’s *Casa Guidi Windows*, and, to cast the thematic net wider, with Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda*, what I find striking is the persistent desire for duty in the pursuit of other people’s nationalisms, a duty that is inextricably bound up in identity. Of the two sophisticated Englishmen, despite his momentary yearnings, Clough cannot urge himself to act on behalf of Italian independence. The Englishman in Italy is constantly reminded of the Anglo-Italian literary tradition that attests to their cultural affinity, even their inheritance in the “spirit” of Italy. As a tourist, however, one can only observe. At best, he is a concerned connoisseur. Deronda, however, can ultimately embrace his intellectual dream of Judaism when he has discovered his Jewish identity. I argue that these national narratives examine the literary, cultural, spiritual associations of the nationless, in “passionate” Italy, the “wandering” Gypsy, and the “tragic romance” of the Jew. Instead of reducing race to tropes of escape, however, they insist on exploring their concrete historical and political realities through the struggle of nation-building.
Matthew Arnold's widely influential notion of “Hebraism” in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) illustrates the idea of race as a cultural trope. In “Hellenism and Hebraism,” English culture is caught in a discordant balance between two points of influence. Arnold locates intellectual freedom, or “seeing things as they are,” in the “aerial ease, clearness, and radiancy” of Hellenism, described as “sweetness and light” (91). At the other end, Hebraism indicates “conduct and obedience,” referring to the abstract strain of religious and moral strain of English Puritanism, which Arnold locates in Judaism. 2 Emphasizing the “essential unity of man,” he points to the spiritual affinity that connects the Hebrew and the English, in the “likeness in the strength and prominence of moral fibre” (95). In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold acknowledges the “science” of Victorian anthropology and how it informs his awareness of “the great and pregnant elements of difference, which lie in race.” 3 Thus, Arnold notes that “we English, a nation of Indo-European stock” are distinct from Hebraism’s “Semitic growth” and belong more “naturally to the movement of Hellenism,” finding a racial origin for this emblematic freedom. 4 However, the social, historical, physical presence of the Jews is displaced when the racial bodies of both Hellene and Hebrew are eliminated, in the process of utilizing these “best

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2 See David DeLaura’s *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), and more recently, Lionel Gossman’s “Philhellenism and Antisemitism: Matthew Arnold and his German Models,” *Comparative Literature* 46 (1994) for discussions of Arnold’s Hebraism. Here, “Hebraism” does not signal a particular racial context, but based on Arnold’s own ambiguous definitions, is dissociated from race and anti-Semitism, and read as a moral imagination sustained by Christian Evangelicism.


4 In *Colonial Desire*, Robert Young discusses Arnold’s anthropological account of culture based on Victorian discourses on scientific and linguistic interrelation and hierarchy of races. The affinity that identifies England as “Hebrew,” defines “culture” against “Philistines,” emptying out the racial element of Jewishness and displace it. As Young argues, “the term involves a further reversal: originally, of course, ‘philistine’ was the name for the non-Jews: in *Culture and Anarchy*, as we shall see, the Jews are identified as Hebraic, which is itself characterized as philistine. So the Jews become non-Jews, while the (cultured) Englishmen take over the role of the chosen people (58).
selves" for the uses of English "culture."\(^5\) Arnold select culture as "the best which has been thought and said in the world," through a process that Catherine Gallagher describes as "scrap[ing] away economic, sectional and class identity, social identity itself, leaving behind the pure and disinterested kernel of the best self."\(^6\) Arnold’s liberal inclusiveness is nuanced by containing racial difference within the discourse of an ideal universalism that must nevertheless "transcend" race. The racialized Jew is emptied of all content ("without politics, without science, without art, without charm") and is merely a mode of action for bringing about ‘perfection.’\(^7\) As Brian Cheyette points out, the extents of English liberalism, as influenced by Arnold, relied on an “ambivalence of race within a dialogue of culture of transcendence” that select the aspects of ‘the best self’ to include and exclude within the limits of the nation’s cultural identity.\(^8\)

In a recent critical study of nineteenth century realism and the nation, Irene Tucker places the Jews as central to the development of English liberalism. In *Probable State: the Novel, the Contract, and the Jews*, Tucker argues that in the debates over Jewish emancipation, while “participating neither in [England’s] political institutions nor entirely in the common language by which that space may be named,” the Jews nevertheless become engaged as a new “fictional authority” precisely because their presence deconstructs

\(^5\) Martin Bernal, *Black Athena*.
\(^7\) Quoted from Arnold *Literature and Dogma* (1873).
\(^8\) Brian Cheyette shows that despite his liberal support for Jewish emancipation, Arnold’s universalism is ambivalent about the place the “untransfigured or unhellenized Jew” can have within the culture of "best selves." *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
these nation-based assumptions of the novel. In *Daniel Deronda*, this idealized Jew represents a distanced form of transnational experience, becoming the model for the modern cosmopolitan subjectivity.\(^9\) Tucker frames Deronda’s and Zionism’s solution as a “potential” for new social relations in transnational experience, not a return to conventional nationalism. However, her thesis attests to the power of liberal authority invested in the bringing the narrative center to marginalized and disenfranchised peoples.

Similarly, the vagrancy of Gypsy life suggested a bohemian freedom that contrasted the image of Gypsy wandering with restrictive, middle-class conformity. Landless, and sharing neither a distinctive common language nor race, Gypsies provided an even greater possibility for flouting authority. It is no surprise that Matthew Arnold imagined them as a liberating escape in “The Scholar Gypsy,” elaborating on a cultural fantasy that presented “gypsying” as a membership that relied on practice rather than strictly on birth (which I will discuss further in Chapter 2). In the Italian nationalisms of the mid-nineteenth century that captivated Barrett Browning, and the imagined nation-building of the Gypsies and the Jews in Eliot, the nationless are placed at the very center of a national narrative that they had challenged and eluded.

Deborah Epstein Nord has argued that “marks of race,” signs of belonging to England’s “dark Others,” allow unconventional heroines to “fall” into an exceptional vocation, forcing them to claim a greater political destiny that would not have been available or ostensibly desirable for white-middle class women. Susan Meyer’s use of “race as a metaphor” in *Imperialism at Home* (1996) yokes the recurring imaginative sympathies of white heroines with the colonialized “dark Others.” Reducing these groups as “metaphors” of

empire, however, risks obscuring the particular place of Jews and Gypsies within England, and a foreign nationalism in Italy. Post-colonial critique of nationalism and feminism by Partha Chatterjee and Benita Parry serve doubly as a reminder of England’s “dark Others” as historical realities that existed in the political spaces of the nineteenth century, beyond their configuration as fantasies.

Fantasies of escaping into the imagined freedom and ‘irresponsibility’ of a darker race (in contrast to the white man’s burden) are complicated in Eliot’s narratives of “exceptional” women, when these fantasies turn into moral responsibilities. By placing the literary encounter within Eliot’s own historical context, I diverge from Meyer and Nord’s respective use of “dark Others.” Placing the literary encounter within the writer’s historical context gives the English Gypsies, Jews, and Italians specific racial and social realities beyond the figuration of a “dark” Others. At the same time, I acknowledge the particular cultural fables of these historical “dark Others,” the signifying fantasies that contributed to their evolving place in the English literary context. What I examine is how the narrative of fragmented families are employed in the narratives of other people’s nationalism, and how these narratives appeal not only to the fantasies of escape and exaltation, but as the vexing moral imperatives of cultural and racial inheritance. Eliot’s “exceptional” women negotiate their place within a community that offers political exaltation and at the same time constrain their choices.

Women and nation, kinship and politics, then, unlike Romney Leigh’s immediate dismissal, cannot occupy discrete spaces of public and domestic spheres. National “mothers” and the motherland are called upon to evoke a loyalty that augments filial devotion to mothers at home, as an extension of
self, family, community, toward a larger national identity. Through the trope of divided families, lost children, and adoption, I examine the pull of divided allegiances and conflicting loyalties of dual race and dual nation. The domestic drama of adopted identities and unfamiliar families is set against the struggle for national independence. The sentimental and familiar approach to an unfamiliar (and foreign) political cause, of setting family before nation, threads together the opposing strands of my questions regarding the advocacy of other people’s politics.

In my first chapter I place Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s political poem *Casa Guidi Windows* within the literary history of the English traveler in Italy and an Italianate English tradition to transform Italian politics into a matter of urgency to an English reading public. I argue that Barrett Browning’s familiarity with an Anglicized, literary Italy allows her to claim to her “adopted” nation through her literary connection with Byron and Milton, and create a familiar, “nativized” place for the woman poet by and presenting a carefully contained voice that privileges the private, and ostensibly demurring poet over the strains of Italian enthusiasm and a foreign tourist’s distance. While the rise of the tourist industry in the nineteenth century made the warmer climate and the hallowed literary and artistic tradition of Italy more accessible to the middle-class English traveler, following the footsteps of Byron is interrupted by the pressing politics of Italian nationalism. Amidst the idyll of classical ruins and Renaissance art and architecture, Italy is the scene of a contemporary political struggle against Austrian rule, from Mazzini’s Risorgimento movement in the 1830s to unification under Victor Emmanuel in 1862. As they identified with the romance of the political narrative, however, English writers confronted the challenge of imagining themselves as patriots of a country not their own. In
this chapter, I look at the evolution of Italy from a romantic and nostalgic setting of landscape and art, paradoxically steeped in history yet insistently excluded from modern history by tourists, into the site of a modern nationalist struggle. Anna Jameson’s *Diary of an Ennuyee* (1826) and later Arthur Hugh Clough’s equivocal *Amours de Voyage* (1858) employ the strategies of the non-native, the stranger, and the foreigner, in distancing themselves from the English crowd, while struggling with their conviction or unease in speaking for another people’s nationalism and national-identity. They faced a complex relationship with the Italy of Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, and the constant specter of Byron, whose example of political engagement with Greek (and Italian) nationalism called for a corresponding heroism that was unsettling and even inappropriate for his Victorian successors in the age of tourism. As an English woman poet, whose flight from England and her father has over-determined the feminist politics of the poem, Barrett Browning’s insistent engagement with the Italian movement relies on personal ties to Italy. In *Casa Guidi Windows* (1852) Barrett Browning offers the unassailable place she has in Italy with her English-Italian son, and her earlier rebuke against Italy develops the “natural” gravitas of a mother, casually reaffirming this English poet’s unquestionable right to have her say in Italian politics.

Chapter 2 turns inwards to England to frame George Eliot’s *The Spanish Gypsy* (1862), a drama in verse set in 15th century Spain, within the context of Gypsies in fact and fiction in the nineteenth century. I look at the Victorian gypsiologists’ linguistic and ethnographic interests to place the gypsies within a “scholarly” framework that is nonetheless is shaped by myth and folk-tales. As figures of vagrancy and irresponsibility, vilified and romanticized at once, the lure of becoming a Gypsy becomes accessible
through the stories of Gypsy-kidnappings and lost children. George Borrow in
the 1850s and middle-class men of the Gypsy Lore Society in the 1880s
emulated this nostalgic fantasy of becoming a Gypsy, in their attempts at
collecting Gypsy folk-tales and language, casting a professional seriousness
over their Gypsy “visits.” Sir Walter Scott’s Guy Mannering relies on Gypsy
kidnapping as both narrative drive and solution, where the loss of a Scottish
heir to the Gypsies results a reversal in the popular folk-myth: the heir (and the
estate) of Ellangowen, is rescued and restored by the Gypsy Queen Meg
Merriels. Gypsies stand in as the advocates of feudal duties that are fast
disintegrating. The Spanish Gypsy explores the complications of gendered
patriotism, in which Fedalma’s domestic and private hopes are dashed by the
demands of national and racial politics. For the Gypsy Fedalma, Maggie’s
dream of escape and exaltation turns into a tragedy fueled by racial tension,
where becoming a Gypsy involves intractable demands of racial loyalty,
nationalist urgency, and responsibility, the very duties that the tantalizing
freedom of the Gypsy fantasy purports to avoid. The demands of racial
inheritance, nation, and domestic desires are raised but left unresolved, until
her last novel, Daniel Deronda.

In the last chapter, the narratives of family, kinship, and adoption are
examined, rejected, and reclaimed again in George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda,
through the triangulated model of adopted child, parent, and birth parent in
constructing Deronda’s modern Jewish identity. The trope of adoption and
Jews as England’s stepchildren, used in parliamentary debates to refuse or
grant the franchise to English Jews, depend on the narrative of family and pull
of extended families in parallel arguments for assimilation, conversion, and
resistance to a mainstream Christian England. It is this connection between
making national subjects of excluded (and exclusionary) “peoples” with the domestic discourse of extended and alternative families that is at stake in George Eliot’s last novel *Daniel Deronda*. Kinship and adoption in the national analogy are tied in with Jewish conversion to Christianity and assimilation into the English nation. Thirty years before *Daniel Deronda* George Eliot objected to Benjamin Disraeli’s *Sidonia* novels, *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred*, vehemently disagreeing with their insistence on a Christian debt to Judaism, and remained skeptical of the move toward emphasizing racial ‘idiosyncracies.” By her last novel, Eliot’s questions on nation and cultural inheritance had come full circle, adjusting these earlier views for a new liberalism that applauded a distinct Jewish identity. Against the attempts at conversion levied at the Anglo-Jewish community, Grace Aguilar, in the 1840s creates a model of Jewish religious education and resistance to conversion that appealed to the tenets of middle-class domesticity in *The Spirit of Judaism*. The romantic model of the beautiful Jewess resisting rape and conversion in Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, is evoked in Aguilar’s posthumously published historical novel *The Vale of Cedars*. The Jewish heroine Marie resists torture and conversion in 15th century Spain to protect her English Christian lover, posing no threat to the stability of the English nation. Eliot’s novel draws upon the narratives of conversion and resistance, not only in the Deronda’s search for his origins, but through Jewish mothers and daughters in the Alcharisi and Mirah Lapidoth. The Alcharisi’s conversion disappoints the expectations to draw her as the fallen mother forgiven in the course of restoring the rights of inheritance to the lost child. While emotionally brutal, the mother’s dissent and distance pauses to dissociate Deronda’s Jewish agency from a reductive determinism. Mirah’s resistance to conversion, diffuses the
focus of sexual attention on the figure of the tragic Jewess, by identifying her personal suffering with the larger course of Jewish history. While Mirah retreats safely into the hearth of the Meyrick’s comforting Christianity, it is the domestic imagination, extending from mother, to race, to nation, that sustains her Judaism. The ties between mother and nation, as outlined by Grace Aguilar’s writing on Jewish mothers and religious education, are articulated in Mirah’s unwavering image of her own mother, as the unchallenged and venerated as the basis of her imagined identity, and Deronda’s by extension.
CHAPTER TWO
The Romance of the Tourist and the Italian Risorgimento

In his brief introduction to Pictures from Italy (1846) titled “The Reader’s Passport,” Dickens playfully lays out the conditions of his travel writing. Unlike other books written about Italy, his will not contain a catalogue of information on Italian history and “innumerable associations entwined about it,” only his personal reflections “with the liveliest impressions of novelty and freshness” (6). Neither will there be, any grave examination into the government or misgovernment of any potion of the country. No visitor of that beautiful land can fail to have a strong conviction on the subject; but as I chose when residing there, a Foreigner, to abstain from the discussion of any such questions with any order of Italians, so I would rather not enter on the inquiry now. (5) Doing so, he implies, will be tedious, and as a visitor, even discourteous to a country he finds “inexpressively attractive.” Politics, it seems, detracts from appreciating the spirit of Italy in its art, architecture, music, and touristic enjoyment, yet English writers defensively explain their choice to look away

from current Italian politics to admire its past. Dickens found no need to
distinguish himself as a true traveller, as opposed to a vulgar tourist. Others,
like Ruskin, concentrated on learned studies of Italian art and architecture that
set them apart as connoisseurs. The pleasure of the journey called for an
apology for avoiding the politics of Italy.

The puzzle of Italy in the Victorian imagination lies in the divergence
and overlap of two nations. One is an ongoing, fragmented political movement
to found a modern nation, while the other Italy already exists as a site of art
history, a contiguous exhibit through the ages, open for the indulgence of the
English aesthete. In the nineteenth century, Italy was not yet a nation, but it
existed in the English consciousness as one. As Metternich remarked
disparagingly in 1849, the peninsula was (merely) a “geographic expression.”
Certainly to the English, Italy encompassed the vaguely defined cultural entity
of Italia, rather than the fragmented political sovereignties of Sardinia,
Piedmont, or Bologna. English writers were divided on how to approach the
mid-nineteenth century uprisings (1848-9) and later the Italian wars of
independence and unification. If advocates for contemporary politics were
enamoured of Italy because of its art, admirers of its art found Italian
nationalist politics persistently mired in the unrest of contemporary foreign
affairs that proved a hindrance to enjoying its cultural history. The political
upheavals advanced by the Risorgimento movement presented a very
different Italy from the open museums that the cities of Rome, Venice, and
Florence provided English visitors.

If Italy offered a rich cultural tradition from Classical Rome to the
Renaissance, opera, architecture, poetry and painting in the nineteenth
century, the historical context of Dante, Petrarch, and Fra Angelico appealed
to English writers more than the attempts at nationalist revolution in 1848. Robert Browning preferred his Italy in the Renaissance, as illustrated in the Machiavellian settings of his poems, “Fra Lippo Lippi,” “Andrea Del Sarto,” “My Last Duchess,” and the monumental The Ring and the Book (1868-9). George Eliot’s historical novel Romola (1863) is set in Savonarola’s Florence beleaguered by foreign powers in the fifteenth century. Although markedly more sympathetic to the Italian cause than the Austrian Metternich, Robert Browning writes in a letter to Isa Blagden, that the Italians “are poetry, don’t and can’t make poetry.”

A geographic expression, or literary expression, Italy lacks agency in the present, literary or political. Browning’s private comment is interesting in its complexity—he follows this remark with “but as a nation, politically, they are most interesting to me” (238), countering a popular critical view that contrasts his savvy skepticism with his wife’s “mad” support of Italian nationalism. Italy and England, politics and poetry, past and present overlap, even as English writers claimed to sequester them. The Italian past is a site of historical interest and poetical resources for the English writer. In their own time, the Italian nationalist movement became an expression of poetic action that inspired some, like Elizabeth Barrett Browning to show her advocacy and

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11 Inspired by Italy, Robert Browning’s dramatic poetry set in the Italian Renaissance presented a sympathetic affinity or “preference” for the foreign, “coarse,” Italian voices that disoriented his English reading public who found them “repulsive,” as the Chambers Journal complained of Browning’s Men and Women in 1861. See Boyd Litzinger and Donald Smalley eds. Browning: The Critical Heritage (New York: Routledge, 1970) 205. Italy, past or present, is a critical double bind for the Brownings. Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s political poetry was met with bewilderment at its enthusiasm; Robert Browning’s Italian poems, set 2-300 years earlier only confused and further alienated his English readers. Matthew Reynolds puts Robert Browning’s historically esoteric dramatic monologues within the context of Browning’s contemporary Italian politics. See Reynolds, Realms of Verse (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001) 157-202. Browning nevertheless writes privately on contemporary Italy and the state of its literature: “I never read a line in a modern Italian book that was of use to me,—never saw a flash of poetry come out of an Italian word: in art, in action, yes… I always said, they are poetry, don’t and can’t make poetry […]” See Ed. Edward C. McAleer, Dearest Isa; Robert Browning’s Letters to Isabella Blagden, (Austin: U of Texas P, 1951) 238.
admiration through her own poetry. Embracing contemporary politics became a personal mission signaling private liberation and artistic freedom, and supporting contemporary Italian politics became a Victorian exercise in the long traveller’s tradition of becoming Anglo-Italian. Just as Italians were subjects of an exuberant way of life who perform rather than actively create poetry, visiting Italy was an occasion for the English writer and artist to embrace an exuberance similar to the Italian “spirit” that will inspire their art. To this, politics and nationalism took on a heightened moral purpose for identifying with the spirit of Italy they had so admired in art.

While all interesting acts, poetic or historical, are safely in the past with Petrarch, Dante, and the Medicis, present-day politics sounds an alarming call for military action, much as it is an alluring occasion for poetry. The model of Byron as the exemplary Italianate English poet continued to generate both admiration and anxiety for his Victorian successors, when discovering an Italy that was at once, insistently struggling to be modern, and at the same time steeped in the glories of the past. Rescuing Italy, the land of classical antiquity and Renaissance art, became again possible, but following Byron’s singular example was problematic. The possibility of Byronic heroism almost thirty years after his death is no longer viable for the level-headed Englishman. Certainly the example of Algernon Charles Swinburne, who recited *A Song for Italy* (1867) on his knees before an exiled Giuseppe Mazzini in London, shows enthusiasm passing into the ridiculous. Nevertheless, Italian nationalism attracted notable advocates in Elizabeth Barrett Browning, as well as George Meredith, who fictionalized the events of 1848 and the Risorgimento in his

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12 For Swinburne’s "republican aesthetics" and the tradition of Anglo-Italian politics see Stephanie Kuduk, "A Sword of a Song": Swinburne's Republican Aesthetics in Songs before Sunrise,” *Victorian Studies* 43.2 (2001): 253-278.
novel *Vittoria* (1867). These Victorian writers faced a complex relationship with the Italy of Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, and the omnipresent specter of Byron, whose example of political engagement with Greek (and Italian) nationalism called for a corresponding heroism that was unsettling and dangerous for his Victorian successors in the age of tourism.\(^{13}\) By the mid-nineteenth century, Byron’s romantic (and ultimately doomed) heroism loomed as an unavoidable example of reconciling aesthetic appreciation of a past Italy with political sympathy for a national turmoil that arose again to international attention. The response, however, in a post-Romantic era is split, as is the desire to recover as well as renounce Byron.

This chapter maps out the stages of political intimacy from the uneasy, but sympathetic contact of tourists to the conviction of Italian enthusiasts, from Anna Jameson’s female diarist negotiating her anxiety of influence, Arthur Hugh Clough’s uninspired Englishman, to Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s fervent support and subsequent disappointment in the Italian Risorgimento. For the casual tourist, present day politics intrudes insistently on his or her enjoyment. For the discerning traveller, however, maneuvering the complexities of Italian-English sympathies becomes an incitement to pleasure, rather than a hindrance. Moreover, following the literary trail separates the learned traveller from the increasing numbers of English tourists in Italy. Political sympathies are acquired and honed along with the right taste in poetry. Drawing on the literary thread that connects Italy and England—Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron—nineteenth century writers draw a literary lineage within Italy. From their familiarity with English poets in Italy, aspiring

writers in the nineteenth century have a distinct vantage point apart from the common tourist. Moral sympathies for the Italian *Risorgimento* resonates with an English invention of Italy through the centuries, familiar to every well-read writer.

Anna Jameson’s *Diary of an Ennuyee* (1826) and Arthur Hugh Clough’s *Amours de Voyage* (1859) avidly or self-consciously follow Byron’s literary trail through a writer’s self-fashioning. Byron’s allure overlaps with the allure of Italy as an occasion for self-discovery and artistic liberation. As poets and artist find inspiration in Italy’s history, art, and landscape, “becoming” Byron offers the tantalizing possibility for the English traveller to become a poet, a revolutionary, and a Romantic of a bygone age. The romance of Italian nationalism shapes the personal and interpersonal imagining of writers into explaining or weaving their “natural” (or literary) qualifications as political advocates, as the foreign tourist, the expatriate writer, the Italiophile, through the “journey of self-discovery.” For Elizabeth Barrett Browning, familiarity with an Anglicized, literary Italy allows her to claim her “adopted” nation through her literary connection with Byron and Milton, a literary lineage that allows her to re-invent a new English Italy. In *Casa Guidi Windows* (1852) Barrett Browning creates a familiar, “nativized” place for the woman poet by presenting a carefully contained voice that privileges the private, and ostensibly demurring poet over the strains of Italian enthusiasm. Through the “natural” *gravitas* of a mother, she marks this English poet’s unquestionable right to have her say in Italian politics.
[1. The Past is a Foreign Country]

If Italy offers the Victorians a political vision, it is grounded in Classical Rome not the *Risorgimento*. Classical Rome serves as either a celebratory identification with the rise of the British Empire as the new Rome, or as a more sober lesson in the decline of the Roman Republic. As Frank Turner points out, late eighteenth-century constructions of English national character, especially in the polemic of Edmund Burke, focused on the turmoil of the Roman Republic expressly because of its "secular" pagan model. These arguments singled out the fall of the Roman Empire in its legal and political institutions that were unsupported by the ethics of Christianity. In comparison, the new empire arising in eighteenth-century England would be equipped with Christian traditions to help avoid Rome’s imperial demise. For many Victorian writers, however, the allure outweighed the eventual collapse. The classical curriculum of Latin (and Greek) kept ancient Rome a familiar fascination, as well as a historical, literary, and political touchstone. A thorough background in the Classics remained a key component of higher learning throughout the nineteenth century despite the demands for a more technical and practical curriculum. At the same time, the Roman Republic and the old Roman Empire continued to serve as a political ideal or warning for England, depending on the metaphor, from the “Augustan” age and well into nineteenth century.14 Although the fall of empire was evident in Roman history, aligning England with Rome remained a delirious act of grandiose historical projection.

14 Norman Vance’s *The Victorians and Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997) discusses the Victorian fascination with ancient Rome, through their familiarity with Roman poets. See in particular, “The Persistence of Rome” (3-23) and “Rome and Imperial Debate” (222-246) for the change in the idea of Rome in English political discourse from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries.
Edward Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1771-89) popularized the site of Roman ruins as a distant warning to England, an elegiac interpretation that relishes the historical sobriety and moral lesson available from the Capitoline hills. Gibbon’s impression of Rome redirects the last gaze from the Roman ruins to the prosperity of the English. Nine centuries of desecration is now “devoutly visited by a new race of pilgrims from the remote and once savages countries of the North” (267). While deploring the ruins of an empire, Poggius’s lament sets an example for English visitors looking for lessons in history, architecture, and morals in one:

…the place and object gave ample score for moralising on the vicissitudes of fortune, which spares neither man nor the proudest of his works, which buries empires and cities in a common grave; and it was agreed that in proportion to her former greatness, the fall of Rome was the more awful and deplorable. (6: 289)

Visiting Roman ruins only enforces this interpretation: Rome becomes less “our contemporary” and more a nostalgic moment in a past Golden Age. As English tourists in Italy trace the lineage of Western civilization by visiting Classical ruins and gazing upon Renaissance art, Roman history and, more importantly, Italian art history are imaginatively inherited (as well as materially collected) by the English and the British Empire. The lessons of history are rote exercises in generating anti-history, where present day politics is dissociated from the tourists’ travel into the past, presented as anecdotes conveniently explained in the popular guidebooks published by John Murray.

It is then as a traveller that the English writer begins to negotiate his relationship with Italy. As the writer’s discomfort with the increasing numbers of (vulgar) English tourists grows, he turns his gaze toward current Italian
politics to distinguish himself from the crowd. However, the attempt to recapture the spirit of Byron in a post-Romantic age, has no unified direction. The literate traveller hesitates, questions, and examines, but arrives at no clear conclusion to this new experience of Italy. The question of sympathy and identification hound the self-conscious Victorian, who can no longer fight for Italy, the way Byron fought for Italy and died for Greece.15

The transition from “travellers” to “tourists” in the nineteenth-century introduces political interest as a means for the discerning writer to distinguish himself from the vulgar crowd. Moving away from his countrymen in search of “true” Italian “feeling,” the writer lays claim to political sympathies closer to the native than to his fellow Englishmen. Following the artist as tourist in Anna Jameson and Arthur Hugh Clough, I draw upon Jonathan Culler’s semiotics of tourism and the cultural phenomenon of modern tourism examined in Dean MacCannell’s The Tourist (1988), and the wide-ranging study of nineteenth-century European travel in James Buzard’s The Beaten Track (1995). Dean MacCannell illustrates how identifying, explaining, and “marking” particular locations “sacralize” those sites—that is, produce as culturally meaningful—for the consumption of the leisure tourist. Marking a tourist object or location requires identifying the distinctive customs, historical import, and cultural value of the site for the tourist who is in search of “authentic experience” and “true culture,” then reducing them to a sign or a “marker” of the society as a whole (39-48). The tourist, committed to the idea of an authentic experience, recognizes and collects a series of these markers in an attempt to produce a

cohesive narrative of the society he is visiting as the ultimate object of travel itself. The semiotic bind of “authentic” and “true” culture generates a string of mythicized locations or objects (the tower of Pisa or the Colosseum) that offer “moral, aesthetic, and psychological superiority” for the tourist who “experiences” them. At the same time, their association with tourists casts a stigma of “spuriousness” over their value as authentically native experiences, leaving the next wave of tourists to search for a more authentic site or more rarified encounter (147-160). Jonathan Culler, in “The Semiotics of Tourism” (1988), points to this widespread derision aimed at tourists and tourism, a distinction that relies on the same pursuit and valorization of “authenticity” in the travellers who identify themselves apart from the tourist.16 The traveller too is in search of authenticity, but beyond the beaten path of popular tourism. He sets himself in hostile opposition to the tourist. The tourist huddles in groups where the traveller is individual and adventurous, is ignorant where the traveller is learned, and stands out as embarrassingly foreign where the traveller blends in with the natives. Most unforgivable of all, the tourist is tacky. As Culler puts it, for this self-important traveller, “the true age of travel has, it seems, always already slipped by; other travellers are always tourists”(157). In the discerning traveller’s nostalgia for an age before tourism and a space uncluttered by the indiscriminate masses, the authentic is farther removed from the reviled tourist and countryman, and located in closer proximity to native experiences and native interests.

[2. Death and the Maiden: Anna Jameson’s *Diary of an Ennuyee* and the Dangers of Byron’s Italy]

We have visited the pretty English burial-ground, and the tomb of Smollet, which in the true English style is cut and scratched all over with the names of fools, who think thus to link their own insignificance to his immortality. We have also seen whatever else is to be seen, and what all travellers describe. (*Diary of an Ennuyee*, 321)

Nearing the end of her journey, the unnamed narrator of Anna Jameson’s *Diary of an Ennuyee* (1826) stops by an English cemetery in the port city of Leghorn (Livorno) to visit Tobias Smollett’s grave. For the diarist, the “ennuyee” who has been hinting at her fatal fatigue all throughout the volume, this is an ominous moment. After a brief return through Genoa and Turin, the pages of the *Diary* (as well as the diarist’s last breath) are cut short at Lyons, ending mid-sentence: “we arrived here yesterday—” (341). An editor’s note announces that four days after writing the last paragraph, the writer died and has been buried before arriving home. *Diary of an Ennuyee*, Jameson’s first published work and only fictional attempt, caused a stir when it was revealed that the author (not to be confused with her languishing fictional heroine) was healthy and alive in London a year after its successful publication.¹⁷ In a market already crowded with travel narratives, some armchair guides written in England, others on the road, the *Diary’s* odd mixture of weary romance and sensible description attracted attention and success.

The shifts in tone and topic reveal the awareness of the diarist writing as a woman, an English traveller, and a writer who warily acknowledges her literary predecessors, while attempting to create a distinctive account of her Italian journey. As she wryly points out the ubiquitous tourist graffiti defacing Smollett’s tombstone, the diarist moves one step away from the English “fools” who etched them, only to move another step back into the crowd of “travellers,” dutifully looking but no longer detailing “whatever else is to be seen.”

Jameson’s Diary is multiply self-conscious: the narrator advances and retreats between the crowd of English travellers and the select group of English writers (past and present) whose literary and artistic trail she is following. We find a parallel anxiety in the hesitant diarist who cannot bring herself to cut the leaves of Mme. de Staël’s Corinne (1807) for fear of identifying and emulating its doomed heroine, and the fledgling woman writer whose Italian journey is peppered with reminders of Byron, Shelley, and Smollett in Italy. English writers are popular landmarks for the common tourist, as is Mme de de Staël and Corinne, which “has become the fasionable vade mecum for sentimental travellers in Italy” (104). At the same time, the threat of mortality looms over the diarist, reflecting both the author’s anxiety toward literary forbears and the diarist’s awareness of what happens to young women who write on the road. If the writer-traveller is emulating the success of earlier writers, she is morbidly reminded of what happens to their heroines. For Jameson’s diarist, the literary trail she follows in Italy allows her to tentatively, then more assuredly write about Italian art, laying the foundation for Jameson’s style of personal impression in her later art criticism that granted her professional survival as a writer.
Anna Jameson visited Italy five years before her fictional diarist in 1821, then as an unmarried governess caring for the children of her employer Edward Littleton. Her letters to her mother and sisters closely follow the Diary’s fictional itinerary, and her cheerful reminders of where to buy the best gloves and shoes are interspersed with the first-time traveller’s literary framing of Italy, which is “just like Corinne.” Already, Italian travel is no longer only the purview of the gentleman’s Grand Tour. With the increasing number of travellers, whole families on the road, and the rise of mass tourism, there is a commensurate rise in the publication of travel narratives and tourist’s guides. Travel writing, a publicized form of diaries and epistles to friends at home, is filled with mundane accounts of inferior lodgings and food, and the writer’s personal impressions focused on their extreme discomfort. The irate, cantankerous English tourist in Tobias Smollett’s Travels through France and Italy (1766) is widely recognized, and quickly ridiculed in Laurence Sterne’s Sentimental Journey (1768), where satirical humor is preferred to homage in Italy. Commercial travel guides such as John Murray’s began to offer encyclopedic detail for foreign travel, in maps, prices, lodgings, and food, while recognizing the need for a guide to the local color, sights, history, art, and even celebrities. John Murray’s travel guides included excerpts from Byron’s poetry, sometimes quoted out of their historical or political contexts to illustrate

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19 Frank Felsenstein points out the shift in sensibility that turned from the irascible Englishman to the admiring one in the 1780s, in his introduction to Smollett’s Travels Through France and Italy, ed Frank Felsenstein (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), xix. Edward Chaney maps the reversal in English attitudes toward Italy, from an admirable cultural contemporary to an ossified setting for past art and architecture, as the balance of political power favored England over the course of the eighteenth century, Evolution of the Grand Tour (London: Frank Cass, 1998). See also, Jeremy Black, Italy and the Grand Tour (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).
local sights. The specific revolutions and sieges are forgotten in favor of abstracted feelings and stirring impressions to beautify the landscape. As James Buzard illustrates throughout *The Beaten Track* (1993), Byron the rebel and anti-tourist who "remade travel in his image" (114), was transformed and re-invented into a tourist icon through the inclusion of poetry and anecdotes in Murray’s from the 1840s onwards. As Buzard notes, these guidebooks “recast” excerpts from *Manfred, The Prisoner of Chillon*, and *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* to complement the scenery of the Alps or Lombardy. Murray’s guides “[reinvented] Byron, making the poet’s stanzas read as though they were created for no other purpose than to guide the finer feelings of the tourist.”²¹ For Victorian travellers, Byron becomes a contradictory model containing both aspects of the traveller/tourist dichotomy. The Byron industry supplies markers of his Italian itinerary with lines of his poetry, venerating the site, and transforming it into an easily identifiable and popular tourist spot. At the same time, it empties his poetry of political context for the easy consumption of tourists. Despite this over-familiarity, Byron remains the constant ideal of “authentic” travel, as a poet and Italianate Englishman whose freedom and rebelliousness signal the exemplary traveller in “spirit.” The tourist industry makes the most of Byron’s public persona, his *outre* personality being as liberating and licentious as Italy promises to be. How useful this sexual, masculine model might be to women writers is a problem that engages Jameson’s diarist, as she selectively maneuvers through Byron’s

reputation in Italy as a poet, a personality, and still prominent political force.²²

Jameson’s *Diary* records a journey close on the trail of Byron. In 1821, when the young, unmarried Anna Murphy visited Italy, Byron was well and living in Pisa and Genoa. By the time she published her *Diary of an Ennuyee* as Mrs Anna Brownell Jameson in 1826, Byron’s death at Missolonghi (1824) was already two years in the past. Byron’s literary Italy, however, had already become the English tourist’s index for quotable (and disreputable) taste. The diarist is aware of the conventions of travel writing, in the casual parade of lists, names, sights, the mundane reports back home on the varieties of fruit and fish, and she carefully avoids them. She is already treading in more literary footsteps. The specter of Byron will excuse her burst of spontaneity and sanction her own preferences in Italian painting:

> At the Manfrini Palace there is the most valuable and splendid collection of pictures I have yet seen in Italy or elsewhere. I have no intention of turning my little Diary into a mere catalogue of names which I can find in every guide-book; but I cannot pass over Giorgione’s beautiful group of himself, and his wife and child, which Lord Byron calls “love at full length and life, not love ideal,” and it is indeed exquisite. (67)

As the Murray’s guides will discover decades later, the diarist finds Byron a convenient means to express her opinions during her travels. Although literary and trivial landmarks become hallowed through their association with Byron, the diarist already finds Italy too crowded with his literary imprint, even as she

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²² Byron’s reputation throughout the 19th century varies according to the responses of his Victorian readers. Andrew Elfenbein shows the reception of Byron as a cult figure, from his own lifetime through the waxing and waning interest in the 19th century, from a representation of “feminine” subjectivity and interiority to an escapist transgressive sexuality. See Elfenben, *Byron and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995).
makes use of them. The boatman on Lake Geneva claims that he had been in
the service of Lord Byron, and was with him in that storm described in the third
canto of *Childe Harold* (33). In Rome, she remarks wryly that the Fountain of
Egeria has risen in popularity due to “some of the most exquisite stanzas in his
poem, and has certainly invested it with a charm it could not have possessed
before,” while the obscure and neglected tomb of Cecilia Metella could
certainly have used the “classical fame Lord Byron has lately supplied in
poetical interest.” (177). The poet as “character” emerges on every scene,
through acquaintances, standers-by, and servants, forming a collection of
anecdotes. The amiable fellow Englishwoman Mrs H in Venice, who had been
on intimate terms with Byron, tells the diarist that his “conversation is very
much that of Don Juan: just in the same manner as familiar, the brilliant, the
sublime, the affecting, the witty, the ludicrous, and the licentious, mingled and
contrasted.” (70). If Byron has breathed touristic life into forgettable
monuments, the diarist is reminded of the dangers of too closely imitating him,
in his risque sexuality.

Byron’s allure, however, overlaps with the allure of Italy, as an occasion
for self-discovery and artistic liberation. As poets and artists find inspiration in
Italy’s history, art, and landscape, “becoming” Byron offers the tantalizing
possibility for the English traveller to become a poet, a revolutionary, and a
Romantic of a bygone age all at once, but this possibility threatens to
overwhelm the diarist’s personal vision of Italy. Becoming Byron suggests that
the poet is the revolutionary is the Romantic, and n’er shall the twain be
untangled. Both Byron and Italy tempt the English to become un-English, to
abjure England and embrace Italian politics as Byron would embrace Italian
art, Italian history, and Italian women. Both tempt the Enuyee into a lapse of
feminine conduct through a singular mixture of the Byronic role model. Byron’s sexual abandon is re-inscribed in a language of creative, aesthetic and political freedoms. Despite this danger, the diarist continually untangles the path of the “new Byron,” for the tourist, the poet, and the woman writer.

The diarist finds clues to Byron’s rebellious politics in Issac Disraeli’s “Essays on Literary Character.” Byron and Disraeli carry on a disjointed conversation in the text where Disraeli discusses Byron, and in the margins where Byron refutes Disraeli’s accusations. Disraeli finds Byron’s foreign loyalties unpatriotic and ungrateful:

The great poetical genius of our times has openly alienated himself from the land of his brothers…. He becomes immortal in the language of a people whom he would contemn, he accepts with ingratitude the fame he loves more than life, and he is only truly great on that spot of earth, whose genius, when he is no more, will contemplate his shade in sorrow and anger. (71)

Byron’s answer is scribbled across the page, as he angrily pushes England away from him. He speculates on the paradox of identity, birth, and fashioning, and would rather write in the language of his chosen land, Italy, claiming his identity need nothing to do with his native land. He declares that “what was rumored of me in that language, if true, I was unfit for England; and if false, England was unfit for me. But ‘there is a world elsewhere.’ I have never for an instant regretted that country,—but often that I ever returned to it.” (71). In her own occasional impatience with her countrymen (and women) in Italy, the diarist finds her sympathies aligned with this, in her own occasional surge of feeling for Italy. Political context is removed from her un-English moment, and Byronic rebellion is channeled into a traveller’s disdain for the common tourist.
The boisterous conduct of the English crowd in Rome is “shameful,” and she blushes for her compatriots:

I found the church as usual crowded with English who every Sunday convert St. Peter’s into a kind of Hyde Park, where they promenade arm in arm, shew off their finery, laugh and talk aloud; as if the size and splendour of the edifice detracted in any degree from its sacred character. I was struck by a feeling of disgust; and shocked to see this most glorious temple of the Deity metamorphosed into a mere theatre. (148)

Contained in the diarist’s reproach is a small withdrawal from England, siding with Italy. The diarist, like Byron, and like the discerning traveller, chooses native Italy over vulgar tourist England. Her reproach deplores English tourists and expatriates, but it is as a disapproving lady. The diarist as the genteel and modest traveller coincides with the woman traveller. The sexual and political rebellion that Byron represents for later travellers prevents him from becoming a model for a young lady, who must protect her reputation while attempting originality. The diarist’s hesitant, and at times faltering, voice carefully stops and checks herself before offering her impressions or opinions, and as in the instance above, she sides against her countrymen only to reproach loud behavior. As Dorothy Mermin notes, the woman writer and her published works risk being greeted with sexualized scrutiny in the public sphere, and the Diary’s “artistry that mimics innocence” consciously presents its pages as feminine and unassuming.23 However submerged in the literary fantasy that is Italy, women travellers must face the dangers of besmirching their sexual

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reputations, while attempting to follow the dramatic, emotional, masculine freedom that Byron exemplifies.

For the woman traveller and aspiring writer, then, a female model becomes desirable, and one is readily available. Madame de Staël's Corinne is the counterpart to Byron, the learned and virtuous woman poet, half-English, half-Italian, who represents her nascent nation. Mme. de Staël's title is telling: Corinne, or Italy. But the diarist finds Corinne too popular a model. Corinne is a pervasive figure in Italy, one that Jameson first notices in her own letters home in 1821. Her fictional diarist vehemently refuses to read it for fear of influence: “I bought it […] with the intention of reading on the spot, those admirable and affecting passages which relate to Florence; but when I began to cut the leaves, a kind of terror seized me, and I threw it down, resolved not to open it again.” (104). Certainly, the diarist’s own abrupt death that ends her narrative suggests the fear of identifying too closely with Mme. de Staël's heroine. This fear of narrative coincidence, however, is followed by the diarist's moments of self-assertion to distinguish herself from Corinne's influence: “I want no helps to admiration, nor need I kindle my enthusiasm at the torch of another’s mind. I can suffer enough, feel enough, think enough, without this” (104). What she objects to here is not Corinne’s narrative of the Italian nation, which she does not mention, but abstracted sentiments that can be quoted from the passages in Corinne, sentiments that might influence and drown her own. The diarist’s anxiety is not over politics. Tricia Lootens argues that Corinne’s English-Italian romance parallels and is surpassed by her love and identification with nation, a narrative possibility that Anna Jameson’s
Corinne’s politics goes beyond casual sympathy to suggest a devoted identification with Italy that Jameson’s diarist avoids. In Italy, Jameson’s diarist prefers to be without any claim to nation and its ensuing identity: “I am, a nameless sort of person, a mere bird of passage” (278). After observing a heated discussion between two Englishmen, the diarist exclaims, “How I hate the discussion of politics in Italy! And above all, the discussion of Italian politics, which offer no point upon which the mind can dwell with pleasure” (276). What the diarist is seeking is not politics; she states that her countrymen’s abuse of first the government, then the people of Italy “concerns me not.” The Italy she desires in her travel is the museum and the resort: “I am not come to spy out the nakedness of the land, but to implore from her healing airs and lucid skies the health and peace I have lost, and to worship as a pilgrim at the tomb of her departed glories” (277-8).

The diarist repeatedly revels in the surge of “feeling” produced by an Italy that is removed from the particulars of the historical, political moment. For a young woman’s private journal, spontaneity and feeling can be expressed without meeting skepticism or censure. She excuses herself from erudition, “I have felt rather than understood” (297), while intimating at her “naturally” excellent taste. The “pure” inspiration the diarist is looking for, in the tradition of English poets in Italy before and after her, transforms the writer into a conduit of feeling, momentarily identifying with the Italy of her impressions:

O what a country is this! All that I see, I feel—all that I feel, sinks so deep into my heart and my memory! The deeper because I suffer—and

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because I never think of expressing, or sharing, one emotion with those around me, but lock it up in my own bosom; or at least in my little book—as I do now. (85)

Despite her precautions to safeguard her emotional subjectivity (from Byron and from Corinne), the diarist submerges herself into this landscape of feeling, and not unlike Corinne, finds herself intimately connected to Italy. The uneven bursts of energy she found on her travels wane as she leaves the country, and her last recollections in rainy Lyons are of “the delicious genial softness of our Italian evenings,” before the diarist records her last interrupted lines.

Jameson’s unnamed diarist does not, like Byron, renounce her Englishness for another country, nor does she stand in for the nation as in Corinne’s example. As she succinctly puts it at the end of her Italian journey, “We love our country because it is our country; our home because it is home […] but, dear Italy:--we love it simply for its own sake” (340).

[3. The Accidental Tourist: Clough’s Reluctant Englishman in Italy]

“Why not fight?—in the first place, I haven’t so much as a musket;”

(III. 68 Amours de Voyage)

It was ten years after Clough penned the long, epistolary poem that Amours de Voyage was published serially in the American Atlantic Monthly in 1858. By this time, Italian nationalist leader Giuseppe Mazzini was again exiled and living in London, and the 1848 revolutions that stirred the Italian
states into war with Austria had long ended in defeat.\textsuperscript{25} The efforts at Italian independence, however, changed direction from Mazzini’s republican idealism of the 1830s, to compromise in a constitutional monarchy under Vittorio Emanuele II of Piedmont, with Count Cavour as his prime minister, and General Garibaldi uniting the city states. In March 1861, a Kingdom of Italy was declared, and when Italian troops marched into Rome in 1870 and established the new capital there, the wars of unification were successfully over. Since Jameson’s diarist visited Italy in the 1820s, the Victorian public developed a more marked sympathy toward Italian nationalism, as a foreign cause that purported to style itself on a British-model of democracy, liberalism, and modernity.

In \textit{Amours de Voyage}, the English tourist in Italy is again caught in the familiar dichotomy of politics versus art, but in the complicated web of the changing political climate, his inaction weighs heavily, as the uncomfortable claims of responsibility to a broader involvement with the world. Clough’s traveller, Claude, wishes to support present politics over past relics. He is seduced by the moral urgency, unity, and self-sacrifice of Risorgimento rhetoric, but prompted by the occasion to act, he removes himself self-consciously from nationalist enthusiasm. Instead he endlessly examines the equivocal predicament of writing about politics and participating in politics, and does neither.

Set as an epistolary narrative poem, Arthur Hugh Clough’s \textit{Amours de Voyage} is structured as a series of letters written mostly by a young Englishman in Italy to his friend Eustace in England during the failed Italian

revolutions of 1848-49. Against the historic backdrop of the uprisings, Clough’s traveller Claude makes half-hearted attempts at both travel and romance. The irony of the title, *Amours de Voyage*, becomes evident, as Claude is too self-conscious to fully commit to the pleasure of the voyage nor the pleasure of romantic pursuit; neither “love of travel” nor “loves in travel” suits the hesitant Englishman. His only pleasure is as the non-committal tourist, who drifts through political events and tumultuous history in perpetual mobility. For a moment, the height of Italian politics goes further to rouse his excitement, to solicit his involvement in a heroic cause without embarrassment, but ultimately, Clough’s reluctant traveller is unable to act. Building on the tepid interest of Claude’s Italian voyage and his pursuit of Mary Trevelyan, the Italian call to arms is met with Claude’s ironic self-consciousness. Claude cannot, will not, fight for Italy because he is not Italian, because he is a tourist, and because he is English.

Compared to Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s excited response in *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851), Clough’s Englishman in *Amours* finds his enthusiasm only sporadically and tempered with self-consciousness. Recent critical recoveries of Elizabeth Barrett Browning have “rescued” her politics from a reputation of zealously, pointing out Barrett Browning’s own critical distance was not any less measured than Clough’s.26 Reading Clough’s *Amours* with Barrett Browning’s Italian poetry, however, draws out questions of exclusion, appropriation, and sympathy regarding other people’s nationalism. Claude’s ironic hesitation emphasizes Barrett Browning’s approach to speaking “for” Italy in her attempt to re-write a history of Anglo-Italian connection that Claude

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cannot find.

Clough himself had asked Mazzini (through an introduction from Thomas Carlyle) for a special pass to the Vatican galleries while the Italian leader was fighting off a siege of French troops, and was well aware of the triviality of his request at the historic moment. Although he had been fired with political enthusiasm in Paris only a year before, Clough deferred from headlong involvement with the Italian revolution, unlike his predecessors Shelley and Byron, his contemporary Barrett Browning, and later Swinburne.27 His ironic tourist Claude remains at best a sympathetic observer. Born too late to be a Romantic and wary of heroes and heroics, Claude follows the beaten track of the Grand Tour and earlier trailblazing poets and waits for inspiration, but instead his skepticism produces poetry on how he cannot heroically rise to the occasion.28

Arthur Hugh Clough’s *Amours de Voyage* places the Englishman abroad immediately within the turmoil of the first Italian Wars of Independence. Between 1848 and 49, the city states of Venice and Rome briefly became republics. Revolution followed revolution in Palermo, Venice, Milan, and Florence, and in January of 1849, Pope Pius IX fled the newly founded Roman Republic. The radical republican and exiled founder of the Young Italy Movement (1831), Giuseppe Mazzini, selected Rome as his central seat and invited delegates from all over the peninsula to discuss Italian unification. The kingdom of Piedmont declared war on Austria twice, to be defeated both times, and while General Garibaldi held the Roman siege, the city fell in July to

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the French, Venice to the Austrians in August 1849. The revolutions and
dream of republics were short-lived, and government returned to the state they
had been in the Austrian regime mapped out by Metternich. The Grand Duke
Leopold II returned to Florence, the Pope was restored in Rome, and Mazzini
again went into exile in London. Italian nationalism, however, gained
supporters within England, with the London-based Society of the Friends of
Italy, as well as literary friends in Thomas and Jane Carlyle, John Stuart Mill,
and an influential ally in William Gladstone in 1851. As Maura O’Connor shows
in The Romance of Italy and the English Political Imagination (1998), Italian
nationalism and the Risorgimento came to stand for a political cause that
English public opinion could support, especially for the liberal middle-class.
Liberal opinion after 1848-9 “became more actively reformist at home and
diplomatically more critical of Austria and France abroad,” as liberals in the
British government “used as their strongest tactics free trade, Protestantism,
and foreign policy, which helped Palmerston craft his ‘uplifting vision of
national purpose and identity’” (76-7). O’Connor argues that English opinion
toward Italy was shaped by the reciprocal voices of English middle-class
liberalism and Mazzini’s Friends of Italy supporters, who translated Italian
nationalism into a moral cause for the public. Middle-class pressure groups in
England “associated the language of public opinion with respectability and
moral awakening, which was inspired by their sense of duty, responsibility,
and commitment to freedom from oppression and tyranny, at least on the
European continent” (80). Claude, in Clough’s Amours de Voyage, is seduced
by such nationalist rhetoric that presents a more heroic patriotism in Italy than
his native England offers. At the same time, Claude’s own irony regarding the
excitement around him cuts through the cliches of coercive social opinion,
obliquely critical of nationalism and individualism, action and inaction.

The tourist’s Italy disappoints Claude. In Rome, “rubbishy seems the word that most exactly would suit it.” (l. 20). History piled upon broken pieces of history, “all the incongruous things of past incompatible ages” (l. 22) are the object of study and admiration for the general tourist. Ironic, educated Claude wishes “the old Goths had made a cleaner sweep of it!” (l. 24). He holds Italy’s revered past in scant respect. Such reverence, he implies, shows no true understanding of history, in collecting relics “treasured up here to make fools of present and future.” (l.23), with “a marvellous mass of broken and castaway wine-pots.” (II. 40). Claude’s first epistles to Eustace mock both the tourist’s usual attitude of revering exhibits of the past (“What do I want with this rubbish of ages departed?”) and his own expectations: the splendid history of his imagination far outstrips the actual sites of Rome. Claude’s tourist is in search of meaning not mortar, as Claude anticipates the learned traveller’s disappointment. Reversing the famous classical tribute to Augustus, Claude proclaims: “Marble I thought thee, and brickwork I find thee!” (II. 50). The framing lines to the cantos, however, paint Italy as a land of poetic self-discovery, where experience translates immediately into art, “where every breath even now changes to ether divine” (l. 5). Italicized and removed from the main correspondence of the cantos, these framing lines are introspective and private, undercutting the self-conscious mockery in Claude’s epistles to Eustace. What Rome means to the Englishman is central to Claude’s question for ancient relics: what can Roman marbles can say to the modern Christian? He implores “ye ancient divine ones of Hellas,” the statues of Roman gods standing in the Vatican, “Utter, O some one, the world that shall reconcile Ancient and Modern!” (l. 200).
Claude’s dilemma of the vulgar tourist/learned traveller is cut short by the 1848 uprising. Before he can reconcile his Italian relics with his English present, Claude’s Italian journey is interrupted. Historical rumination cannot be casual when gunshots are fired across the café. Amid these events of 1848, Byron at Missalonghi is the spiritual recruiter calling to arms young men, especially young poets. If Byron had found the Italian political situation too uncertain, with its domestic squabbles and lukewarm popularity (turning instead to Greece), Clough’s hesitant poet is beset with greater uncertainties, arising from his own anxiously scrutinized masculinity. Byron’s overused model of poet and national hero is ridiculed in Claude’s letters to Eustace, where he mocks the outmoded quotations in his tourists’ Murray’s Guide (the bourgeois Trevellyans “quote, which I hate, Childe Harold”). Claude, however, who claims to have "avoided it all," cannot help being affected by the political moment. Called from the role of wandering tourist into that of war correspondent, he begins his report from the front by showing off his familiarity with political poetry, a visionary grandiosity bordering on Biblical prophecy. He is aware of the heart-stirring splendor as well as the ridiculousness of the image: "I [...] never beheld a/ New Jerusalem coming down dressed like a bride out of heaven/ Right on the Place de la Concorde- "(II. 19-20). He concludes, however, with increasing sympathy and indignation on behalf of the Italians. Claude’s letters are charged with an excitement he attempts to temper but cannot contain: “I, nevertheless, let me say it, / Could in my soul of souls, this day, with the Gaul at the gates, shed / One true tear for thee, thou poor little Roman Republic!” (II. 20-2). He berates France for the siege (“it is fouly done!”). Further, he is prompted by embarrassment at his own country’s indifference to burst into scolding "poor foolish England" for refusing to
interfere on Italy’s behalf, despite its official position that “nations must choose for themselves” (II. 26).

Faced with England’s non-intervention, Claude’s own reluctance to fight is charged with greater self-deprecation, as he equates his inability to act in romantic matters to his detachment and inaction in current Italian affairs. Claude’s role as reluctant war correspondent pushes him aside from the main action ("I, who avoided it all, am fated, it seems, to describe it.” II.15), and after his first outburst, he largely refrains from politically charged commentary. Despite himself, Claude excitedly reports that “we are fighting at last,” eliding the distinction of partisanship: “we,” “they,” “Italian,” “English.” The events of the moment include him in the action. His information, however, turns out to be acquired second-hand, as he sits in a café with his Murray in hand. “The sign of battle” he first assumes to be “a change in the weather.” Only when his waiter informs him there is no milk for his caffe-latte does he observe civilian and soldier “gulping in hottest haste, still standing, their coffee—withdrawning / Eagerly, jangling a sword on the steps, or jogging a musket.” (II. 108-9). Juxtaposed with the curious crowd who gather on the Pincian Hill at noon to watch the battle, the glimpse of “smoke, from the cannon, white,” from the fighting in the distance is as surreal as soldiers ordering their coffee before rushing into battle. The onlookers can only conjecture from “some lines of men descending / Down through the vineyard-slopes, and catch a bayonet gleaming” which side might be Italian, which side French. Claude finds his own role ridiculous as well: he’s attempted to “idly minister balm to the trembling” fears of two old British women and makes sure of his dinner “before the enemy enter,” while he hears “voices / Talk, though you don’t believe it, of guns and prisoners taken” (II. 144). Claude assures Eustace that they are far
from excitement or heroism, even as he writes home to England of his experience first hand: “This is all that I saw, and all I know of the battle” (II. 146). The highest point of his peripheral brush with history comes when he excitedly reports to Eustace: "So, I have seen a man killed! An experience that, among others!" (II. 164). Even this event, he begins to doubt until the experience becomes less and less certain with each line: “I suppose I have; although I can hardly be certain,” “But a man was killed, I am told, in a place where I saw/ Something,” “a man was killed, I am told, and I saw something.” (II. 165-68). His experience becomes uncertain, and a matter of hearsay. The historic moment, when he has taken part in it, is left vague, and for others to examine: “History, Rumour of Rumours, I leave it to thee to determine!” (II. 211).

National loyalties matter less than international sympathies when fired by idealism, and even Claude is tempted by the heroism of the moment. His ability to act, to report, to pronounce judgement, however, is hampered at every turn by his hesitation, his skepticism, and his self-ridicule. The question of whether he will fight or not, is bound up with the question of what he will fight for. Claude supposes national loyalty motivates him more than outmoded chivalry, if he can only accept his place in the Italian cause. The prospect of Italian freedom appears more alluring than “to lay down my life for the British female” abroad. Chivalry seems ridiculous and apathetic. As Claude puts it in his usual withering tone, "one doesn't die for good manners" (II. 71). Caught between national loyalties--if only in theory--his patriotic duty points to protecting his own country(wo)men, England over Italy, but guarding the British contingent doesn't evoke the same grandeur as fighting for the Roman
Visions of military glory are alluring even as he concludes it is all “vain and ephemeral folly.” “In broad day did I dream,” he confides, “of great indignations and angers transcendental, / Dreamt of a sword at my side and a battle-horse underneath me” (II. 63-4). Intellectual, hesitant, pacifist Claude imagines it should be for a worthwhile cause, and Italian nationalism is charged with a moral liberalism that rouses Claude’s support, if only momentarily:

No, if it should be at all, it should be on the barricades there;
Should I incarnadine ever this inky pacifical finger,
Sooner far should it be for this vapour of Italy’s freedom,
Sooner far by the side of the d—d and dirty plebians.
Ah, for the child in the street I could strike; for the full-blown lady—
Somehow, Eustace, alas! I have not felt the vocation. (II. 73-8)

Claude can recognize the lure of the Risorgimento: it offers heroism of a past age that appeals to Claude’s literary sensibilities. The rhetoric of Italian nationalism contrasts the democratic urgency of “dirty plebians” and the “child in the street” with social pressure from his fellow English (“the full-blown lady”); laying down his life “for the British female” deflates nationalism as ridiculous and obsolete chivalry. From Claude, whose anxiety over his love for Mary Trevellyan makes him as hesitant in romance as he is in politics, a disavowal of British nationalism as mere chivalry is telling. Neither model of heroism, the soldier or the lover (exemplified by Byron), chimes well with Claude’s individualism. He realizes that he cannot meet the demands of a normal courtship, and this failure is directly damaging his masculinity: “Oh, 'tisn’t

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manly, of course, 'tisn't manly, this method of wooing; / 'Tisn't the way very likely to win.” (II. 292). If only his actions could resonate with similar heroism in his personal and in his political sympathies, the poem seems to suggest, he would be successful. Women—and nations—would “Ever [prefer] the audacious, the willful, the vehement hero; / She has no heart for the timid, the sensitive soul; and for knowledge” (II. 294-5). Struggling with this coercive militant model, Claude pleads for a broader understanding of masculinity, more accommodating of "contemplative creatures, […] upon whom the pressure of action is laid so lightly" (II. 310). He rejects the aggressive, domineering hero for the contemplative, the scholar for the soldier. He impatiently insists, "Ah, let me look, let me watch, let me wait, unhurried, unprompted!” (II. 276).

Between the soldier and the priest, Claude’s scholarly Englishman would much prefer the priest, a role that would doubly exempt him from both fighting and romance. The model of aggression however, at a time of military action, is persistent, presenting itself as the only model for Claude. Barrett Browning’s *Casa Guidi Windows* is set during the uprisings of 1848 as well (hers after the jubilant response to the Grand Duke Leopold II in Florence). Like Barrett Browning, Clough’s Englishman is familiar with Roman past and the long history of Italian art, and struggles to reconcile the meaningful past to the politics of the present. Surely, his familiarity of the classics must shed some light on current events? As an Englishman and an outsider, Claude seize upon nationality as the reason for inaction. Where Barrett Browning bridges the gap between England and Italy through poetry and a shared literary landscape, Clough’s beleaguered Englishman is, and remains, a troubled spectator.
Rome and romance demand action, but Claude cannot provide it. “What can I do?” he asks, “I cannot / fight, you know; and to talk I am wholly ashamed.” (III. 61-2). Claude asks what good his emotional response can provide: “What is the good of that? Will swearing, I wonder, mend matters? / Cursing and scolding repel assailants?” (III. 63-4), when the only acceptable action is to fight, which he will not. His laughter and self-questioning becomes almost frantic, when faced with his inaction at the events he can only read in the newspapers:

No, whatever befalls, I will hide, will ignore or forget it.
Let the tail shift for itself; I will bury my head. And what’s the
Roman Republic to me, or I to the Roman Republic?
Why not fight? –In the first place, I haven’t so much as a musket;
In the next, if I had, I shouldn’t know how to use it;
In the third, just at the present I’m studying ancient marbles;
In the fifth,--I forget, but four good reasons are ample. (III. 65-72)

The anti-manifesto foretells the future bereft of simpler heroic action and political change. What is left are not heroes but observers and museums, and Claude’s new Englishman loses himself in the anonymity of the tourist’s city.

Claude’s impatient question, “What’s the Roman Republic to me, or I to the Roman Republic?” echoes Hamlet’s famous reflection, “What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, that he should weep for her?” The question leads not so much to “Why not fight?” as Claude asks, but “Why fight at all?” Why should middle-class English writers care about Italian independence? Hamlet is prompted by observing a theatre audience moved by Hecuba’s plight onstage. He asks why we should be moved by the representation of a world remote from our own. The suggestion contained within Hamlet’s speculation on
spectacle and sympathy offers a possible solution for England watching the
drama of Italy. The appeal to a higher moral cause, such as Barrett Browning’s
empathic entreaty for child-laborers in the mills or American slaves, finds less
resonance in the call for Italian independence. Foreign nationalism does not
invite such unequivocal urgency, nor can the arguments for national
partisanship fully engage liberal sympathies. Clough’s Claude, despite being
moved to sympathize with Italy, remains a spectator who exempts himself
from the pressing demands to take military action.

For Barrett Browning, however, already excluded from the avenues of
action by grace of being English and a woman, spectatorship is, in itself, a
course of action. In Casa Guidi Windows, the woman poet watches Italian
history unfold under her window. Taking the cue from Hamlet’s theatre of
sympathy, Barrett Browning’s course of action is not to leap onto the stage
and join the actors, but neither is it to dismiss the events as fictional, merely
“unreal” after the curtain comes down. For the very real events of the Italian
Risorgimento, the poet at the window opens another avenue of action, not
limited to joining the march of the Italian multitude, but to re-write and reclaim
a literary history that calls for a wider audience of sympathy in England.

[4. The Pitfalls of False Advertising: Reception, Relapse, and Restoration
of Casa Guidi Windows]

This poem contains the impressions of the writer upon events in
Tuscany of which she was a witness. ‘From a window,’ the critic may
demur. She bows to the objection in the very title of her work. No
continuous narrative nor exposition of political philosophy is attempted
by her. It is a simple story of personal impressions, whose only value is in the intensity with which they were received, as proving her warm affection for a beautiful and unfortunate country and the sincerity with which they are related, as indicating her own good faith and freedom from partisanship. (“Advertisement,” Casa Guidi Windows)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s retreating justification in the “Advertisement” to Casa Guidi Windows misleadingly directs critical response to this political poem, and is a likely suspect in the decline of Barrett Browning’s critical reputation for more than a century after her death. The strategies of “artlessness, spontaneity, affection and sincerity” of the woman poet in this disclaimer, as Dorothy Mermin points out, has “until very recently [been taken] by most critics at face value,” making it necessary to “point out that the poem is neither foolish nor naïve” as it modestly claims to be.30 This is the point feminist critics have been insistently making to re-establish Barrett Browning’s work and presence in the literary canon and anthologies. As Julia Markus has to explain in her introduction to the 1977 edition, Casa Guidi Windows is not a poem “written by an unknowledgeable and hysterical female”(xix) but in fact “one of the most detailed accounts of the political happenings in Florence in 1847 and 1849 that has come down to us.”31 Feminist recoveries of the poem outline a genealogy of neglect stemming from the early reviewers’ antipathy to its stridently “unfeminine” voice, and later critics’ disappointed (and somewhat unreasonable) expectations that it precisely predict the outcome of the events of 1847.

The charge of naivety or foolishness has been further compounded by the portrayal of the Brownings’ politics in terms of an orthodox domestic tableau: an enthusiastic but naïve wife and a restrained and sensible husband. Flavia Alaya has pointed out this overly “mythologized” contrast between the couple, and argued instead that Barrett Browning’s “hyperbolic rhetoric” is designed to convey a “spiritual immediacy,” providing a “true revolutionary archetype” of both “rescue and rebirth” for both a personal as well as a national liberation. The feminist project of “rescuing” Barrett Browning has focused on reading Casa Guidi Windows as an over-arching feminist metaphor for her personal struggle against domestic tyranny. What Dolores Rosenblum has called a “cosmic-domestic perspective” lends itself to a double vision of mapping the psychological struggle of the female artist onto that of the nation. Sandra Gilbert has further argued that an involvement with politics enabled a new stage in Barrett Browning’s poetic development through a poem that “enacted and reenacted her own personal and artistic struggle for identity, a Risorgimento that was, like Italy’s both an insurrection and a resurrection.”

Feminist poetics has “rescued” and restored the poetry and politics of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Casa Guidi Windows, through focusing on the personal mythos, and continues to assess the critical responses upon its

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publication. Barrett Browning's fall in reputation can be traced to contemporary objections that her enthusiasm for Italian politics was "unwomanly" and her grasp of it in the poem "naïve." Her most influential critic, Henry James, determined her posthumous neglect: while appreciating her "genius," James deplored her use of particular politics in poetry. James, however, objected to the subject; Italy was too narrow for her scope. He did not judge her politics as "naïve," as later critics have pronounced. The questions of gender identity and gendered writing surrounding women's poetry and the political sphere proves central to the lackluster critical response to Casa Guidi Windows. As Leigh Coral Harris points out, "since the idea that a woman might actually be a gran poeta was almost inconceivable", Italian critics focused on her British nationality and her sympathy for their cause, while British critical reception "recast" her as a feminized "male" Italian voice, "[circumventing] the problem of a woman's political participation."37

The problem of negotiating the relations between politics and poetry, for a women, a writer, and a foreigner, I argue, is at the heart of lukewarm reviews, and one which was refuted with more attention to a feminist identity politics in the process of re-evaluation and rescue. What I wish to address further then is the question of a political identity, or the poetics of a

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36 Frederick Wegener points out that rather than being hostile to Casa Guidi Windows and its support for Italian independence, as Flavia Alaya has suggested, Henry James was sympathetic to the politics, only not in its use in poetry. See "Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Italian Independence, and the "Critical Reaction" of Henry James," SEL 37 (1997): 741-61.

constructing a nation and national voice, from the doubly removed writer’s position as a woman and outsider. I return to James’ critique of *Casa Guidi Windows* and Barrett Browning’s own “Advertisement” to consider the political strategies of demurring and speaking out, of watching from a window and walking into the city, and how these movements inform the national gaze of re-constructing history from the unity of a national future.

In a biography of the expatriate sculptor William Wetmore Story, an American friend of the Brownings, Henry James discusses the disturbing fanaticism he finds in Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Italian poetry:

> We wonder at the anomaly, wonder why we are even perhaps slightly irritated, and end by asking ourselves if it be not because her admirable mind, otherwise splendidly exhibited has inclined us to look in her for that saving and sacred sense of proportion, of the free and blessed *general*, that great poets, that genius and the high range of genius, give us the impression of even in emotion and passion even in pleading a cause and calling on the gods. [...] a possession, by the subject, riding her to death, that almost prompts us at times to ask wherein it so greatly concerned her.

James’ contention with *Casa Guidi Windows* is not with its particular politics, that he disagreed with Barrett Browning’s “naïve” understanding of Italian politics, or even with the nationalist movements in Italy. As Frederick Wegener points out, James was not hostile to Italian unification or its “progressive” republicanism as Flavia Alaya has suggested- he was rather sympathetic to the particular politics of Italy, only not to its use in poetry. His critical objection is leveled at the “anomaly” of its intense focus on particular causes and persons (the misplaced sympathy for the Grand Duke Leopold II) that is at
odds with “the free and blessed general,” a “narrow” cause that is disappointing for someone of her “admirable mind.”

The “blessed general,” which James argues is the moving and passionate subject of great poetry, is at odds with the specificity of Italy, Napoleon III, and French and English foreign policies. The events are too recent, and recent events are not yet history, and even less myth, not worthy of “calling on the gods”. What James points out in this argument for the general of a familiar Western canon of mythos, rather like the notion of a “grand style” in the eighteenth century, is the lack of familiarity or rightful ties between Elizabeth Barrett Browning and the political cause that “so greatly concerned her.” The question of why Barrett Browning should care becomes, for the poet herself, a question of the legitimacy of her voice as the speaker for Italian (not English) freedom. How can the gran poeta speak from the outside, first as a foreigner, then as a woman? Is this ventriloquism of another people’s historical moment a gendered colonial move, a gaze from an Englishwoman above to speak for the Italians below? And how does this self-conscious negotiation of the current historical moment influence the reading of Barrett Browning’s critical disavowal of a tradition of aesthetic colonization, of Italy as a plaintive helpless woman?

These questions cannot have escaped Barrett Browning herself. Her demurring prefix to the poem claims it is only “a simple story of personal impressions” - closer to James’ blessed general – proving her “warm affection” for the country. The “good faith” on the poet’s part claiming to be free from political partisanship four years later at the poem’s publication (1851) does not encompass the partisanship she includes when writing the poem in 1847. Indeed, she argues that the poem’s elaborate discussion of Pio Nono (Pope
Pius IX) and Grand Duke Leopold is in fact a testament to her “sincerity.” As Barrett Browning explains in the second part of the “Advertisement,” “the discrepancy between the two parts is a sufficient guarantee to the public of the truthfulness of the writer”:

If the discrepancy should be painful to the reader, let him understand that to the writer it has been more so. But such discrepancies we are called upon to accept at every hour by the conditions of our nature, implying the interval between aspiration and performance, between faith and dis-illusion, between hope and fact. (xii)

Barrett Browning claims that the contrasting views of Part 1 and 2 of Casa Guidi Windows, and her deliberate editorial move to include her former enthusiastically naïve self are part of a deliberate presentation, one that illustrates the general appeal of the poem, in its example of hope, faith and aspiration.

As critics have argued in her defense, Barrett Browning was neither naïve nor simple when it came to Italian politics. At the time of publication, she was not even as enthusiastic as she has been popularly portrayed. While the distinction between the poet and the poet’s voice is less acknowledged in Casa Guidi Windows, the divergence between fervor at the time of its writing and a cooler eye at its publication makes the poem less than a direct declaration of her eccentric personal politics. The “Advertisement” that precedes the pages of Casa Guidi Windows anticipates the reading public’s response to this poem and to the poet. Barrett Browning writes to her friend Mary Russell Mitford, “which numbers of people will be sure to dislike profoundly, & angrily, perhaps,” and attempts to forestall this response: “If the discrepancy should be painful to the reader, let him understand that to the
writer it has been more so” (my italics). In her letters to Mitford, Barrett Browning’s political excitement has reached its peak at the time of the Florentine procession. In September 1847, a year after her elopement with Robert Browning, the poet celebrated her wedding anniversary watching a procession under her window, across the street from the ducal palace. The occasion itself, when Grand Duke Leopold of Tuscany granted Florentines a few civic rights, gave rise to a hopeful tide of liberalism in visions of a benevolent monarchy, which Barrett Browning momentarily embraces, against the republican politics of Giuseppe Mazzini (so called “father” of Italian liberalism) and the Risorgimento proper.

The more remote origins of Casa Guidi Windows’ Italian politics can be traced back to Metternich’s Congress of Vienna, which established Austrian power by annexing Lombardy-Venetia as provinces of the Austrian Empire, and signed protective alliances with the Papal States and the Two Sicilies, after ousting Napoleonic invasion and occupation. Revolutionary uprisings in Italy against Austria's restoration monarchy burst sporadically through the 1820s and 30s, urged on by Giuseppe Mazzini's Young Italy movement in the 1830s. What Elizabeth Barrett Browning witnessed from her window in Florence in September 1847, was again fervent popular hopes for an independent Italian nation, after Duke Leopold had granted the right to form a civic guard. In 1848, a series of revolutions and disturbances throughout Italy, most notably in Venice, Milan, and Piedmont, granted constitutions and limited monarchial power. The Austrians were driven out of Venice for five days (the famed cinque giornato) and the city declared itself a Republic. Both Rome and Florence established republican governments briefly in 1849, and the heroes of Barrett Browning’s 1847 hopes fled in the face of the Risorgimento.
republicanism: Pope Pius IX from Rome and Duke Leopold II from Florence. By the time Casa Guidi Windows was published in 1851, the republican governments of Rome, Florence, and Venice had fallen under Austrian rule again, and the return of Duke Leopold to Florence brought with him the return of foreign occupation.38

From her modest advertisement “at the window,” Barrett Browning is acutely aware of her position in Florence, as an Englishwoman and a foreigner. As an observer and a poet, in Casa Guidi Windows she attempts to negotiate her place in current Italian affairs. The conventional definition of pre-national Italy is an apolitical landscape. La bella Italia excluded Italy from the historic movement toward European nationalism in the nineteenth century. English literary tradition goes further to feminize Italy’s “geographic expression,” circumscribing the talk of nations within a masculine domain of politics and sex. In Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage, Byron turns away from current Italian politics and instead turns the nascent national struggle into a hopeless, tragic female figure, “lone mother of dead empires” (IV.77), “the Niobe of nations! There she stands/ childless and crownless, in her voiceless woe;/ An empty urn within her withered hands” (IV. 79). Byron is at the forefront of the Anglo-literary tradition that insisted on a feminine, dispossessed Italy, a trope that is mirrored in the Italian tradition as well. From Niobe’s mourning mother, to Filicaja’s sexualized, victimized “shamed sister” (“Had she been less fair/ She were less wretched”), Barrett Browning repudiates this trope in Casa Guidi Windows. If the “timeless” Italian past is an aesthetic object that

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removes modern Italy from current history, *Casa Guidi Windows* rejects this in favor of reclaiming the past as part of the Italian nationalist movement.

Part 1 of *Casa Guidi Windows* does not remain removed and distant as the title suggests, with the poet looking down upon the Italian crowd from the windows of the Browning’s residence in Casa Guidi. Instead, after hearing a child sing “bella liberta,” the poet leaves the window, and sitting and inaction behind, and follows the crowd out walking through the city. Written immediately after watching the procession of Florentines pass by in 1847, Part 1 of the poem is not so much an account of personal—and apolitical—impressions from an English woman waving until her wrists hurt in the secluded safety of the window, as it claims to be in its “Advertisement.” While the Florentine public celebrates the civil liberties granted by Duke Leopold, the poet imagines greater liberties from her window, a vision of a unified and independent Italy that gripped the peninsula during the 1848 uprisings. Urged by the excitement of the hopeful procession below her window, Part 1 of Barrett Browning’s *Casa Guidi Windows* departs from commentary to build upon the visionary. Barrett Browning is less interested in partisan politics, republic or monarchy, as she is in searching for a leader, one who can combine “true art” of the past with the politics of the present. And who better to guide the spirit of Italy, than the poet?

The poet’s literary pilgrimage mimics the tourist’s in her walk through Florence. Part 1 deploys a personal account of the tourist’s experience that uses the tourist’s walk as a personal revelation or manifesto of the poet as prophet and poet as leader, a move that firmly plants the speaker in the center of foreign politics. The city is close around the poet-walker, the spaces intimate and immediate. The poet’s proximity to the “heart” of the city is
measured by her steps, mapped out by her walk through the streets, from street corner to marble hall. The city itself is closely-spaced, river by wall by window, closing the distances within itself. The Arno “shoots away/ Straight through the heart of Florence” (54-5) through streets of marble between,

… palace walls on either side,
And froths the cornice out in glittering rows,
With doors and windows quaintly multiplied,
And terrace-sweeps, (58-61)

And the intimate architecture of the empty city is filled, not only with the lone poet, but with brief signs of life within the walls, through signals of romance:

By whom if flower or kerchief were thrown out
From any lattice there, the same would fall
Into the river underneath no doubt,

It runs so close and fast ’twixt wall and wall. (62-65)

The flower or kerchief thrown out the window is part of the city, but not part of its crowd; the hand is unseen, only the gesture. The poet’s walk builds a Florence that speaks in familiar spaces with the poet-walker, but does not push her into the Italian crowd, as of yet. In the poem’s early walk around the city, Florence is peopled, not with modern-day Italians, but with monumental figures of the past. Michelangelo is present in his sculptures of Night and Day, Dawn and Twilight, and “the princely Urbino on the seat above/ with everlasting shadow on his face.” (93-4). These figures speak familiarly of the word the poet is waiting for: “What word will men say?”; “What word says God?”; the word of the cultural zeitgeist and poetic vision that the poet is attempting to read in the stones of Florence. Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s poet walks away from the flaneur and the tourist, and apes their walk outside of the
crowd. In her earlier stroll through the city, she observes, walks, blends in, and disappears into the city not the people, a flaneur (flaneuse) apart from the crowd. The flaneur, however, is part of the city crowd, native and indistinguishable, not foreign, not alone, and not a conspicuous outsider. As a foreigner, her nationality brings her closer to the tourist, a visitor whose interest in Italy is through books, its notable sights, art, architecture, scenery, poetry. Indeed, the poet’s communion with the spirit of Florence and Italy, through Michelangelo, Giotto, and later Dante, is closely akin to the tourist’s appreciation, more so in that the English tourist in Italy finds its art wasted on the Italians, more deserving of the English as true successors.

Her foreigner’s gaze is similar to a tourist’s, marking her Englishness, but emphasizing the poet’s distinctive place as not one of the crowd, but a special successor to Italy. What the poet enacts in her stroll through the city, familiar as a flaneur, reverent as a tourist, is a spectrum of identities in which she is both native and foreign. She blends into the narrow alleys and the absent background of native crowds, listening for the “word” Italian art has to say about Italian future. The acts of walking, looking, listening, as she blends in and out of the city, liken the poet to the Italian native, though she never outright claims to be speaking as one. She suggests a closer kinship to Michelangelo than Italian nobility can have, “mere Grand-duke’s posterity.” The words she imagines from Michelangelo are the poet’s manifesto as a prophet. The imaginary connection Elizabeth Barrett Browning builds in her own manifesto of a poet’s leadership is a spiritual leadership privileged over that of Italian dukes and princes:

[‘…] I live by my art!

And the tradition of your act and mine,
When all the snow is melted in the sun,
Shall gather up, for unborn men, a sign
Of what is the true princedom! Ay, and none
Shall laugh that day, except the drunk with wine.’ (IV, 137-144)

The poet’s problem with history lies in the problem of nostalgia and inaction in the tradition of imagining Italy as a helpless woman (“childless among mothers,/ Widow of empires”), from poets whose “old thin voices” she would rather not join, who “sigh for Italy with some safe sigh” (V, 162-3). Barrett Browning’s critique of mournful tropes of nations as helpless women have been fully recognized, and it is evident there is scant message for action in this vein of the cultural past, “too long swept/ Heroic ashes up for hour-glass sand.”39 The Italy of English imagination, separate from its national politics is “[n]o nation, but the poet’s pensioner,”

With alms from every land of song and dream,
While her own pipers sweetly pipe of her,
Until their proper breaths, in that extreme
Of sighing, split the reed on which they played.

The poet insists that “we do not serve the dead- the past is past!” (VII, 217). In her following declaration of “wakeful prayer and worthy act,” the poet sides with a sympathetic “we,” “who put away the meats they used to sup,/ And on the dry dust of earth outcast/ The dregs remaining of the ancient cup” (VII, 220-2). For the remainder of Part One, the poet imagines herself speaking from within a community of artists in her Italian vista, with poets and artists who serve as the public conscience that will judge Italian political leaders. Barrett Browning’s public sphere, made up of artists and poets, equivocates

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39 Mermin (1989)
on the question of nationality and identity, through a selective use of history to write a national future. She amends that “We who are the seed” would be “vile” to turn “and spate/ Upon our antecedents” (287-9), “foul/ To grudge the Savanarola and the rest their violets!” (277-8). Here and afterwards, the poet includes herself in the metaphor of seeds and buried pasts, as part of the Italian descendents who will, “having strewn the violets, reap the corn” and “plant the great Hereafter in this Now.”

Barrett Browning’s use of the past is selective, excluding the lyrical tradition of tragic heroines and including the analogy of literary kinship. While it repudiates the foregone conclusion of the nostalgic elegy for Italy (who “Sate still upon her graves, without the ruth/ Of death, but also without life’s energy.” VI, 173-4), the poem draws upon the past to insert the poet into a crowd of Italian voices and claim for herself an ambiguous connection to the lineage of poet-prophets, speaking for Italy from within the boundary of native *improvatrices*.40 She declares, “the day is come” and “I, who am a singer too, forsooth,/ Prefer to sing with those who are awake” (V, 155-6). The past that the poet writes into her vision of the national future conscripts the language of lineage and family. Taking the analogy further, from the persistent use of helpless women serving as the main trope for a national crisis, Barrett Browning’s tropes of family and kinship extend to national ties of state and citizen, similar to the rhetoric of the national family. The narrative of the national past, gathered from the coherent glance of the national future, employs the past as engendering parent, mixed in with the use of the fatherland, the mother tongue:

Unless we choose

40 Harris (2000).
To look back to the hills behind us spread,
The plains before us, sadden and confuse;
If orphaned we are disinherited. (XI, 438-41)

History, as written in the city and the landscape, takes on the analogy of family, and the language of inheritance allows the poet to write herself into the genealogy of Italy, and legitimize her presence through a lineage of poets. What the poem re-writes into its selective national history, then, is not so much a display of partisanship in this particular moment of Italian politics, but a national history that is personal and inclusive, through the eyes and guise of the foreigner, the English poet who finds kinship in Italy.

The current leaders of Italy, popes or dukes, do little to meet Barrett Browning’s expectations of leadership. Her leader occupies a political position that requires the inheritance of “spirit,” found in Italy’s tradition of artists and poets instead of current political squabbling. Barrett Browning’s preference for Duke Leopold II is tempered in the poem, and her approval is damned with faint praise: “I like his face: the forehead’s build/ Has no capacious genius, yet perhaps/ Sufficient comprehension” (XIII 564-6). He is good enough for a politician, but not the “sovran teacher” the poem demands. Her appraisal of Pope Pius IX is not much better. “Only the ninth Pius after eight,” she asks if he will bless the poor seated atop “triple-piled [t]hrone-velvets,”

While the tiara holds itself aslope
Upon his steady brows, which, all the same,
Bend mildly to permit the people’s hope? (XX, 828-833)

Barrett Browning’s Protestantism in Casa Guidi Windows is skeptical, bordering on suspicious of “Pio Nono” and the possibility of an Italy under Roman Catholic rule. More than the flippant concession to Duke Leopold II,
the poet is ambivalent towards the Vatican as the political center of a future Italy. *Casa Guidi’s* not so veiled critique views Rome and the Pope as politically suspect and despotic. The poet acknowledges Rome’s place as a contender in the shaping of a future Italian nation, recognizing the popular hopes for the Vatican leading a unified federation of Italian city states.\(^{41}\) The poet however does not see the Pope’s spiritual or religious sympathy attuned to the ideal of an Italian nation:

This country-saving is a glorious thing!
Why say a common man achieved it? Well!
Say a rich man did? Excellent. A king?
A Pope? Ah there we stop, and cannot bring
Our faith up to the leap, with history’s bell
So heavy round the neck of it -  (XXI, 860-866)

Although Barrett Browning grudgingly concedes the possibility (“We fain would grant the possibility,/ For thy sake, Pio Nono!”), she dismisses both Pope and Duke, in favor of a new political leader who is the successor in spirit to an English populist liberalism: “We want thee. O unfound/ And sovran teacher!”

In the following cantos, the poet contrasts this true leader and teacher to the Pope and Rome, and in doing so returns to the “simple story of personal impressions” of her “Advertisement.” She insists her “words are guiltless of the bigot’s sense,” supposedly free from a Protestant’s misgivings about Catholic Rome. More to the point, she glosses over the search for a political leader to speak of her own suitability in comparison: “My soul has fire to mingle with fire/
Of all these souls, within or out of doors/ Of Rome’s Church or another” (XXV:

\(^{41}\) Beales (1861).
943-5). Spurred on by the excitement of the crowd, the poet’s confession serves as an idealistic manifesto of the “political philosophy” she claims to avoid in her “Advertisement”:

\[ I \text{ feel} \] how nature’s ice-crusts keep the dint
Of undersprings of silent Deity.
\[ I \text{ hold} \] the articulated gospels, which
Show Christ among us, crucified on tree;
\[ I \text{ love} \] all who love truth, if poor or rich
In what they have won of truth possessively!
No altars and no hands defiled with pitch
Shall scare me off, but I will pray and eat
With all these—

(XXV: 955-963, my italics)

Here, Barrett Browning posits herself, the poet, within the search for leadership. Unlike the pallid restraint of papal, “To this mark, mercy goes, and there, ends grace”(952), her poet “feels,” “holds,” “loves,” expressing more heartfelt faith. Unlike the present contenders, the Duke, the Pope, and Mazzini, real possibilities, real politicians, the poet is at once fervently attuned to nature, God, and the general populace. As she has shown on her walk through Florence, the poet shows her special kinship with Italy that is greater than she sees in its erstwhile leaders. And in her poetry, she employs her kinship in form. As Matthew Reynolds notes, the meter of Casa Guidi Windows is written “in a variant of terza rima and therefore recalls Dante… Judging Italy to be in need of ‘Dante’s soul’, she presents the country with at
least an echo of his rhymes.”42 If her fervor is fueled by the idealism of the
time, it ends by emphasizing the hold of an “Italian spirit” that Italian art,
poetry, music, and landscape have on the English imagination. Through this
cultural affinity, Italy is closer to English sympathies than its native hills:

While England claims, by trump of poetry,

Verona, Venice, the Ravenna-shore,

And dearer holds her Milton’s Fiesole

Than Langland’s Malverne with the stars in flower.

(XXVIII: 1125-8)

Comparing the respective emotional draw of Milton and Langland, Barrett
Browning suggests forgrounds a loyalty to the native land that is inherited
through literature not citizenship. The Malvern Hills draw less English ardor
than the Italian landscape scattered through Milton’s Paradise Lost, landmarks
to which Barrett Browning herself made pilgrimages during her stay in Italy.
Effectively, Part 1 of Casa Guidi ends, not at the Florentine windows, but at
Vallombrosa, “[T]hat June day, knee-deep, with dead beechen leaves,/ As
Milton saw them ere his heart grew sick/ And his eyes blind.” (1137-9). The
poet whimsically notes that even the “monks and beeves/ Are all the same
too” from Milton’s day.43 For all her insistence on a modern Italy, Barrett

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42 Matthew Reynolds, Realms of Verse: 1830-1870, English Poetry in a Time of
43 From Paradise Lost (New York: Norton, 1975, ed. Scott Elledge):
Nathless he so endur’d, till on the Beach
Of that inflamed Sea, he stood and call’d
His Legions, Angel Forms, who lay intrans’t
Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks
In Vallombrosa, where th’ Etrurian shades
High overarch’t imbowr; […]
(Book 1, 299-304)

Earlier in the summer of 1847, Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning visited
Vallombrosa, but Elizabeth was not allowed to stay at the monastery where the abbot, “given
to sanctity, and [had] set his face against women.” (Letter to Mrs. Martin, from Florence:
August 7, 1847).
Browning does not exclude the familiar literary landscape from the poetry of nation, but like many nationalist histories, employs the past golden age to envision a future political unity. For English sympathizers, recognizing Italy begins by associating Milton’s Vallombrosa with the present struggle for nation, and as “[y]our beauty and your glory helped to fill/ The cup of Milton’s soul so to the brink,” so (flatly) follows English loyalty:

He sang of Adam’s paradise and smiled,

Remembering Vallombrosa. Therefore is

The place divine to English man and child—

We all love Italy.

(XXIX: 1161-4)

Barrett Browning connects the lineage of her love for Italy and her reasons—the association of English poetry with the Italian landscape, and the history of Italian art reverberating in English sensibilities lead to accepting Italy as spiritually and “naturally” English through the lineage of poets.

Three years after the celebrations of 1847, Barrett Browning is again at the window of Casa Guidi. If the poet of Part 1 leaves the window to join in the crowd’s idealism, in Part 2 she retreats behind the window, after the political hopes of 1847 have been disappointed. The enthusiasm for which she was criticized is dampened after the brief republics of Venice and Rome fall under French and Austrian troops, and the Pope and the Grand Duke Leopoldo are restored under an absolutist government. After finishing Part 1 in 1848, Barrett Browning sent it to *Blackwood’s* only to have it rejected. The completed poem was published in London in 1851 for an English audience, but despite the “apology” of Part 2, her identification with and self-inclusion within the “Italian cause” does not subdue the poet’s political fervor. The events post-1847 are
observed through the window, presenting a concentrated framing of hope of
disappointment in historical sequence:

From Casa Guidi windows I looked forth,
And saw ten thousand eyes of Florentines
Flash back the triumph of the Lombard north—
(2: III: 28-30)

From Casa Guidi windows I looked out,
Again looked, and beheld a different sight.
The Duke had fled before the people’s shout
(2: VI: 100-2)

From Casa Guidi windows, gazing, then,
I saw and witness how the Duke came back.
The regular tramp of horse and tread of men
Did smite the silence like an anvil black
(2: XII: 286-9)

Meanwhile, from Casa Guidi windows we
Beheld the armament of Austria flow
Into the drowning heart of Tuscany
(2: XIV: 352-4)

History seen from the window ends with the poet’s question, “But wherefore
should we look out any more/ From Casa Guidi windows?” She immediately
suggests they should,

… Shut them straight,
And let us sit down by the folded door,
And veil our saddened faces, and, o wait
What next the judgement-heavens make ready for.
Her retreat to the window and the bitter proposal to close them does little to retract her earlier hopes for the Italian republic, neither does it remove her political interest. The “apology,” “[f]or me, I do repent me in this dust/ Of towns and temples, which makes Italy” (58-9), repeated over again, “I bow my soul and knee,/ And sigh and do repent me of my fault” faults only on her supposed credulity, “That ever I believed the man was true.” Her identification with the Risorgimento movement includes her in their ranks, if only momentarily, but she does so in order to issue her criticism of its failure. As with the initial disappointment and repentance, the poet places blame on herself and other “[t]hinkers, who have thought for thee and failed,/ We hopers, who have hoped for thee and lost.” She begins where she ended in Part 1, as the possible poet leader who understands Italy, “[w]e poets, wandered round by dreams.” But “we” becomes the members of the Italian Risorgimento (followers of Mazzini and later Cavour) whom Barrett Browning saw as dallying in politics: “How they set new café-signs, to show/ Where patriots might sip ices in pure air” (VII: 125-6). This “we” elides into another group, less the thinkers, dreamers, and poets of Part 1, and more the dabblers who wear “[b]lack velvet like Italian democrats,/ Who slashed our sleeves like patriots, nor forswore/ The true republic in the form of hats” (VII: 148-51). Writing to Mary Elizabeth Mitford, Barrett Browning assures her friend that the fears of anarchy or a popular uprising in Italy are exaggerated in the English press. Any “threat” of a republic is only talk:

Every now & then a day is fixed for a revolution in Tuscany, but up to the present time, a shower has come & put it off. Two Sundays ago, Florence was to have been 'sacked' by Leghorn, when a drizzle came &
saved us. You think this a bad joke of mine, or an impotent sarcasm, perhaps; whereas I merely speak historically” (10 October, 1848).

As she explains more seriously later, “Italy understands nothing constitutional: liberty is a fair word, & a watchword, - nothing more: an idea, it is not in the minds of any” (16 December 1848). Her correspondence enters into her poetry on a more somber note, but the disappointment in her public, poetic chastisement runs similar to her personal, wry missives:

Since I wrote last to you, I think we have had two revolutions here at Florence - Grand Duke out, Grand Duke in- The bells in the church opposite rang for both- They first planted a tree of liberty close to our door and then they pulled it down. The same tune, sung under the windows did for "Viva la republica" and "Viva Leopoldo."

(Letters to Mary Elizabeth Mitford, 30 April 1849)

Nay, what we proved, we shouted—how we shouted
(Especially the boys did) planting

That tree of liberty, whose fruit is doubted.

(Casa Guidi Windows, Part 2, VIII: 178-80)

The failure of the Risorgimento lies with the “childish” impetuousness of the Italians, the “boys” who played at revolution; chastisement turns the Italians into children unready for the sober task of nation-building. The opening of Part II echoes Part I, “I wrote a meditation and a dream/ Hearing a little child sing in the street,” but the child’s singing that first inspired her to join the Italian crowd falls short of inspiration. She compares it to the short-lived Italian effort “[w]hich tried at exultant prophecy/ But dropped before the measure was complete,” and builds upon the trope of the metaphorical child as the poet
continues to scold an “immature” nation. She asks,

    Didst thou too, only sing of liberty,
    As little children take up a high strain
    With unintentional voices, and break off
    To sleep upon their mothers’ knees again? (2: I: 9-12)

Toward the closing of the poem, Barrett Browning has retreated again into Casa Guidi, removing herself from the front of the crown and the Risorgimento “brotherhood,” but the relationship that turned bitterly condescending, shifts toward a resolute hope instead. Closing as it opened with the child singing of liberty, Barrett Browning returns to the trope of feminized hopelessness that persistently draws Italy as Niobe, and continues to resist the popular tendency to eulogize the current failure into the familiar myths:

    Still, graves, when Italy is talked upon!
    Still, still, the patriot’s tomb, the stranger’s hate.
    Still Niobe! Still fainting in the sun
    By whose most dazzling arrows violate
    Her beauteous offspring perished! Has she won
    Nothing but garlands for the graves, from Fate?
    Nothing but death songs?
    
    (2: XXIV: 724-30)

Casa Guidi in the end is a plea for Italy, to the world and to England (“Hast thou found/ No remedy, my England, for such woes?” 640-1), where the poet exhorts a political cause before poetry. If Niobe’s mourning mother is the symbolic figure Barrett Browning refuses to uphold for the Italian nation, mothers are not wholly excluded from the nation. As an English woman poet, whose flight from England and her father over-determined the feminist
reception of the poem, the poet’s insistent self-insertion into the Italian movement relies on personal ties to Italy. She turns inwards from the window to her own life. Refusing Niobe and her lost children, Barrett Browning’s poem calls on her Italian-born English son in the final stanzas, “my own young Florentine” Pen Browning, whose “brave blue English eyes” can teach the poet to “hope for, what the Angels know,” as she had been inspired in three years earlier “[b]ecause a child was singing.” The conclusion to Casa Guidi ostensibly settles within the domestic tableau away from politics, with a mother and son. The private household that Barrett Browning offers is the unassailable place she has in Italy with her English-Italian son, and her earlier rebuke against Italy develops the “natural” gravitas of a mother, casually reaffirming this English poet’s unquestionable right to have her say in Italian politics.44

[5. The Afterlife of Nations]

To teach them… It stings there! I made them indeed
Speak plain the word country. I taught them, no doubt,
That a country’s a thing men should die for at need.
I prated of liberty, rights, and about
The tyrant cast out.45

In the midst of a victorious celebration of the long-awaited Italian nation, a woman poet mourns for her two sons who died for this cause. Patriotism,

44 For the early political writing of women in the public sphere, and the introduction of the mother in and national discourse, see Anne K. Mellor, Mothers of the Nation: Women’s Political Writing in England, 1780-1830. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000).
learned from the mother, is no solace for the grieving mother; she blames herself for instilling “country” as an ideal to her lost sons since childhood. Published in the posthumous collection *Last Poems* (1862) a year after her death, Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s “Mother and Poet” does not offer a stirring vision of a national future. Rather, the poem empathizes with the very personal grief of a mother whose once fervent belief in a political cause now rings hollow. She compares her role as a mother and as a poet, “what art is she good at, but hurting her breast / With the milk-teeth of babes, and a smile at the pain?” (III, 71). Her question “what art can a woman be good at?” finds its answer in motherhood. What can be more maternal, more poetic than breastfeeding, the poem implies. Love for *la patria* is taught at the mother’s knees. Speaking as a mother and a poet, Barrett Browning’s voice returns to cutting skepticism. From the poet of *Aurora Leigh*, a life-long supporter of Italy who is accused of political naivete by critics embarrassed by her foreign jingoism, her answer in “Mother and Poet” does not deny any of the difficulties nor any of the personal losses suffered in the national struggle. Towards the end of her grief, her motherhood, poetry, and patriotism become an explicitly powerful cry:

Forgive me. Some women bear children in strength,  
And bite back the cry of their pain in self-scorn;  
But the birth-pangs of nation will wring us at length  
Into wail such as this—and we sit on forlorn  
When the man-child is born. (XIX, 74)

The birth of the nation was no joyous event; neither, it seems, was childbirth. Left with a nation/child and not her sons, the new Italy leaves the poet/mother bereft after her efforts. She casts her dejection over this national birth,
uneasily and ambiguously including natural birth in her gloom. Even as the personal, maternal loss undercuts the exultation of impersonal, political victory, the poet mother is well aware of the picture she presents. Motherhood and loss is highly aestheticized: “my grief looked sublime / As the ransom of Italy.” (IX, 73). Like Michelangelo’s Pieta, the mother grieving for her son becomes a stirring image in the panorama of national history, steeped in cultural significance that will draw more to sympathize with her voice. Literally speaking as a “mother of the nation,” she is aware of the personal stakes that fuel the political image, even as she declares “you want a great song for your Italy free, / Let none look at me!” (XX, 74). The poet mother affirms her place as a national poet even she relinquishes the claim. Through grief and a scathing critique leveled at patriotism, the poet gains an indisputable say in politics. Returning to the personal tale and the particular wrongs, Barrett Browning privileges the private relationships of family to create the strongest political poetry. Against her detractors, she overturns her own critical voice in Romney Leigh, “All’s yours and you,/ All, coloured with your blood,” by employing it in the imagined web of kinship.
‘Where does the queen of the gypsies live?’
‘What! Do you want to go to her, my little lady?’ said the younger woman. The tall girl, meanwhile, was constantly staring at Maggie and grinning. Her manners were certainly not agreeable.

‘No,’ said Maggie, ‘I’m only thinking that if she isn’t a very good queen you might be glad when she died, and you could choose another. If I was a queen, I’d be a very good queen, and kind to everybody.’

(*Mill on the Floss*, 174)

Spurned by her brother Tom in favor of her perfect, fair-haired cousin Lucy, Maggie Tulliver finds the solution to her troubles by running away to join the Gypsies. “So often told she was like a gypsy and half-wild” (168), Maggie imagines herself to be a Gypsy child, moreover a special one, returning to her lost people to become their Queen. Her impulsive plan grows more elaborate as she strays farther from home. Being a Gypsy explains her differences, her
dark unmanageable hair and scowling black-brows, her frustrations with tidiness, and her general inability to behave like an obedient, respectable girl. Rebellious Maggie not only runs away from a family who fails to appreciate her, but in doing so, imagines joining her natural kin, who will recognize her special qualities, as well as the superior English education of her nurture, and crown her their natural leader.

Maggie’s Gypsy adventure posits a child’s fantasy against the backdrop of George Eliot’s wry realism, a dream dashed by a disappointingly mundane reality. But what is interesting to note in Maggie’s encounter with the Gypsies, is that a little girl’s fantasy remains an alluring and persistent possibility for bohemian escapism, not only for children, but also for educated middle-class Englishmen. For them, becoming a Gypsy does not suggest the fall of “going native” or crossing racial boundaries. Despite the Romany people’s long sojourn within England, the popular term “Gypsy” is emptied of racial content, suggesting instead a vagrant way of life unencumbered by responsibility. With the rise of amateur anthropology, through self-educated groups such as the Gypsy Lore Society, Gypsies gained popularity as the embodiment of escapist fantasy, and at the same time became the focus of serious sociological, linguistic, and even genealogical study. Close observation brought the attention of social workers and lawmakers who called for social reform, education, and even eradication and expulsion of the English Gypsies from the boundaries of rural communities. At once romanticized, scrutinized, and vilified as figures of vagrancy and irresponsibility, Gypsies and their rightful place within England were increasingly brought to question. Their seemingly foreign origins turned them into upsetting figures who lurked outside the town limits, figures that unsettled the stability of family, inheritance, law, and the nation.
In this chapter, I begin by comparing the free-spirited Gypsy of popular English imagination and the social reality of the Romany people in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, two opposing characterizations that created a complex object of longing and disgust. Fact and fable, employing and overturning stereotype, bring out the disruptive factors of Gypsy identity. These stereotypical associations -- thieving, vagrant, landless, nationless, “dark,” and sexual – are contested and complicated in the founding of a Gypsy nation in George Eliot’s *The Spanish Gypsy*. Within rural folklore, the figure of the Gypsy presented the possibility of participating in irresponsible freedom, and equally of this freedom intruding into the well-ordered lives of rural England. Maggie’s adventure offers the simultaneously disturbing and seductive intersecting trope associated with Gypsies: you can run away to join the Gypsies, or the Gypsies can steal you away first. Both cultural fables leave identity open-ended. One could become a Gypsy, discover oneself to be a Gypsy, or turn out to have been stolen away from your real family, and not a Gypsy after all. These Gypsy tales reflect both the desire and anxiety surrounding an unfettered identity that suggests romantic wandering and freedom from social responsibility one the one hand, and on the other, the loss of children that disturbs the stability and welfare of the family. At the same time, through the stories of lost children, changelings, and secret identities, these narratives go on to richly explore the divided allegiances of the adopted child who has grown up among strangers, to his birth and adopted families, cultures, and further, nations.

In contrast to the fantasy of a deracinated Gypsy wanderer, Eliot’s Maggie Tulliver and Matthew Arnold’s Scholar Gypsy, popular “Gypsiologists” such as George Borrow and Frances Hindes Groome brought attention to the
racial, cultural differences of England’s Gypsy population, even as they admired and emulated them. Not all gazes from the general public were sympathetic. While Gypsies were increasingly perceived to be a menace to orderly English life and a cohesive English nation, Sir Walter Scott’s *Guy Mannering* relies on the popular stereotype of Gypsy kidnapping as both narrative drive and solution, to overturn the common plot of Gypsy child-stealing. The Gypsies who rescue and restore the Scottish heir of Ellangowen, are portrayed as the advocates of feudal loyalty, nostalgic defenders of an organic past. George Eliot’s *The Spanish Gypsy* takes the plot of lost and restored children further, and places a lost Gypsy child at the center of a drama of founding nations. Maggie’s fleeting fantasy is expanded into an extensive exploration of divided racial loyalty and the possibility (and problems) of women’s exceptional destiny. For the Gypsy Fedalma, Maggie’s dream of escape and exaltation turns into a tragedy fueled by racial tension, where becoming a Gypsy involves intractable demands of racial loyalty, the urgency of nationalism, and responsibility to the very duties that the tantalizing freedom of the deracinated Gypsy fantasy purports to avoid.

When the Gypsy fantasy becomes a reality, when the wandering folk figure becomes a particular racial identity, Eliot’s Gypsies bring with them a history of grievances and oppression that can only be settled by founding their own nation. Fedalma’s conflicts are not so much of desire as of duty. She is torn between loyalty to Christian Spain where she was raised, her fiancé, Duke Silva, and to the Gypsy father who claimed her birthright on the eve of her wedding. Running away to become the Queen of the Gypsies turns out to be neither Maggie’s dream of exaltation nor George Borrow’s (and Groome’s, and by extension Arnold’s) fantasy of nomadic freedom. In *The Spanish*
Gypsy, the survival of the unformed Gypsy state demands greater urgency and authority than Fedalma’s private, feminine desires. The very point of her tragedy is that the duty to race supersedes women’s choices, while at the same time granting Fedalma a position of political authority, as a leader who will save her downtrodden people. How then, do categories of gender, sexuality, nation, race, and resistance, implicated as they are in relational dialogues to each other, speak to and against the totality of this imagined Gypsy nation? How does domesticity in the language of nationalism spill over into equivocal and disputed fables of the national family? And how are these fables deployed by women crossing the marginal spaces between nations and races? How is this family expanded through the narrative of foundlings, lost children, and transcultural adoption? Like Fedalma, private individual and national symbol, the poem moves between the national and the notional. The freedom from connections that the Gypsy offers is contrasted with the absence of relations in the orphan. In portraying the Gypsy and the orphan’s situation, Eliot’s narrative undermines both notions: the Gypsy’s freedom is marginalized within the nation, and the orphan’s solitude suggests liberation, in addition to vulnerability. As free agents, Gypsy freedom is imagined as liberating, to the point of disrupting the boundaries of national unity. In *The Spanish Gypsy*, the unfixed figure of the Gypsy in Fedalma, between nations, races, and domestic roles and loyalties, finds little freedom and less solutions in her interstitial position. Although Eliot’s long neglected poem purports to give no answers, *The Spanish Gypsy* brings together a storm of conflict and overturned fantasies, between nation and nomad, public and private ambitions, and the divided sympathies called forth by transnational, transcultural figures straddling multiple, and uncontainable identities.
[1. Gypsies of the Spirit: Roaming the World with that Wild Brotherhood]

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.

(Matthew Arnold, “The Scholar Gypsy, 197-200)

The freedom of Matthew Arnold’s scholar Gypsy is unfettered, liberating his scholarship and nourishing his soul, as he wanders far beyond the borders of England (and even time). Indeed, the Oxford scholar from the pages of Glanville, disappointed at constantly being passed over for preferment, is transported from the spiteful politics of university halls into the freedom of nature and childhood. The Gypsies of Arnold’s poem appear in brief glimpses at the outskirts of villages and woods, “and every bush you see/ With scarlet patches tagge’d and shreds of grey,” (113-4), an extension of the landscape and easily negligible. Their tents form the backdrop of a picturesque English countryside. The Gypsies emerge and disappear, as elusive as the scholar whose ghostly presence (“and thou art seen no more!”) becomes hearsay and legend within the poem: “Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,” “But none hath words she can report of thee,” “Have I not pass’d thee on the wooden bridge,/ Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,” (84, 90, 123-4). Disappearing and appearing is an aspect of Gypsy lifestyle that grants the scholar his mysterious power. What he has lost by leaving Oxford seems inconsequential, the mundane concerns that plagued him irrelevant, as if by joining the Gypsies, the scholar has cast aside worldly concerns in favor of
spiritual enlightenment:

So often has he known thee past him stray,
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither’d spray,
And waiting for the spark of heaven to fall. (118-120)

By joining “that wild brotherhood, he has gained greater and even exotic knowledge through the secrets of “gipsy lore,” to learn the “arts to rule as they desired/ The workings of men’s brains,” and to “bind them to what thoughts they will.” (45-47). The scholar is absorbed into the Gypsies, “in hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,/ The same the gipsies wore,” and by donning their “outlandish garb” he disappears with them. Although, the poet reveals that his story is set two hundred years in the past, he presents it as if the elusive scholar had just passed by, following rumors of his appearance. Indeed, Gypsy freedom is not less attractive or alluring in the speaker’s present day. Gypsy life takes the scholar far away from the “strange disease of modern life,/ With its sick hurry, its divided aims,” from the infection of our mental strife,/ Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for the rest.” In Arnold’s poem, the Gypsies are more than a folk-tale, less than a people, existing as a way of life outside of modernity, and offering an ideal freedom in their mobility. They suggest a fantasy of wandering and escape, of straying from the path of convention toward an alluring spiritual and intellectual freedom.

The spiritual ideal of joining Arnold’s Gypsies becomes problematic when Maggie Tulliver puts the dream to practice, when real Gypsies appear out of the landscape and present real dangers. Maggie chooses Gypsy freedom to escape from disapproval at home, but becoming a Gypsy proves to be more than donning “outlandish garb.” Following the call of Gypsy freedom, Maggie’s Gypsy adventure not only deflates the child’s fantasy of being stolen
away and granted special powers, but goes on to suggest the dangers of sexual “falling” that implicate Gypsy women, signaling Maggie’s own tragedy later. The mixture of fantastic and realist representation in Maggie joining the Gypsies, fittingly illustrates the cultural space that Gypsies occupy in the mid-nineteenth century. Guided only by a memory that Gypsies pitch their colorful tents “in a common,” Maggie strays farther away from her home, past unfamiliar and now dauntingly wide expanses, outside of town. The lane is inhabited by storybook figures, “haunting images of Apollyon, and a highwayman with a pistol, and a blinking dwarf in yellow with a mouth from ear to ear, and other miscellaneous dangers” (171). She imagines the Gypsies will be camped out in a “mysterious illimitable common where there were sand-pits to hide in, and was out of everybody’s reach” (as she would like to be out of reach). Disappointingly, the Gypsies of her day are camped in a lane, abiding by new Vagrancy laws that restrict their habitations.

Maggie’s well-meaning, yet childish desire to wash and educate the Gypsies comically reflects the puzzled response of the Victorian middle-class toward real Gypsy life, both the serious attempts by Christian groups for social reform and the gypsiologist’s desire, like Matthew Arnold’s scholar Gypsy, to join “the wild brotherhood.” The Gypsy camp’s unexpected proximity to the village center and its shabby discomforts do not deter Maggie as she settles in to have tea around the disorderly fireside. The old Gypsy woman defers to her and calls her “my nice little lady,” and Maggie plans to instruct them about Columbus and Geography, and “[gain] great influence over them.” She imagines it will be “quite charming when she had taught the gypsies to use a washing-basin and to feel an interest in books.” Despite this auspicious start, where her Gypsy fantasy opens up even greater possibilities for Maggie’s
dreams, eventually, she must be expelled and returned home. Tired and hungry, she cannot understand their “incomprehensible chattering,” she wishes for her tea at home instead of the old Gypsy woman’s bag of scraps, and she “felt it was impossible she should ever be queen of these people, or ever communicate to them amusing and useful knowledge” (175).

Her frustration at communicating her plans, of finding spiritual kinship with the Gypsies, and of finding her place among them, descend into a startling awareness that they are not, and never will be, her true kin:

Her ideas about the gypsies had undergone a rapid modification in the last five minutes. From having considered them very respectful companions, amenable to instruction, she had begun to think that they meant perhaps to kill her as soon as it was dark, and cut up her body for gradual cooking; the suspicion crossed her that the fierce-eyed old man was in fact the Devil, who might drop that transparent disguise at any moment, and turn either into the grinning blacksmith, or else a fiery-eyed monster with dragon’s wings. (177)

As the Gypsies undergo a rapid transformation, from amenable subjects to the monsters of her imagination, what is evident in Maggie’s frightening encounter is that the pleasures and the dangers are fabulously imagined, relegating the Gypsies to fiction. The Gypsies become, not her unknown kindred, but the storybook devils and monsters, the fear of the Other escalating to fantastic proportions. Before her horrors can prove themselves, however, she is discovered and sent back home.

Maggie’s episode with the Gypsies deflates the common stereotypes of Gypsies, to negative and gratifying conclusions. If her expectations of their romantic and liberating life were dashed by the scenes of poverty and lack of
refinement, the forbidding fable of Gypsy child-stealing is found equally mistaken. Eager to conciliate their English neighbors (and earn a small reward), the Gypsy men take care to return Maggie and her belongings safely home on the back of a donkey, although the journey itself frightens Maggie as much as the Gypsy fireside. The path leading back home appears as monstrous as the Gypsy camp, “the red light of the setting sun seemed to have a portentous meaning,” “[t]wo low thatched cottages– […] it was probable that they were inhabited by witches.” (180). However, contrary to the cautionary tales of Gypsies stealing gaugio (or white, non-Gypsy) children, the wayward child is returned safely home by the Gypsies. Despite this gesture, Maggie’s father sends away the Gypsies with half a crown and a dismissive remark, "It's the best day's work you ever did." Maggie’s dream of acceptance (as well as exaltation) ends, not with a comical, or even fearful demonization, but in a homecoming that deflates the romance and terrors of the Gypsy fantasy.

Leaving the well-beaten path and following the Arnoldian flight into an idealized Gypsy life is a familiar, alluring temptation, one that is liberating for the scholar Gypsy. For Maggie, however, the dangers arise when Gypsies break the comforting mold of her fantasies with their very physical presence, to create more frightening fantasies inserted into the landscape. The menace of the Gypsy body, their seductive sexuality in folk imagery of Gypsy women, does not explicitly enter Maggie’s world yet, but her deviation from “the trodden path” suggests her later tragedy, when she assumes the “dark passions” of the “fallen woman.” Eliot’s “Brother and Sister” (1869) sonnets
bear a resonant resemblance to the Maggie and Tom’s childhood.\textsuperscript{46} It loosely follows the closeness of childhood to the closing lament that “School parted us; we never found again/ That childish world where our two spirits mingled” (XI). Maggie’s disastrous voyage down the river is reflected only in a pleasant fishing trip. The younger sister venturing onto the “far pavilioned boat for me alone/ Bearing me onward through the vast unknown” (VII) does not meet death, but triumph, when she catches a silver perch.

The sonnets end with a nostalgic view of lost childhood.\textsuperscript{47} Sexual falling, however, is conflated with straying off the safe path to meet Gypsies. The “vast unknown” beckons them away from “the trodden ways” as they ignore the warning of their mother. The sister’s escape off the mother’s “path” mirror’s Maggie, who is “used to wandering about the fields by herself,” and climbs over gates and steals out of Dorlcote Mill with “a delightful sense of privacy in creeping along by the hedgerows” (\textit{Mill}, 173). Unlike the lone Maggie, brother and sister wander off together, mindful of a landscape that changes from fields of cowslips, wild-rose branches, and grassy mounds, into a threatening Eden of “black-scathed grass” where unknown “wild things” rush “unseen.” The greater danger lies at the end of the lane:

A gypsy once had startled me at play,

Blotting with her dark smile my sunny day. (IV)

The idyllic scene soon betrays snakes in the grass and the Gypsy who introduces the element of seduction into the garden. This “abode of mystic gypsies” separates the sister from the safety of mother’s path, “lurk[ing] between [m]e and each hidden distance of the road” (IV), spoiling the  


protection and seclusion of an unknowing childhood. Moreover, the Gypsy and her “dark smiles” separate the sister from her brother, and expel them from the play of childhood into an uneasy awareness of sexuality, a knowledge that separates their counterparts in Mill. What Maggie knew, in her child’s wish to become a Gypsy, is complicated by the over-sexualized portrayal of Gypsy women in the nineteenth century imagination. Arnold’s “wild brotherhood” is a far cry from Carmen and Esmeralda: the widening gap between the “scholar gypsy” and the “gypsy woman” transforms the kinship of the spirit into the seductions of the flesh.

Recent feminist scholarship differentiates the stakes for a woman joining the Gypsies, an act doubly dangerous in its implied racial, as well as sexual, falling. Maggie’s ambition is met with damaging consequences for the middle-class Victorian Englishwoman. For the ambitious, however, Deborah Epstein Nord argues that “falling into race” allows the middle-class heroine to “escape” from the protection of the middle-class private sphere, and claim a greater, more active, political destiny.48 In a comprehensive guide to literary Gypsies in the long nineteenth-century, from Austen and Scott, to the Brontës and George Eliot, Nord points out that the “suspicion” (sometimes discovered as justified) of uncertain Gypsy race is cast upon these heroines. Marks on the body, dark skin and black curly hair, set these women apart, and compel them into a forced agency of “an unconventional femininity located in blood and bone.” The racial and social “descent,” while undesired by the heroine herself, functions “imaginatively as an ‘escape’” from the conventional domestic plot to an attractive heroic role beyond “the ordinary lot of womanhood,” that is at

once liberation and exile.

Susan Meyer’s reading of “race as a metaphor” yokes the recurring imaginative sympathies of white heroines with “dark Others,” reading women’s domestic struggles as parallel to Britain’s colonial entanglements. Meyer notes that the presence of Gypsies, in *Wuthering Heights*, *Mill on the Floss*, and *The Spanish Gypsy*, serve as a constant awareness of the British Empire, through locating the Others within the borders. She identifies Heathcliff as a Gypsy, but he is read as a symbol of all (dark) colonial subjects, one “colonial repressed.” Although, she reminds us of the dangers of reducing a particular race into a “metaphor” of a generalized “oppression,” her reading of “the Other” at home conflates one instance of a marginalized figure with all terms of imperialism, erasing the particular part and place of the Gypsy. The comic result of Maggie’s encounter with her “unknown kindred” develops out of mapping an enjoyable fantasy of Gypsy freedom over the life of real Gypsies. By placing the literary encounter within Eliot’s own historical context, I diverge from Meyer and Nord’s respective use of “dark Others.” Placing the English Gypsies within a specific racial and social reality beyond the “marks of race” or “dark Others,” counters the move of reducing Gypsies into merely a familiar symbol of racial, colonial, or class anxieties. At the same time, I acknowledge the particular cultural fables of Gypsies, signifying fantasies that contributed to the evolving figure of the Gypsies in the English literary context. Eliot’s brief use of Gypsies in *Mill* responds to the allure of Gypsies and their cultural cache as Arnold’s “wild brotherhood,” but avoids “timeless” caricature and stereotype, and instead anchors them to their historical spot.

The claim to history is crucial to her existence, nay survival, when the

Gypsy becomes more than an element of a folk fable, when she emerges in the narrative with her own subjectivity. The “timeless” tale of the Gypsy fantasy, nevertheless, remains a crucial element of Gypsy identity that she resists or reclaims to participate in the march of history and nation-building. Katie Trumpener takes up the question of Gypsy subjectivity in relation to their representation in Western literature, and connects the persecution of Gypsies in modern legal measures with their place in the literary imagination. The Gypsies of fantasy are presented either as ominous boogeymen or pre-modern figures antithetical to the progress of history. The very romantic and nostalgic qualities of these characterizations contribute to their place “outside of history.” Trumpener brings together the opposing aspects of Gypsy in the cultural memory, and argues that both the romanticization and vilification prevents the Gypsies from political action as national subjects. The suggestions that their nomadic customs and their very mobility, bar them from a unified, national, and ultimately modern identity is contested when the Gypsy attains agency in Eliot’s The Spanish Gypsy. But the Gypsies of fact and fiction are not easily separated. Indeed, fact and fiction foster each other in the expanding the definitions of the Gypsy figure in Victorian texts. Maggie’s expectations are not limited to children, but shared with a long history of Gypsy chroniclers in England, in a mixture of fantastic and scholarly representation that fittingly illustrated the cultural space Gypsies occupied in the nineteenth century. Far from establishing Maggie’s fantasy as a singular child’s perspective, Eliot’s short episode points to the widespread notion of Gypsy fantasy that informed its definition in the English imagination.

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Who are the Gypsies? Does one become a Gypsy by birth, by adoption, or by practice? Maggie Tulliver is not alone in searching for the Gypsies, and being puzzled when she finds them. I have briefly examined how the popular figure of the Gypsy, in Matthew Arnold, allows for a free appropriation of a self-styled, deracinated Gypsy identity that determined by practice rather than birth. Open membership into a wandering brotherhood appealed to Victorian fantasies of escape. Becoming a Gypsy indicated a bohemian freedom from a wide array of conventional middle-class constraints: in education, (male) sexual behavior, the regulations and strictures of domesticity, and even a mobile freedom beyond a settled community. Familiar and exotic, “timelessly” English yet disturbingly foreign, Gypsies offered an escape from a conventional middle-class English life, in an array of Romantic and romanticized, exotic folk tales, just outside the periphery of “civilization,” but safely within sight of the center. They appear racially disparate from those composing an “ideally” homogenous England, but an indistinct racial hybrid, the Gypsy populations across Europe providing a linguistic and racial map for their Victorian enthusiasts. The uncertainty around Gypsy identity and the Victorian urge to define them in terms of racial, cultural, or political cohesion serve only to contrast and heighten the idea of Gypsies as eccentric figures of Otherness and rebellion.

The ambiguity of Gypsy identity encouraged the growing interest in “Gypsies, our contemporaries,” resulting in a surge of amateur “gypsiology,” where Victorian “gypsiologists” would visit Gypsy tents, collecting folklore and learning the Romany language. In short, they “became” Gypsies, sympathetic
observers who defended their definition of Gypsy identity from the mingling of fact and fiction. Victorian gypsiologists traced the origins of the Gypsies in England, through a study of language and culture, that ultimately defined the Gypsy as race not custom. Writing in the 1880s, self-proclaimed “gypsiologists” Francis Hindes Groome found this conflation exasperating. Receiving letters questioning the habits of “authentic” Gypsies addressed to his expert opinion, he dismisses the question of custom as “vulgar opinion.” He overturns the argument by removing mere practitioners from the category of Gypsy: “that Gipsies cease to be Gipsies by ceasing to live in tents, is not worth refuting; it is as sensible as the notion, that all who live in tents are necessarily Gipsies” (59).

Gypsy life appeared dangerously alluring, as well as immediately accessible to the Victorian “gypsiologists” and their readers, who insisted on placing their Gypsies contemporaries within an ethnographic and linguistic framework. In turn, their attempts at categorization were shaped by the folktales of Gypsies, imposed and self-imposed, that fueled the persistent desire to become part of an alluring life of freedom and rebelliousness. At the other end of the “Gypsy problem,” through census, primary education, hygiene, and legal measures to restrict Gypsy movement, the call for social reform included Gypsies as an ambiguous and disruptive presence that disturbed the stability of community and nation. They practiced vagrancy where settlement was the norm, native and not native. Furthermore Gypsies were associated with outlandish, “magical,” and even menacing stereotypes, often self-generated to
increase their appeal (and livelihood) as mystics.51

For over four hundred years, the steady presence of Gypsies (or the Romany people) in English rural life made them foreign, and, at the same time, exceedingly domestic. Maggie’s Gypsies existed as particular literary figures in the cultural imagination, but also as a historically specific and familiar part of England. Their tents, their occupations of tinkering and hawking, stereotypical folk tales of “child-stealing,” fortune-telling and the element of English rural entertainment, cannot be conflated with a general “dark Other.” As David Mayall illustrates, the Gypsies were a familiar presence in rural England, performing “significant roles in the imperfect supply and demand conditions of the time, contributing goods and services to the economic and social life of the village.”52 They provided a necessary connection within and between rural communities, with their trade of small household goods and their roles as tinkers, peddlers, farriers, and conspicuously as fortune-tellers. They were outside the bounds of small villages, but contained within the wider national boundaries of England.

Although Maggie attempts to trace her imagined ancestry on her features, more often the idea of Gypsy vagrancy often took on a vague, non-racial definition. The Gypsies themselves suggested wilder and more romantic origins for various reasons: to aid their mystic appeal as fortune-tellers, to discourage the interest of outsiders, to establish some tentative local protection. Their prevarication, constantly providing, denying, and replacing


existing racial and cultural definitions, added to the confusion. The term “Gypsy” is found in the earliest records of their presence in England, designating a group of people who presented themselves to James IV in Scotland in 1505, as pilgrims from “little Egypt,” only to be expelled shortly afterwards.\footnote{See Brian Vesey-FitzGerald on Scottish Gypsies in \textit{Gypsy Borrow}. (London: Dobson, 1953) 21-5.} The major legislation, marking the legal presence of Gypsies in the English system, also dealt out expulsion: the first Egyptians Act in 1530 banned the further immigration of “Egipcions” with a notice given to leave England. Amendments to this Act in 1554 and 1562 go on to extend and specify the penalties on being found an “Egipcion” in England. Through censure, these records marked a country of origin, outside of England. Afterwards, “Egipcion” was contracted and Anglicized to Gypsy, thus carrying the exotic and misleading racial origin for the people who now call themselves Roma or Romany in the twentieth-century.

Even in the face of such strictures, some dared “pretend” to be Gypsies, and vagrancy, or itinerancy was added to the defining features for Gypsies, expanding from the earlier definition based solely on foreign origin. The Poor Law Act (1596) followed the Pedlars Act of 1551, prohibiting vagrancy and travel without a license. It added to a generic category of “vagabonds and rogues,” the clause of all wandering persons “p’tending themselves to be Egipcyans or wandering in the Habite Forme or Attyre of counterfayte Egipcians.”\footnote{Appendix 1, in Mayall (1988).} The term “Egipcian” expanded into a comprehensive term covering all vagrants, and as Judith Okely suggests, a dubious assumed identity for those of highly questionable foreign origin. When vagrancy and Gypsy identity became interchangeable, many that were not
Gypsies began to claim they were.\textsuperscript{55} Certainly, as Okely points out, if the law punished all vagrants equally, “Egipcian” or not, then, there would be no harm for these vagrants to claim to be a Gypsy, with the few economic advantages of marketing Gypsy exoticism. That their origins could be traced to leaving Egypt along with the Biblical Mary and Joseph only enhanced their reputations in magic and fortune-telling. Exaggerating a fantastic, mythic origin was actively encouraged and practiced by the Gypsies in the interest of survival.

The legal designations supplied the common factors involved in identifying Gypsies, and these prohibitions, in turn, were based upon an increasing array of censorious stereotypes. Although the Egyptians Act was finally repealed in 1783, the laws directed against itinerancy and vagrancy (instead of a Gypsy ‘race’) through the 1820s, well into the 1880s, alluded to commonly known Gypsy habits, and became the measures that attempted to eliminate them. The Turnpike Roads Act (1822) and Highway Act fined Gypsies camping on side of roads. The Vagrancy Act (1824) penalized persons telling fortunes or lodging under tent or cart without being able to account for themselves. The Commons Act of 1876 allowed local government to close the commons to the Gypsies, driving them to pitch their tents by the wayside of roads, where Eliot’s Maggie finds them. Gypsies were ruled as undisciplined (as well as unhygienic) vagrants needing the sterner legal strictures that confined their itinerancy, but also the charitable efforts at welfare reform to educate, wash, and employ them within the settlements.

Not all municipal efforts aimed to expel Gypsy caravans from the English landscape. The “Gypsy problem” increasingly became a target for unwanted benevolence. While some laws were forcing Gypsies to give up

\footnote{Okely 23-31.}
vagrancy, local groups and charitable organizations intervened to absorb them into sedentary life. The Gypsy problem caught the Victorian ardor for reform, but the varying forms of aid or hostility were as complicated as illustrating what exactly this “Gypsy problem” was. One approach was to recognize the “Gypsy problem” as wandering poverty, not least because it loosely applied to earlier definitions that included all vagrants, whether self-identified as Gypsy or not. Itinerancy was interpreted as “aimless” and “idle” wandering. Gypsy hawkers, tinkers, farriers, and peddlers were “idle, lazy, and poor,” a corrupting influence on honest wage-earners and rate-payers, as well as a danger to themselves. In the 1820s, the Home Mission Society turned to rescuing the Gypsies from their present condition, and ultimately, from themselves. While not all of the missionaries believed in compulsory settlement, the poor material conditions of the English Gypsies led James Crabb and the Southampton Committee to persist in their efforts to “convert” the Gypsies, to cure them from their travelling ways by instructing them in the Christian religion. The “Gypsy problem” was a focus for local charitable effort and institutionalized aid, in the process of widespread social reform, to improve working conditions and providing primary education for everyone, Gypsies included.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Victorian gypsiologists and linguists sought to preserve, not to reform, the life of contemporary Gypsies. Theirs was the ethnographer’s impulse, as opposed to the missionary’s, aimed at the foreign “savage” residing within domestic England. As George Behlmer

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56 See Mayall *The Gypsy Travellers*, on domestic missionaries to the Gypsies, 105-110.

notes, a “romanticized ruralism” transformed the Gypsy from rural pariah to “noble savage.” For an urban population eager for exoticism, the Gypsies were eagerly re-invented in the nineteenth century as “the Arabs of pastoral England- the Bedouins of our commons and woodlands.” The foreign element that seemed so menacing as a social problem became the most appealing and exotic to local Gypsy enthusiasts. With the rise of amateur anthropology, Gypsies became the object of romanticized fantasy. The ambiguity about their itinerancy, customs, language, and racial or national origin invited more speculation. English Gypsies were cast in the role of England’s own “noble savage,” a nostalgic remnant of a fast disappearing rural charm, in the face of swift modernization and urbanization.

Ethnological, linguistic, and even charitable, pursuits attempted to “solve the Gypsy problem” first by determining an exact place of origin from the tangle of fabulous myth and a widespread practice of itinerancy. Ethnography gave the clue to linguistics. Disciplinary action, as laid out in English laws, indicated the originating nation space contained in the term Egipcian/Gypsy, and this conjecture based on “Egypt” launched a search for the linguistic roots of an original Indo-European language in Romani. Gypsy migration, across the centuries, was considered a linguistic map tracing the family of European languages across the continent. Indeed, early historical linguistics pointed to an evolutionary tree of man that could be traced through a genealogy of languages. This form of amateur Victorian anthropology, influenced by early German romanticism, followed Friedrich Schlegel’s suggestion that philology would be the decisive a guide to an original

language. The “inner structure of languages or comparative grammar” would provide new insight into the genealogy of languages, “similar to that in which comparative anatomy has shed light on higher natural history.” The focus on linguistic roots and its conjecture on racial origins formed a hierarchical index of blood, from “pure” Gypsy down to “half-breeds.” Cultural and linguistic inheritance dwindled analogously with racial mixing. The Romany language, traced back to a possible Gypsy migration from Egypt or India, and filtered of “impurities,” would contain recognizable elements that would connect all Indo-European languages, a key to all languages. As George Stocking illustrates in the study of Victorian linguistics and anthropology, the similarities in linguistics would “trace the affinities of all the various ‘races’ of man,” and reducing their present diversity to primitive unity provided the methodological foundations for the study of “ethnology.” How fortunate that the theory of racial migration could be observed in Gypsy diaspora that moved across Europe from an Aryan homeland. Linguistic clues could be excavated in mummified fragments of archaic Romani. It was the mission of these gypsiologists to prevent further degeneration and preserve a “racial essence” in language, and a “passion for race was recast as scholarship.”

Throughout the 1870s and 80s, local ethnography introduced a scholarly framework for the pursuit of Gypsy genealogy, relying on personal engagement with Gypsy life. These gypsiologists become Gypsies themselves, anticipating the anthropological concept of participant observers. Far from reforming or converting the gypsies, they insisted on studying and

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60 The pursuit of a “pure” origin for both humanity and language also reflects Causabon’s search for the “key to all mythologies” in George Eliot’s Middlemarch.
preserving the habits of Gypsy communities. Formed in 1888, the Gypsy Lore Society consisted of amateur enthusiasts with the purpose of learning the “Gypsy lore,” gathering their information directly from the oral tradition at Gypsy campsites. The late-Victorian enthusiasts of the Gypsy Lore Society embraced Gypsy life while gathering ethnographic and linguistic scholarship.63 The quarterly issues of *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* collected anecdotes, Gypsy folk-tales, and linguistic comparisons from different regions in England (and sometimes from all over Europe). Collected during the gypsiologists’ visits to Gypsy camps and living with Gypsies, the Society showed a contrasting approach to the “Gypsy problem”: instead of eradication, they transformed it into scholarship, and in the process emulated the life of Gypsies. The “Preface” to the first issue states the JGLS’s aim: “to preserve much information that might otherwise perish,” working under the assumption that the Gypsy life and people would disappear or become “watered down” in contact with the rush of modernity.64 Gypsy folklore, customs, and language, therefore, must be salvaged for the sake of historical preservation, and further, to provide the key to linguistic and racial origins, through a variety of connections suggested in Gypsy lore. Indeed, the focus on amassing and decoding linguistic clues to provide a secret key to all *Indo-European* languages suggests a departure from charitable reform or attempts at assimilation. The “Preface” outlines the concerns of the philologists to provide “the final solution of the Gypsy problem” which can be found by exploring “the language, the manners, the folk-lore” of the Gypsies. Here, the “problem” is

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63 *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* produced a comprehensive collection of Gypsy anecdotes, fables, and language in a quarterly journal in the 1880s, and currently continues to publish articles relating to Gypsies, from linguistics, anthropology, to literary criticism.  
64 *JGLS* v.1, 2.
the puzzle of defining and delineating Gypsy language and race, not the social problems seen in their itinerancy, in a scholarly approach to the Gypsy presence in England. Dating “original” Gypsy migration in a wide approximation from around 430 A.D. to an exact 1417, the “Preface” speculates that the origin of Romani is in Greek or Sanskrit. Although the popular space of origin is considered to be India, suggesting the return of the repressed Other in the English Gypsy, other possible origins ranges include Egyptian and “Persian,” composing a map of linguistic and racial connections across Asia and Europe.

Victorian gypsiologists emulated the “wild brotherhood” of Arnold’s Scholar Gypsy, not only imitating Gypsy life as they observed it, but actively joining them in learning their language and folktales. The anecdotal style of gypsiologists and the JGLS contributed to the accepted fantasy of personal liberation that was easily accessible to the eccentric individual, through “gypsying.” Michele H. Champagne writes in a recent dissertation, that “gypsying” was both a mode of romantic escapism and a way to establish an alternative scholarly authority for middle class men of letters who lacked resources.65 She argues that “gypsiology functioned as a strategy for constructing a marginal, transgressive masculinity that simultaneously resisted bourgeois domesticity and consumerism” (127-8). Rather than engage in the more typical Victorian practice of “arm-chair” scholarship,” their anthropological approach was “imbued with a similar romantic rebellion- a similar sensibility” to the middle-class bohemianism found in “becoming” Gypsies (128).

Although the gypsiologists listed the appearance of literary Gypsies in the pages of the *JGLS*, fictional representations were met with scorn, as hazardous to scholarship. A “scholar gypsy” at the end of the century, Francis Hindes Groome complained about the “lack of truth” in the literary Gypsies, fiction that relied on a popular myth rather than serious ethnography. He found that despite the constant presence of gypsies in England and in English paintings, plays, and novels, Gypsies had been “untruthfully” represented, the “lack of truth, which can be detected at a glance by the aficionado, the true love and student of Romani life.”66 In his personal account of life among the English Gypsies, *In Gipsy Tents* (1880), Groome records conversations and folklore collected from Gypsy camps, pausing to note the various popular notions of romanticizing “genuine” Gypsies. Groom was one of the scores of Victorian “gypsiologists” who studied the Romany language and observed their life by living in Gypsy tents, performing his personal “rebellion” in a scholarship unacknowledged by the establishment of Oxford and Cambridge. After leaving Oxford, Groome took his admiration for the Gypsies a step further, marrying Britannia Lee, and later Esmerelda Lock, both of whom were Gypsy women.

In an 1851 excerpt in the *Illustrated London Times*, Groome claims he “cannot remember a single genuine Gipsy in a novel, though both Bulwer and Disraeli have tried their hands at the class.” Literary representation contains too much of familiar stereotype, too little grim reality. In Bulwer-Lytton and Disraeli, neither account of Gypsies is favorable. Referring to his earlier article, debunking the validity of textual Gypsies, Groom follows this account at a later date in order to pursues another fantasy, the trope of the over-sexualized

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Gypsy woman.67 His experience, as a middle-class Englishman enjoying his escape into Gypsy company, authenticates the exoticization of Gypsy women, even as he frames the argument of dispelling misguided stereotypes. Groome is taken by a young gypsy woman, the most attractive he has ever seen, “as limber and graceful as a lizard in her movement, piquant in the little touches of savagery that crossed her Oriental and lazy courtesy of manner.” (347). His description draws attention to the irresistible and uninhibited sexuality that characterizes Gypsy women in popular stories, “savage” as Esmeralda or Carmen. He goes on to speculate the entry of this Gypsy fantasy into the bloodlines of England:

I can quite conceive the mad passion that such a creature may create in a man, and has created, in our own times too. We need not go back to Spain, and the days of Cervantes, to find a Preciosa. Not a few Oxford men, of nine or ten years’ standing, could tell a tale of frantic passion for a Gipsy girl entertained by two young men at one time, one of them with ducal blood in his veins, who ultimately wooed and wedded his Gipsy love. So that it is no way impossible (with heirs to the dukedom being all unmarried, and unlikely to marry) that the ducal coronet of – may come to be worn by the son of a Gipsy mother. (348)

In the gypsiologist’s account, the attempts at “fact” move quickly into fictional seduction, and descend into popular rumors. He provides a hearsay account of Gypsy blood in England, and speculating on the easy sexuality of Gypsy women, conjectures their possible entry into English inheritance. Moreover, these stories are not a foreign myth set in a fictional past, nor are they contained within a cerebral, pastoral fantasy. Conversely, instead of feeling

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threatened by the seductive Gypsy woman entering the peerage of England, Groome seems to relish the outcome. Coming from Groome himself, who escaped the institutions of England (and in turn, was barred from them) and married Gypsy women, the “frantic passion” suggests an unconventional return to power via the Gypsies. His parenthetical aside, “with heirs to the dukedom being all unmarried, and unlikely to marry,” relegates traditional English masculinity to heterosexual impotence, and slyly posits, not only the “son of the Gypsy mother” into the line of inheritance, but the “frantic passion” of following his heart and the Gypsies.

The most popular of the “gypsiologists,” George Borrow, showed a marked sympathy for the Gypsies, and his public personality depicted him as being more Gypsy than English. His semi-autobiographical accounts of life frequenting in Gypsy tents imbue his brief chronicles and philological fragments with the romance of Gypsy freedom. Borrow’s Gypsy writing intimates a mythic Gypsy past in the origin of Western civilization, and embellishes “gypsying” with the grandiose drama of a lost race, re-framing Gypsies not as a danger, but as inheritors of an ancient nation. Writing more than thirty years before the Gypsy Lore Society, George Borrow gained public recognition through his personal account of missionary work, The Bible in Spain (1843). Expecting another Bible in Spain, his readers were confused with the loosely assorted anecdotes of his life with the Gypsies in Lavengro (1851). Critics were puzzled by the blurring of fiction and autobiography, by the collection of Romani words, the linguistic speculation on their origins, the uneven lack of narrative focus, and pronounced the book “unreadable.” Despite their hostile response, Borrow returned to the theme (Zincali, or the Gypsies in Spain in 1841 preceded The Bible in Spain), and produced two
more of his “gypsy writings,” *Romany Rye* (1857), *Wild Wales* (1862), and a Romani wordbook *Romano Lavo-lil* (1874) by his death in 1881. Despite their similarities in method, Borrow’s engagement with the Gypsies was later dismissed by the later enthusiasts of the Gypsy Lore Society for his haphazard collecting of Romany language and flamboyant “gypsying.” The Gypsy-reading public, however, rediscovering his works in the 1870s and 80s, embraced Borrow as the public’s Gypsy “expert,” a reputation deeply influenced by Borrow’s eccentric public persona, as a Gypsy by choice.

Borrow’s digressive mixture of autobiography, linguistic compilation, travelogue, offered the allure of “going native” at home, in an ethnography that shifted between the rejection and reproduction of conventional Gypsy stereotypes. Borrow’s Gypsy texts were appealing in his identification with and impersonation of Gypsy life, in the rambling (wandering) narratives that satisfied the longing to leave “settled” responsibilities and middle-class anxieties. Local “folk” tales are elevated to a universal nostalgia for the past; the individualist adventurer Borrow fascinated modern, urban readers. Borrow’s semi-autobiographical writings present Gypsy life as a liberating possibility, as a means of disengaging from modern life and authority for the eccentric.

Gypsy escape, however, was not a celebration of the outcast Gypsy for the sake of individual eccentricity. Ironically Borrow’s Gypsy writing, like Groome’s, fetishized the biological and cultural differences that made them appealing emblems of freedom. Borrow draws on recreating the ideal of pastoral “wandering,” a trait that is distinctly, recognizably Gypsy in character,

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68 For the life of George Borrow see Herbert George Jenkins, *The Life of George Borrow, Comp. from Unpublished Official Documents, His Works, Correspondence, etc.* (London: J. Murray, 1924), and David Williams, *A World of His Own: The Double Life of George Borrow* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982).
but re-written as English at the heart of its portrayal of eccentric individualist freedom. “No country,” he claims “appears less adapted for that wandering life, which seems so natural to these people, than England.” Despite the careful cultivation of land in England that leaves no forests or wildernesses unused, Borrow maintains that England is particularly suited for the Gypsies. Borrow provides no reasoning for this close relationship with Gypsies, only indicating their presence, as part of the landscape, inextricably bound in the psyche of the nation:

Yet it is a truth that, amidst all these seeming disadvantages, they not only exist there, but in no part of the world is their life more in accordance with the general idea that the Gypsy is like Cain, a wanderer of the earth; for in England the covered cart and the little tent are the houses of the Gypsy. (14-5)

Borrow’s attempt to re-claim Gypsies for England locates them as the natural extension of an uninviting, provincial landscape, as familiar (and disreputable) figures of expulsion. Although he notes that the general public compares the freedom of the Gypsy to the curse of Cain (“a wanderer of the earth”) conversely, Borrow considers them a “privileged people…though their way of life is unlawful.” Within the enclosed borders of rural England that constantly threatens to expel them, the performance of Gypsy wandering creates a trail of idyllic transient spaces, outside the history of “progress.”

In the face of modernity, fixing a romanticized figure of the Gypsy outside of an urbanized, alien England, preserves the unadulterated ideal of an inviolate rural tradition. The disappearance of Gypsies from the commons,

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through the Vagrancy and Pedlars’ Acts, coincides with the utilization of these commons as enclosed pastures. The disappearing Gypsy is stands in for the loss of rural England, and their movement is fetishized as trajectory of temporary spaces, swallowed up in the organization of England. Ian Duncan’s reading of Borrow through Deleuze and Guattari’s “nomadology” is useful in thinking about Borrow’s re-mapping of England through his practice of Gypsy wandering. Duncan argues that Borrow’s “nomadic” style “enacts the discontinuous flow of a mobile, ubiquitous subject” who inhabits “temporary, serial affiliations with other cultural identities,” but is never absorbed into them completely. Borrow and the romantcized Gypsy are similarly estranged from modern England, while they both remain safely within the boundaries of a larger national idyll. Following the Gypsies on their travels, Borrow fashions Gypsy wandering into a narrative of national nostalgia, where he finds English ruralism in the riches of its Gypsy past. “Unsettling” national unity through strangeness in race and in language, Borrow’s Gypsy life relies on creating sentimental alternative to modernization, and in doing so, offers a seductive vision of the eccentric individual’s freedom within an idyllic pastoral England.

Setting the theme for future gypsiologists and linguists, Borrow’s *Lavengro* excavates the remnants of an original nation within the linguistic strata of the Romani language. *Lavengro* follows an Englishman with an exceptional gift for languages (like Borrow himself) and his friendship with a Gypsy family, in a digressive narrative of his travels through England. “Lavengro,” meaning “word master” refers to his mastery of Romani, a mastery

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70 Ian Duncan reads *Lavengro* as a discursively fractured recruitment of Gypsy accounts that formulate a national English character through the identification with Gypsy estrangement. “George Borrow’s Nomadology,” *Victorian Studies* 41.3 (1998) 381-403.
that eases his identification with Gypsy wanderers.\footnote{The Works of George Borrow (London: Constable, 1923; Ed. Clement King Shorter), Lavengro (1851).} Educated in law, Lavengro escapes from the monotony of the legal office, first to translate Welsh poetry, then to frequent the Gypsies’ stalls at the fairgrounds, and ventures on to forgo a conventional, professional life, in favor of his rural travels with the Gypsies. Within their language, Lavengro believes he has found the key to an original culture. As unassimilated outsiders to England, in Lavengro, Borrow suggests that Gypsies preserve an “untainted” fragment of lost Indo-European civilizations in their mythic origins. Not only does living Romani contain a secret key to Sanskrit, the name “Romany” and “Roma” hint at another lost empire of Gypsy origin. In his continued travels in Romany Rye, Lavengro laments, “I almost wish that I had lived some two or three hundred years ago, that I might have observed these people when they were yet stranger than the present” (80). In a moment of self-doubt, Lavengro despairs of the use he would put his growing wealth of knowledge. In an earlier age, both he and the Gypsies are better served. The middle-class Englishman would be unworried by the pressures to engage in respectable professional work. The Gypsies “yet stranger than the present” would be two or three centuries less “spoiled” by their life in England. The key to Lavengro’s “Gypsy problem” steps farther and farther into the past, toward an imagined golden age.

Lavengro’s narrator finds the remains of ancient history in what he had suspected was “a mere made-up gibberish” of Romani, “broken, corrupted, and half in ruins as it was.” He eagerly listens to another one of the many speculations on Gypsy origin, one that connects his nostalgic longing, and his
linguistic hypotheses, not merely with exotic Egypt, but the grandeur of a Rome:

‘But whoever we be, brother,’” said he, ‘we are an old people, and not what folks in general imagine, broken gorgios; and, if we are not Egyptians, we are at any rate Romany chals!’

‘Romany chals! I should not wonder after all,’ said I, ‘that these people had something to do with the founding of Rome. Rome, it is said, was built by vagabonds; who knows but that some tribe of the kind settled down there-abouts, and called the town which they built after their name; but whence did they come originally? Ah! There is the difficulty.’

(178-9)

Of the many speculations on Gypsy origin, the idea of founding Rome is the most grandiose, one that casts a respectable familiarity for both the eccentric Englishman and for the despised Gypsies. They are no longer “broken gorgios,” adulterated in custom and blood by centuries of living with and marrying among the English, but “Romany chals.” Instead of lingering on this suggestion of Roman origin, of lost empires, the narrator leaves this question to speculate on another word, another anecdote, in his continued study of the Romani language. As he declares later, in Romany Rye, when he has “learnt their language and all their strange ways, and then—and then—” he still is no closer to a tangible “profit” from his wandering life. Lavengro sees no end. Like the pursuit of origins that goes further and further back, before the founding of Rome, Lavengro’s pursuit of the wild Gypsy dream offers no definite “key,” but gains in suggestive speculation that avoids the rational ordering of history. In doing so, however, Borrow’s Gypsy individualism returns again and again to both Gypsy and England to a nostalgic idyllic past.
Nostalgia for the rural idyll is at the heart of Borrow’s Gypsy outcast, and the act of rebellion in becoming a Gypsy returns to a national center that the Gypsy figure purports to evade. The disruptive attributes of Gypsy wandering, thieving, suspected foreign origin, and child-stealing, set the Gypsy in opposition to the orderly state, but the narrative of lost inheritance in Sir Walter Scott’s *Guy Mannering* restores Gypsies to support the nation, just as they restore a lost Scottish laird to his inheritance. While the danger of kidnapping creates involuntary Gypsies, stolen children raised away from their true origins, *Guy Mannering* posits the Gypsies as guardians of a nostalgic feudal loyalty that is fast disappearing with modernity. Scott’s Gypsies, like Borrow’s, are romantic icons of the past, much like the Highlanders of the *Waverley* novels, instigating rebellion and subversion only to be transformed in the end into figures of responsibility, loyal to a state that will soon find them obsolete. What is interesting to note in Scott’s text is that the narratives of national inheritance employ the very disrupting elements of the Gypsies in the plot to support it. While reading Gypsy eccentricity as nostalgic conservatism is useful, the recurrence of Gypsies in the crises of nation points to the sympathetic draw of the disenfranchised. They are ultimately absorbed into the nation-state, which then posits Gypsies as subjects of a future modern England. This incorporation forms another model of nation: the benevolent, parental empire that includes a collection of wayward, “dark” children. The absence of a protective state for the Gypsies parallels the narrative of the lost child, and this framework draws similar conclusions. Neither the lack of nation
nor parent is voluntary nor is it desirable.

*Guy Mannering* is set in the late 1770s on the Scottish estate of Ellangowan, where the young Scottish laird, Godfrey Bertram, is caught up in a zeal for reform and order after winning public office as the Justice of Peace. Scrupulously enforcing enclosure and vagrancy laws in order to modernize his estate, he upsets the ancient and comfortable coexistence with a band of Gypsies who had found refuge on his land for generations. Disregarding the long relationship between his family and these loyal Gypsy tenants, Godfrey Bertram evicts them from his land in a bid to win public favor, incurring the wrath of the Gypsies and their curse.

Bertram is uncertain on how to treat the Gypsies. Their right to settle on his land is as inexplicable as their need to “settle” at all, a practice allowed by custom not reason. In his well-ordered plans, they are criminals, foreigners, or idle vagrants who must be swept aside in the name of progress, but when he is faced with their plight, Godfrey Bertram becomes reluctant, and even hesitant. The letter of the law is on his side, but momentarily, he mistrusts the spirit of it. The narrative, as well, pauses to provide a brief history of the Gypsies in Scotland, attempting to clarify their origins. They are acknowledged “a separate and independent race” by James II, in a notice that links foreigner to criminal when it immediately reduces the Gypsy to “a common and habitual thief” in the eyes of Scottish law. Their foreignness is inextricable from their criminal character: despite their long residence in the country, their “idleness and predatory habits” are claimed to be the “national character of the Egyptians.” The narrator quotes Fletcher to paint a picture of Gypsy “banditti” from a century before, as beggars, thieves, and murderers, “a most unspeakable oppression to poor tenants.” Fletcher goes on to propose a mode
of correction proposed, by introducing a “system of domestic slavery” which will, through law and labor, “reduc[e] this dreadful evil [the Gypsies] within more narrow bounds” (55).

Although the “history” quoted from Fletcher assumes the worst of the Gypsies, as idle, lawless, and violent foreigners, for whom slavery would be a boon, the narrator neither approves of nor condones this view, but avoids denouncing the root of their “criminal” behavior in their foreign origin. Moving back into the present, he situates the Gypsy in a history of persecution. Foreign origin carries, instead of a cause for censure, a claim to cultural relativism:

The wildness of their character, and the indomitable pride with which they despised all regular labour commanded a certain awe, which was not diminished by the consideration that these strollers were a vindictive race, and were restrained by no check, either of fear or conscience, from taking desperate vengeance upon those who had offended them. These tribes were in short, the Parias of Scotland, living like wild Indians among European settlers, and like them, judged of rather by their own customs, habits, and opinions, than as if they had been members of the civilized part of the community. (56)

The narrator reserves pronouncing judgement on them, betraying even admiration for the part of the “noble savage” the Gypsies play within domestic lands. Despite being termed pariahs, they command “a certain awe” for their “wildness,” “indomitable pride,” and savage vengeance. The comparison to “wild Indians” transplants the figure of another oppressed “dark Other” onto Scottish land, but removes them from the judgement of Scottish law. As foreigners, the passage presumes, the Gypsies are outside the bonds of
community, and exempt from following its contracts. However, though they are “lawless” and “outside civilization,” their eviction at the hands of Godfrey Bertram is implied as a breaking of an unspoken contract. What Godfrey Bertram misjudges, is that despite their savage customs, the Gypsies must be read as Scottish, not foreign, by grace of the centuries of settlement in Ellangowan, whatever their origins. Instead of “wild Indians, their role is reversed as they become settlers.

Indeed, the narrative further establishes the Gypsies, not as outlaws and vagabonds, but as tenants who have repaid their feudal duty to Ellangowan, putting their “natural” violence to use, “by service to the laird in war, or, more frequently, by infesting or plundering” neighboring barons. In Godfrey Bertram’s day, the Gypsies have become thoroughly domesticated and pacific, spinning “mittens for the lady, and knitt[ing] boot-hose for the Laird.” They repair cracked china, worm dogs, and bring a rustic tribute of berries, nuts, and mushrooms from the woods, providing a long list of petty services that reduce their danger and paint them instead as a charming, simple people. Framing the Gypsy ejection with two contradictory portraits of the Gypsies, the narrative sets out to evenly illustrate Godfrey Bertram’s choice: eject the Gypsies as foreign miscreants according the letter of the law, or follow the unspoken, older law and protect his loyal tenants. Given the earlier distancing of foreign as criminal, the narrative nods sympathetically in favor of the Gypsies.

Neither legal justification nor “history” of criminal Gypsies in Scotland will ease Godfrey Bertram’s conscience, his “qualms of feeling” after he has “summarily dismissed” them from their “ancient place of refuge.” He berates himself too late on “depriving them of a degree of livelihood” without even
attempting to reform them. To the scene of “violent ejection,” he has sent peace officers to “unroof the cottages and pull down the wretched doors and windows,” which elicit only pity and dis-ease, not a sense of justice. Upon leaving the estate, the Gypsies take on the guise of familiar subjects again, instead of “idle and vicious” rogues:

They were not more irregular characters now than they had been while they were admitted to consider themselves as a sort of subordinate dependents of his family. […] There was also a natural yearning of heart on parting with so many known and familiar faces. (64)

The Gypsies, sullen and defiant, are driven from Ellangowan, and Godfrey Bertram’s guilt makes him attempt to avoid the spectacle by visiting a friend. But to his dismay, he encounters the Gypsy woman Meg Merrilies who shames and curses his cowardice. Meg Merrilies is a startling presence: “a full six feet high, [she] wore a man’s great-coat over the rest of her dress, had in her hand a goodly sloe-thorn cudgel, and in all points of equipment, except her petticoats seemed rather masculine than feminine” (30). Outlandishly dressed, tall, dark, and masculine, she is foreign and dominating. She wears her Gypsy dress to remind him of his lapsed duty, to frighten him through an impression of her mystical powers, “from some traditional notions of respecting the dress of her ancestors” (64). Her Gypsy costume is “artfully adopted” for the performance of her Gypsy identity. This exaggerated identity, however, does not present the stereotypical, seductive, and overly sexual Gypsy woman. Far from it, Meg Merrilies is monstrous, masculine, and threatening in appearance:

Her dark elf-locks shot out like the snakes of the gorgon, heightening the singular effect of her strong and weather-beaten features, which they partly shadowed, while her eye had a wild roll that indicated
something like real or affected insanity. (30)

She stands like a “sibyl in frenzy” and scolds and curses the Scottish laird for his betrayal. Rather than silence her voice, her exotic dress, “a large piece of red cotton cloth rolled about her head in the form of a turban,” gives her a heightened authority that contrasts with Godfrey Bertram’s weak-spirited reform. The text compares her manner, charged with Gypsy magic, with that of a displaced queen, the “proudly contemptuous” Margaret of Anjou “bestowing on her triumphant foes her keen-edged malediction” (64). Again, at the moment of claiming their right as subordinates, the text associates Gypsies with independent sovereignty and majesty. Despite the majestic and ominous warning by Meg Merrilies, Bertram ignores the Gypsies’ plight and his own duties toward his subjects, and in a quick sequence of calamities, is punished for mis-reading his duty. Shortly afterwards, Godfrey Bertram’s young son is abducted, rumored to have been carried off by vengeful Gypsies.

The collapse of the feudal family seems to unfold as a result of Godfrey Bertram’s failures as a virtuous patriarch, and the repercussions are exacted upon his own family. Hearing of her son’s disappearance, Godfrey’s wife dies upon giving birth to a daughter, who cannot inherit. The Gypsy woman’s curse on the house of Ellangowan gains force: seventeen years after the young heir is lost, the estate falls to the scheming lawyer Gilbert Glossin. More dangerous than the fleeting, folkloreish Gypsy threat, the estate falls into the hands of the rising middle-class, the very wave of modernity that Godfrey Bertram had invited in the name of progress. The titular “Astrologer” is no Gypsy, but a rich English colonel, Guy Mannering from East India, who retires at a neighboring estate with his daughter Julia. The narrative resumes with the lost son, who unaware of his true heritage, has returned to Scotland as Julia Mannering’s
suitor. Having been stolen away as a child and raised in Holland, discharged after serving under Colonel Mannering in India, the younger Bertram, goes by the name of “Van Beest Brown” (of the brown beast), an ungainly mixture of colonial, Dutch, Indian, and Gypsy. He is struck by the familiar landscape of Ellangowan that strikes a chord in his buried memory. It is not the colonial administrator, however, who restores him to his rightful inheritance, but the unlawful Gypsy woman. Like Odysseus’s nurse, Meg Merrilies, who had served as nurse to the young heir in his infancy, recognizes him to be the returning master. Glossin, merely an upstart lawyer, can never be a true master of Ellangowan. Sitting at an alehouse she laments the fall of the Ellangowan house to Glossin:

“Sell’d!” echoed the gipsy, with something like a scream; “and wha durst buy Ellangowan that was not of Bertram’s blude?—and wha could tell whether the bony knave-bairn may not come back to claim his ain?—wah durst buy the estate and the castle of Ellangowan?”

“Troth, gudewife, just ane o’thae writer chields that buys a’ thing—they ca’ him Glossin, I think,”

“Glossin!—Gibbie Glossin!—that I have carried in my creels a hundred times, for his mother wasna muckle better than mysell—he to presume to buy the barony of Ellangowan! [...]” (154)

Meg has been de facto nurse for both, but Glossin’s humble origins cannot measure up to the “gude blude” of the lost Harry Bertram. Estates cannot be bought and sold, only inherited, and Glossin’s blood “wasna muckle better than mysell.” Gypsy pride does not claim equal or competing sovereignty within the nation. Meg Merrilies still claims the title of “queen of the Gypsies,” but she is the first to uphold the status quo under the feudal system. Despite
being hounded by his father, the late Laird Godfrey Bertram, Meg directs her energies to restoring the young heir. She reveals Gilbert Glossin’s role in kidnapping the young Bertram heir those years ago, not the Gypsies, and more importantly exposes his legal manipulation to secure the Ellangowan estate.

Standing before Colonel Mannering and local English and Scottish magistrates, Meg’s outspoken theatrics, her impressive height and build, and her blunt speech work in her favor. Initially taken as a madwoman, her audience gradually accepts her testimony against Glossin. Playing up her role as a Gypsy fortune-teller and mystic, and dressed for the part again, she nevertheless speaks in heavy Scottish brogue. The combination of two bucolic natives, the Scottish and the Gypsy, impresses her listeners into crediting her veracity:

Her words, though wild, were too plain and intelligent for actual madness, and yet too vehement and extravagant for sober-minded communication. She seemed acting under the influence of an imagination rather strongly excited than deranged. (344)

Meg Merrilies channels the exotic Gypsy, speaking truth through fortunes and riddles, while simultaneously presenting herself as Scottish and local. She serves as the medium that voices native interests and native loyalty, representing an outdated group that valorizes the past, much like Scott’s Highlanders, whose “wild vitality” is recruited to support Harry Bertram’s legitimacy. She is, however, sacrificed as the narrative closes. Van Beest Brown is revealed to be Harry Bertram on Meg Merrilies’ dying breath, and her death secures her testimony:

When I was in life, I was the mad randy gipsy, that had been scourged,
and banished, and branded—that had begged from door to door, and
been hounded like a stray tike from parish to parish—wha would hae
minded her tale? But now I am a dying woman and my words will not
fall to the ground, any more than the earth will cover my blood! (406)
The strength of her word rests not only on her life, but also her theatrically
performed race. She draws attention to Gypsy persecution and poverty,
“scourged, and banished and branded” as reasons for dismissing her
testimony, but it is her Gypsy outlandishness that makes her conspicuous, and
ultimately heard and believed. Meg Merrilies plays the public, iconic role of the
Gypsy: she displays the eccentric and stubborn loyalties of “native” Others,
while the tenor of prophecy and mysticism strengthens her testimony. Her
revelation allows Harry Bertram to regain his identity and his inheritance, and
marry the English heiress Julia Mannering. Ellangowan can finally advance as
a modern estate, and restored with Julia’s colonial fortune, gather under its
protection the feudal Gypsies.72

Meg’s declaration reinstates Harry Bertram’s legitimacy, but her
picturesque Gypsyness does not disrupt English order. Her outspoken
criticism of the former Laird was directed at his failures to uphold his
responsibilities to his subordinates. The rebellion and subversion suggested
by the Gypsies, their depiction as vengeful, lawless foreigners, the suspicions
of child-stealing, are overturned in the course of the novel, where Scott’s

72 In her reading of the novel, Katie Trumpener draws a parallel between the British
empire and local government: “[d]omestic mismanagement is repeatedly linked to imperial
mismanagement; imperial misdeeds are restituted by a process of domestic atonement and
rebuilding. […] Gypsies become Indians, domestic victims become imperial enemies” (188).
While the marriage of Julia Mannering and Harry Bertram points to domestic harmony and
virtuous government, Trumpener argues, purifying the domestic space of imperial guilt, the
dilapidated Ellangowan estate nevertheless is rebuilt with the Mannering’s Indian fortune (“a
few bags of Sicca rupees”), in a modern marriage of England and Scotland (218-22). Bardic
Gypsies, instead of disrupting national unity, uphold the hegemonic order through the outlandish, eccentric performance of their Gypsy identity. Like the Highlanders of Scott’s *Waverley* novels, the Gypsies in *Guy Mannering* resist the current state, in order to staunchly support a bygone order, standing against the transition to modernity. Although both are “figures of the past,” *Guy Mannering*’s Gypsies are not Highlanders; they are not native to Scotland, and much attention is called to their foreignness when first placing them in their historical context. Despite this, they are returned to the land, just as the heir of Ellangowan is reclaimed. The modern order that consumes them is fashioned by extending the close loyalties of the feudal Gypsy-Laird relationship onto the governing of empire.

Leading the feudal estate and its “dark subjects” is the child between cultures, young Harry Bertram/Van Beest Brown, the lost heir of Ellangowan. His early childhood already showed him to be “a little wanderer” through “every patch of lea ground and dingle around Ellangowan.” Frightening his attendants, the child makes frequent “stolen” visits to Gypsy hamlets (60). His affinity marks him out, early on, as a better master than his father: his “Gypsy wandering” places him closer to both his land and his tenants. The affection is reciprocated by Meg Merrilies, who serves as a “native” nursemaid to the young laird, and teaches him in Gypsy ways, “sing him a gipsy song, give him a ride upond her jackass,” and plying him with gingerbread and apples (60). His early relationship with his nurse serves him well, when he returns after his abduction, as Van Beest Brown, a lowly, ex-officer with no advantages of name, birth, or property. He recovers his birthright, but his wandering past also places at the head of Ellangowan, the Brown Beast, the Anglo-Indian outsider, who had been raised, in part, by the Gypsies.
[4. The Double Bonds of Nation in *The Spanish Gypsy*]

Inspired by Tintoretto’s *Annunciation*, George Eliot sought a fitting conflict to match the “universal idea” of the painting, where an ordinary young woman is called upon to fulfil a greater role in history. The idea came to her in Venice, May 1864, where the painter Frederic Burton pointed out the small picture, and they discussed its “glorious, and even poetical merits.” Tintoretto’s *Annunciation* presents the moment as a sudden invasion: the Virgin Mary is startled by Archangel Gabriel, who bursts into her quiet room leading a flock of cherubs rushing in behind him. In *The Spanish Gypsy*, Eliot describes it as the “first young passionate wail of spirits called to some great destiny,” an elevation of the private individual “entailing a terribly different experience from that of ordinary womanhood.” Drawing upon the impression, if not the literal content of Tintoretto’s painting, Eliot’s tragedy was conceived of as a conflict between choice and destiny, “a subject grander than that of Iphigenia.”

Between 1864 and 65, Eliot wrote *The Spanish Gypsy* first as a play, then “versified” in 1867 after a visit to Spain. Even before this, she had chosen the Spanish struggle with the Moors in the fifteenth century as her setting, where “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. I required the opposition of race to give me the need for renouncing the expectation of marriage.”

*The Spanish Gypsy* was not Eliot’s first turn to foreign political history, far away from her popular “English” novels depicting country life, *Adam Bede*.

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(1859), *Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silies Marner* (1861), and *Middlemarch* (1871-2). With the publication of *Romola* (1863), her historical novel set in Savonarola’s Florence, Eliot had already departed from the English setting. The critical reception for *Romola* was mixed: while praised for its elegance and historical detail, it was constrained by an elaborate language that refused excitement. Her readers wanted another *Adam Bede*, another *Mill on the Floss*. *The Spanish Gypsy* was even more puzzling to readers and critics alike.75 The theme of a woman’s impossible choice in the struggle of national survival, however vexing to admirers of Eliot’s portrayal of English country life, is one which Eliot returns to persistently, continuing the questions of personal ambitions and the individual’s duty to her community of birth. In her “foreign” novels, duty becomes markedly apparent when it is played out as racial and cultural conflict. In *The Spanish Gypsy*, the “opposition of race” alludes to Fedalma’s hereditary duty to Gypsy nation-building, more urgent because of the history of persecution against the Gypsies. Fedalma’s choice, between a private domestic life and a greater political destiny, then, seems no choice at all: it is already been determined by her birth. Fedalma’s tensions of allegiance lie in the impossibility of “choosing” a racial and cultural identity. Despite this foregone conclusion, however, the poem’s dramatic form allows the struggle between private desires and racial destiny to take the form of a debate and argument, one that places the action of nation-building mainly in a thorough discussion of racial loyalty and the history of persecution. What briefly emerges is the dialogue of possibility, between Spanish and Gypsy, wife and Queen, even between Spain and its other pariahs, the Jews. *The Spanish Gypsy*

Gypsy rehearses the concerns of nation and racial duty that Eliot later develops again in *Daniel Deronda*, of individuals who occupy the spaces between cultures. Eliot, however, takes pains to confer upon one of the most despised races in Europe an august racial history, and the poem’s most stirring conviction is in Zarca’s vision of Gypsy future-history. In instilling her account of the Gypsies with the seriousness of nation-building, Eliot’s portrayal inverts the popular images of freedom and irresponsibility associated with the Gypsies. Instead, she locates their nation-building within the restraints and spiritual severity of the Jews, bringing together the two “disinherited” races in their appeal for nation.

Fedalma’s tragedy begins with an intractable opposition of historical forces that end only through conflict, despite the attempts of Fedalma and her lover who plead for a peaceful coexistence. Fedalma, raised by Spanish Christians, is unaware that she is the daughter of a Gypsy leader. On the eve of her marriage to the Spanish Duke, Don Silva, she is reunited with her father, Zarca, who reveals her true identity and urges her to leave her familiar life and join him. Hers is no ordinary lot, but a greater, historic role: to lead her tribe and found an independent Gypsy nation. Unlike *Guy Mannering*, the family romance of the lost child, returned to his/her family, does not provide the narrative solution for Fedalma, but burdens her with through revelation. Here, Eliot overturns the Gypsy stereotype of child-stealing. Where Scott had cast the familiar suspicion upon his Gypsies to prove them finally innocent, Eliot takes this inversion further; the Gypsies are the victims who lost their child. As she continues later with the Jewish cause in *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot’s treatment of the Gypsies is sympathetic, even deeply respectful. In Fedalma’s father Zarca, the poem finds its moments of grand passion, in his vision of a
founding the Gypsy nation in Africa. Allied to the Spanish Moors, Zarca vehemently opposes Fedalma’s marriage to Don Silva. In turn, Don Silva’s uncle, the sinister Prior Isidor disapproves of Fedalma, suspecting her of heresy that originates in her unknown blood. Unlike other George Eliot heroines who dream of greater things and are subdued by their unalterable circumstances, Fedalma’s unalterable circumstances force her to reluctantly live out a fantasy of fulfillment, as the Queen of the Gypsies leading her people to their Promised Land.

Fedalma herself complicates the dilemma of split duties that begin as domestic choices: does she follow her father or her husband? Her own fleeting ambitions before her marriage, to become a public figure and to throw off the shackles of conventional domesticity, are quickly obscured by the burden of her dreams when they are realized, much to her dismay. Her identity seems to turn on the choice of which domestic role will influence her political status. The premise of the poem could be simplified to the pitting of individual will against racial determinism. Nevertheless, *The Spanish Gypsy* is important and critically challenging because of Eliot’s treatment of racial duty and in her considerable discussions for racial survival. Fedalma’s tragedy does not reduce Fedalma’s conflict to an anachronistic and privileged liberalism discussed in Eliot’s time, nor does it disregard the urgency and complexity of race. The difficulty of framing *The Spanish Gypsy* lies, not only in opposition of individual against the community, but in the competing political voices that pit the *female* individual against her heredity of *racial* disadvantage, and subsequently frame race largely as a disadvantage.

Deborah Epstein Nord points out the poem’s tension “between the celebration of unconventional femininity and unhappy obedience to an exigent
inheritance” that “reflects Eliot’s fundamental anxiety about imagining female
election or female exceptionalism.” Nord claims that these “marks of race”
allow, and ever force, the heroine to leave the retreating safety of a white,
Victorian middle-class domesticity, and lay claim to an unconventional destiny
without fear of public outcry against ambition or immodesty. While Nord’s
argument emphasizes the exceptional and unconventional choices in Fedalma
and her political exaltation, my discussion moves away from the focus of
domesticity, to Eliot’s deliberation on inheritance, which stands out so
“markedly” with racial difference. Bernard Semmel’s discussion of “disinherited
races” is extremely useful in this regard. In an examination of Eliot’s “politics
of inheritance,” Semmel reads Eliot through her identification with Auguste
Comte’s Positivism, and her return to the theme of the individual’s relationship
with her community of birth. Semmel points out that the “overwhelming
authority of race” in The Spanish Gypsy changes Eliot’s earlier treatment of
cultural inheritance. Whereas the English novels, Silas Marner and Felix Holdt,
allowed the heir to reject, “even morally compel” him to “disinherit himself”
from his narrow cultural legacy, in The Spanish Gypsy and later Daniel
Deronda, the efforts of the individual to accommodate his heritage “become a
force for communal good” (116).

Thus, to read the many conflicts of The Spanish Gypsy as merely the
opposition of women against patriarchy would be a self-defeating move
against the power of racial resistance that Eliot sets up so painstakingly. This
dichotomy assumes that women’s desire can only be articulated within the
seemingly liberal, “raceless” humanism that claims to “liberate” women. Alicia

76 Nord 1998, 189.
Carroll points out that these suggestions of freedom, especially in romantic narratives of “dark” women, imply sexual liberation only though “fallen” sexual experience, certainly no willing freedom at all. Framing *The Spanish Gypsy* as a problem of women against patriarchy runs the risk of reducing and “resolving” questions of complicated identity positions, questions whose “resolution” could possibly result in their extinction or erasure from the narrative’s history. Postcolonial critics elaborate this complex relationship between women and the politics of race and nation. Race, and its expression in nationalism (in the accounts of homogenous nations), reinforces its own “overwhelming” authority over all other liberties, feminism being one of them. Writing on Indian nationalism, Partha Chatterjee points out, that the resistance to imperialism reinforces nationalist politics as the normative, authoritative, and most *authentic* reality, constraining women’s questions to take a “nationalist expression.”

To separate these questions of a subject who incorporates the threads of various contending positions, identities, and pasts, and set them in opposition to each other, pulls out the complex patterns in Fedalma’s history and re-weaves them back together incompletely. Fedalma’s relationships are convoluted exactly because Fedalma exists as several figures at once, in the web of personal relations as a political symbol, and as a real subject of

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political history. She is both representation and representative. My reading of Fedalma’s doubling and her father Zarca’s vision of the Gypsy national narrative is informed by Homi Bhabha’s essay on national subjects and the object of national narratives in “DissemiNation.” Bhabha suggests out that narrative from exile and margins locates “a form of living that is more complex than ‘community’; […] more mythological than ideology; […] more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identifications than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonisms” (140). The “double narrative moment” exists in what he terms “a contested cultural territory of double time.” The agency of a people is split in the narrative authority moving between “the pedagogical and the performative.” The totalizing boundaries of official representation are continually “evoked and erased” by counter-narratives produced from the margins living in the historic moment. The national narrative both prescribes who belongs within a nation to ensure its future (in the pedagogical), while searching for an ongoing description of a daily life that confirms its existence (in the performative).

Then, for the subject caught in the very moment of writing national history, both the past and the future exist as potential, and selecting the past becomes revision as well as erasure. The palimpsest of histories and imagined communities form a cohesive grid of identity. The national narratives, from the prescribed, the localized, and the visionary, from the center and from the margins, emerge in The Spanish Gypsy through the form of dramatic verse and its use of a polyphony of voices. Gypsy is defined and erased and

performed, by the Spanish consensus in the marketplace, through Zarca’s zealous nationalism, and the Gypsy girl Hinda’s simpler understanding of what it means to be Zincali. The orchestra of voices creates the network of social reality, the prominent disagreements of Zarca, Isidor, Don Silva, and the Jewish astrologer Sephardo’s all present their respective national, racial vision. At the beginning rather than the end is where *The Spanish Gypsy* places the dialogue of belonging, not to disentangle the knots of opposing interests, but to weave them further into a more complex pattern of belonging.

It is at this assembly of public opinion in the Spanish marketplace, that the reader is introduced to Eliot’s fifteenth century Spanish milieu. As a band of Gypsy prisoners are led through the Plaça Santiago in chains, the Spaniards compare them to the Jews, both pariahs in Spain, under the constant threat of expulsion. The expulsion of one brings up the topic of the other: “Some say, the queen/ Would have the Gypsies banished with the Jews./ Some say, ‘twere better harness them for work. They’d feed on any filth and save the Spaniard.”81 The voice of economic rationalization counters this, when the florid silversmith Blasco comments that “Jews are not fit for heaven, but on heart/ They are most useful. ‘Tis the same with mules/ Horses, or oxen, or with any pig” (233), and likewise is the case of the Gypsies. In the crude economics of this Spanish marketplace, the folk tales about Gypsy origins are brushed aside along with Jewish faith. Coexistence is maintained, jokingly, through exploitation:

But when [God] sent the Gypsies wandering

In punishment because they sheltered not

Our Lady and Saint Joseph (and no doubt/ Stole the small ass they fled
with into Egypt),

Why send them here? ‘This plain he saw the use

They’d be to Spaniards. (234)

He concludes that the presence of Gypsies is God’s will and order, not a
matter of politics: “Shall we banish them,/ And tell God we know better?” The
Jews and the Gypsies are thrown together in the common fate, carrying “the
sorrows unredeemed/ Of races outcast, scorned, and wandering” (250). Eliot
yokes the wandering Gypsies, carefree in the English imagination, to Europe’s
other landless race, the Jews. Moreover, it does not offer any of the familiar
enticements to join. There is none of the conventional Gypsy fantasy in Eliot’s
“disinherited races,” and it is clear that joining the Gypsies does not entail
idleness or escape from responsibility. Gypsy wandering is read as the
absence of history as well as land, which Zarca later expounds on.

But public’s interest is in the Duke, Don Silva’s coming marriage to a
girl of unknown family. Fedalma’s story is likened to a fairytale by the minstrel
Juan, her advocate in the crowd. Common expression does not run to wild
rumors, but is controlled by Juan. As the polyphony of voices form public
opinion, the bard or minstrel has the final weighted word as he directs the
consensus: “all along in common for the expressive act/ Yet wait for it; as in
the olden time/ Men waited for the bard to tell their thought” (237). At the very
beginning of The Spanish Gypsy, the reader sees Fedalma prior to her public
appearance through the overlapping or contradictory descriptions that gather
and skewer romanticized conventions. Juan valorizes Fedalma by presenting
a romantic second-hand reputation. His rhapsody of Don Silva’s love that
“[w]ills no highest-born Castillian dame,/ More sacred than Fedalma. He
enshrines/ Her virgin image for the general awe/ And for his own – will guard her from the world,” (226) counters other rumors that Don Silva stoops in marrying a “bird picked up away from any nest.” Indeed, he begins what Zarca continues later for his new Gypsy history: the hagiography of Fedalma as the Virgin queen. Fedalma’s reputation is mixed with fables (King Cophetua raising a beggar maid to be his queen) that align Fedalma’s sympathies with the common crowd. The rumor of Don Silva’s devotion exalts erotic love to spiritual exaltation.

By the time Fedalma appears the public voices rising in a crescendo of excitement are ready to greet her as their saint. When she appears, “with gliding motion like a flame/ that through dim vapour makes a path of glory” Fedalma is greeted with frenzy. The voices of the public square asking, “Lady Fedalma! – will she dance for us?” point to this performance not so much as sexual falling, as Isidor and Zarca see it, but as “the public act” which reveals to the public “their thoughts,” an act of representation and leadership. Fedalma’s appearance as a public figure is “sole swayed by impulse passionate”:

Feeling all life was music and all eyes
The warming quickening light that music makes,
Moved as, in dance religious, Miriam,
When on the Red Sea shore raised her voice
And led the chorus of the people’s joy; (245)

Later, this dance sparks Prior Isidor’s condemnation; Fedalma’s dance is an immodest display that betrays her to be unsuitable as Silva’s wife, a sign of her “bad blood.” Her father Zarca censures it as a Gypsy dance turned into “sport for those who spit upon her people’s name.” For him, it is a betrayal of
her race to the mockery of the Spanish. Both men condemn it as sexual
entertainment, unworthy of a public figure.

The people gathered around Fedalma, however, watch in “reverential
silence,” their “admir ing tension” giving way to relief, “sighs of delight,
applausive murmurs low” (246). Fedalma buoyed by the spirit of the crowd’s
exaltation, evokes the Biblical Miriam, and the poem re-directs Jewish
leadership from Moses to his sister. Leading the “chorus of the people’s joy,”
Fedalma’s dance suggests that she is “naturally” attuned to public opinion, and
channels its approval. Political leadership becomes a performance, more
suited to Fedalma as a “natural” medium of public sentiment. The voice of the
public resonates in her dance, in a performance that reflects the “ardor of the
crowd,”

The strains more plenteous, and the gathering might
Of action passionate where no effort is
But self’s poor gates open to rushing power
That blends the inward ebb and the outward vast. (248)

As the crowed is swayed, the obscured boundary of “the dancer from the
dance” proceeds to blur the dancer from the crowd as well into “the outward
vast.” The high dramatic verse of the poem proper is suspended intermittently
throughout the dance by the gaps of shorter minstrel song. The blank verse is
interrupted by the snippets of the minstrel Juan’s song that accompanies
Fedalma’s dance marking her movement:

Day is dying ! Float, O swan,
Down the ruby river;
Follow, song, in requiem
To the mighty Giver. (248)
Set apart in the poem from the language of the poem proper, the Gypsy songs act as the pause in the epic narrative and provide the rupture of historical realism, the reiteration of real life in the midst of fabulous future histories. Likewise, Fedalma’s dance is the meeting of the public and private self, a force from the crowd surrounding her. She declares, “I danced for joy – for love of all the world”:

The joy, the life

Around, within me, were one heaven: I longed
To blend them visibly: I longed to dance
Before the people – be as a mounting flame
To all that burned within them! Nay, I danced;
There was no longing: I but did the deed
Being moved to do it. (265)

Channeling public feeling into a performance, and evoking Miriam as the leader of the Jewish exodus from Egypt, Fedalma’s dance culminates in a religious fervor heightened with a sexual dimension (later attracting the Prior’s scathing judgement). Her spontaneous performance, however, takes the sexualized Gypsy dance to compound a “natural leadership” into a “natural” cultural inheritance. Raised by Spaniards, her knowledge of the Gypsy dance, comes from her blood. Her dance creates the only space where her political action can be performed, where the performance of her identity is not contested or silenced, but recast as the Gypsy leadership she must assume upon the discovery of her identity. Already, she shows a natural affinity, “instinctively” drawing on the culture of her birth.

Fedalma’s split desires for both ambition and domestic affections develop in sustained tension through the narrative. Her “unconventional”
Gypsy traits defeat nurture with nature. She longs for freedom in the public eye, rather than retreating into the seclusion of the domestic sphere. Fedalma does not approach her impending marriage to Don Silva with unequivocal joy; indeed, her domestic bliss appears as a confinement. Her occasional “bursts of spirit” result in brief acts of rebellion, as evident in her dance in the Plaça. On hearing “the sound of fetters,” the chains of the Gypsy prisoners outside her window, she compares her own plight with theirs, yoking domestic bondage with racial oppression. Her qualms lead her to sympathizing with her (yet) unknown people. Fedalma’s chains are made of gold and set with rubies, wedding jewels given to her by Don Silva: “These rubies greet me Duchess.” They signal to her a captive state, and she identifies herself with them, “Their prisoned souls are throbbing like my own.” She wonders if “they only dream of a wider life,” and tells herself, “we must be patient with our prison house,/ And find our space in loving” (280). Her yearning for “some wider space,” is hemmed in by the correlating image of a “miser-like” Don Silva who “hoards” his time with Fedalma like a “costlier joy” (251). He berates her public dance, as it has shown her to eyes other than his own. As pearls thrown before swine, she has “flung [herself] out on the dusty way/ for common eyes to see [her] beauty soiled” (265). Fedalma refutes this, stating that she wishes to remain in the public eye: “I should like the world to look at me/ with eyes of love that make a second day” (267). She confides that,

\[
\text{I with all my bliss} \\
\text{Have longed sometimes to fly and be at large;} \\
\text{Have felt imprisoned in my luxury} \\
\text{With servants for my gaolers.} \quad (274)
\]

She warns Don Silva that in her dreams she has flown far away from him, and
discovers, trying to fly back that she cannot because her wings have been clipped. As Fedalma draws parallels between her longing for “wider spaces” and the Gypsies’ wandering, she sees similarities between their respective lack of freedom. Comparing the Gypsies’s wildness to nature (and the “noble savage”), she considers their wandering as a natural predilection, as natural as “savage beasts”:

Their walls have been rocks, the pillared pines,
Their roof the living sky that breathes with light:
They may well hate a cage, like strong-winged birds,
Like me, who have no wings, but only wishes. (283).

Fedalma reads her unconventional character as traits she shares and sympathizes with in the Gypsies, and resolves to “beseech the Duke to set them free.” When she is re-united with her father, it is little surprise to Fedalma that she is a Gypsy by birth after all.

Despite Fedalma’s wish to bridge the rift between Gypsies and Spain, neither the narrative, nor her father Zarca, allows the immediate solution through inter-marriage. Initially, Fedalma believes her interstitial position, the lost child of the Gypsies raised by Spaniards, the daughter of a Gypsy leader marrying a Spanish Duke, is ideally suited to understand both Spanish and Gypsy, and imagines her leadership based on her place within both societies. From the onset, however, the poem forecloses these expectations. Through Zarca’s objections, the poem resists such resolutions as erasures that bury the complexity of racial and cultural difference in the happy ending of the marriage plot. Unlike the family romance of lost heirs, The Spanish Gypsy does not allow the discovery of Fedalma’s true heritage to resolve its narrative conflict. Neither does her father Zarca accept that Fedalma’s vision that her marriage
with Don Silva will create a new space within Spain where Gypsy survival is assured. When Zarca shares his plans to lead the Gypsies into a new “Holy Place” in Africa, Fedalma is eager to join his cause. Zarca’s Gypsy nation kindles her pride. When she discovers her Gypsy heritage, her marriage to Don Silva finally seems to reveal a greater purpose. To Fedalma it becomes, briefly, a means to integrate her private life with public ambition. She means to rule through Don Silva through influence, the political guide in the domestic sphere: “I shall but do more strongly what I will,/ Having his will to help me.” She imagine declaring her identity before the Spanish nobles:

“I am his daugther, his,
    They Gypsy’s, owner of this golden badge.”
Then I shall win your freedom; then the Duke -
Why, he will be your son! – will send you forth
With aid and honours. Then, before all eyes
I'll clasp this badge on you, and lift my brow
For you to kiss it, saying by that sign,
“I glory in my father.” This, to-morrow. (303)

Fedalma relies on the connection of family; politics is mapped onto personal relationships. Her bond with Silva will now connect Zarca to the Spanish Duke, and all political conflict can be solved, when they realize their kinship. However, Fedalma is not asked to perform the traditionally feminine role of bridging communities through marital union, despite her desire for such a convenient solution. Zarca scorns her plans as “[a] woman’s dream – who thinks by smiling well/ To ripen figs in frost… Enslave yourself/ To use your freedom?” (304). To Zarca, Fedalma’s power through marriage is merely
sexual servitude. He berates her version of political power of ruling through her husband:

Not so the woman who would save her tribe,
Must help its heroes – not by wordy breath,
By easy prayers strong in a lover’s ear,
By showering wreaths and sweets and wafted kisses,
And then, when all the smiling work is done,
Turning to rest upon her down again,
And whisper languid pity for her race
Upon the bosom of her alien spouse. (304-5)

Zarca’s version makes it clear that Fedalma’s dream is naïve and insipidly feminine. Indeed, against his vision of “epic” nation, Fedalma’s “romance” does not bear well in comparison. The father’s idea of leadership ignores sexual influence, and denies his daughter to partake in its “shameful” role: “Other work is yours.” Although he offers a more direct, militant leadership that demands greater agency from Fedalma, such a role eliminates any other loyalty than to her race. The new Gypsy nation is constructed upon Fedalma’s own conflicts of sexual desire and racial loyalty – her father Zarca the Gypsy’s demands are matched against her lover Silva’s will. Upon the sudden discovery of her ‘true’ identity, Fedalma is urged to abandon all that is familiar in her previous life on the eve of her wedding, and assume her political destiny. For Fedalma, her father’s idea of racial survival through nation-building means eradicating her own memory and desires.

The absence of national memory only animates Zarca into writing Gypsy history as a Gypsy future. His vision is fueled by the persecution that erased Gypsy history in the first place, but as it develops, Zarca’s history
becomes a prescriptive history that contains agency within a strict boundary of race. At first, the vague memory out Gypsy suffering exists in comparative sympathy with other races. When Fedalma ask him of her Zincali origin, “a race/ More outcast and despised than Moor or Jew?” he affirms their lack of written or oral history, the absence of religious or judicial structures that would have unified the Zincali:

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. (299)

Obliquely, Zarca presents Zincali history as a deficient parallel to the Jews, whose God did “[take] knowledge” of them. Jewish spiritual unity that combines history with religion is what the Zincali lack. The Zincali are “[u]ntutored, unbefriended, unendowed;/ No favorites of heaven or of men,” but being born to them, Zarca embraces their “disinherited” state: “Therefore I cling to them!” (300). Moreover, he finds reason to write their future, expressly because of their lack of history:

[…] Therefore no lure
Shall draw me to disown them, or forsake
The meagre wandering herd that lows for help
And needs me for its guide […]
Because our race has no great memories,
I will so live, it shall remember me
For deeds of such divine beneficience
As rivers have [...] (300)

Eliot’s treatment of the Gypsies develops a passionate zeal from the absence of a written past, granting Zarca the status of a visionary, the place of a prophet in the Zincali’s national future. Throughout his wandering, Zarca has learned, “[l]ore from the Hebrew, deftness from the Moor-/ know[s] the rich heritage, the milder life,/ Of nations fathered by a mighty past;” (300). Fedalma compares him to “Moses, Christ, and Mohamet”, who lived to save their people, “slaves, lost, wandering, sunk beneath a curse” (303), and it is a comparison that Zarca readily accepts. Their vision of Zincali future is written as a myth, and Zarca’s role of leader is spiritual as well as political:

To be the angel of a homeless tribe:
To help me bless a race taught by no prophet
And make their name, now but a badge of scorn,
A glorious banner floating in their midst, (302)

As Zincali wandering is likened to Jewish wandering, as a punishment exacted upon race, Zarca plans to lead his “brethren forth to their new land,” to settle at the “hearth that binds us in one family.”

The stirring account of a future Gypsy nation relies on mapping the family by blood, onto the nation, without extending the limits of family through other kinships. Zarca rewrites a history of the Gypsies, in the same way he revises Fedalma’s personal history: by overshadowing the performative with the pedagogical. Zarca’s idealized, romanticized nationalism and national destiny relies on his belief in racial determinism. Zarca’s Gypsy identity, indeed, becomes a singular totality of racial definition that annuls private desires in the name of a greater purpose. The discovery of her true identity is the complication, not the solution to Fedalma’s narrative. Zarca tells Fedalma,
she has not been lost to him at all. She “had a double life fed from [his] heart,” contiguous from the moment she was lost, and “before you dreamed that you were born a Zincala – your flesh/ stamped with your people’s flesh” (301). It erases her experience between Spanish and Gypsy in favor of revising a new personal history, a ghostly double life that she has unwittingly lived since she has been separated from her people. In this dialogue of race and purity, “of a blood/ unmixed as virgin wine,” Fedalma, now a political figure, is no longer allowed a private, feminine fate. Her longings are dismissed as “a vile life that like a garden pool/ lies stagnant in the round of personal loves” compared to the epic cause of the nation, which echoes like “music rolling o’er the world” (382).

Her father Zarca’s demands are not only to re-construct herself into another racial identity (Gypsy not Spanish), but to re-make herself through this political identity from female to male. Politics has brought about her change in gender roles: “you belong/ Not to the petty round of circumstance that makes a woman’s lot, but to your tribe” (309). Taking up her role as leader of her tribe requires her transformation into a female man, reminiscent of the virgin Queen Elizabeth. Earlier in this chapter, I noted how Walter Scott’s Meg Merrilies, another Gypsy woman leading her people, effectively erased conventional femininity from her person. Here, Zarca’s demand is couched in racial loyalty. To refuse Zarca is not only to remain disgracefully feminine, but also to shamefully cover racial features, to ape whiteness:

Unmake yourself, then, from a Zincala –
Unmake yourself from being a child of mine!
Take holy water, cross your dark skin white;
Round your proud eyes to foolish kitten looks;
Walk mincingly, and smirk, and twitch your robe:
Unmake yourself – doff all the eagle plumes
And be a parrot, chained to a ring that slips
Upon a Spaniard’s thumb, at will of his
That you should prattle o’er his words again! (309)

Zarca’s accusation blends a shameful racial passing with femininity, that is trivial and traitorous. Conventional femininity is ascribed to a degenerate Spanish culture, and shameful signs of sexuality identify her as an abject defector to the Spanish. The political demands of race, religion, and gender all compete over Fedalma’s choice of identity. Choosing to remain with Don Silva would mean racial denial and a dangerous and heretical conversion, as well as exhibiting the unnatural case of an ungrateful child renouncing her father. For the loyal Zincala, there would be no similar sexual shame (Or so it seems to a father who insists his daughter stay unwed).

The father’s dream for his daughter exceeds a mere domestic life, which he sees as a stagnant pool that drowns an exceptional public life. This public life moves beyond realist possibilities into the exalted language of nation and poetry, much as the poem itself moves between the reproduction of everyday Gypsy life and into the grander discourse of the future in Zarca’s visionary nationalism. His dream of the Gypsy nation is written closely between the nascent nation and its future, and depends on Fedalma to sustain it:

To plant the race her lover now reviles
Where they may make a nation, and may rise
To grander manhood than his race can show;
Then live as goddess, sanctifying oaths,
Enforcing right, and ruling consciences,
By law deep-graven in exalting deeds,
Through the long ages of her people's life.
If she can leave that lot for silken shame,
For kisses honeyed by oblivion –
The bliss of drunkards or the blank of fools –
Then let her go! (397)

As Zarca tells Don Silva, Fedalma's future is not to suckle fools and serve small beer, but is as one with the nation's. The future reproduced in Zarca's version is not the run of every day life, but an eternal future, both immortalized as and immortalizing the nation. Fedalma is at once an institution, a symbol and myth, the mother, not of little Spanish Gypsies, but of the Gypsy nation at an unknown hearth in Africa.

Against the "pedagogical" future of Zarca's vision, Fedalma cannot find scenes of a "performative" nation from ordinary Gypsy life, any competing realities that might allow her future Silva, without denying her Gypsy heritage. Zarca's national history rings with epic fanaticism, and remains one of the most urgent voices of The Spanish Gypsy in its appeal for Gypsy survival and nation-building. The dramatic form of The Spanish Gypsy permits "ordinary" voices to enter as part of the national chorus, but for the Gypsies, Zarca's vision guides their responses. When Fedalma leaves her fiance to follow her father, she desperately tries to reconcile the desires of her previous life with
her place within her tribe.\textsuperscript{82} Against her father’s derisive judgement of feminine as weak, false, and traitorous, Fedalma looks for the examples in the ordinary lives of the Zincali. Brooding over her lost love, she asks a Zincali girl, Hinda, what she would do for love, hoping to find a more sympathetic answer in an ordinary woman’s experience. Hinda’s love, however, is unequivocal; both love and life are rooted in the tribe and its traditions, her way of life: “How could we live else? With our brethren lost? –/ No marriage feast? The day would turn to dark” (387). Fedalma’s hypothesis of love conflicting with her tribe is unimaginable to Hinda. Fedalma’s question, “Should you have loved him, had he been a Moor/ Or a white Castillian?” is incomprehensible to Hinda, who cannot see why Fedalma would shame her to imagine such a possibility. Met with the girl’s confusion, Fedalma’s hypothesis of other lives and greater extremities of survival become wilder and wilder:

\begin{quote}
Could you leave Ismael? Get into a goat
And see the waters widen ‘twixt you two
Till all was water and you saw him not,
And knew that you would never see him more?
“If ‘twas your chief’s command, and if he said
Your tribe would all be slaughtered, die of plague,
Of famine – madly drink each other’s blood…” (386)
\end{quote}

Fedalma’s imagined future, like her personal history, can only result in the

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{82} Neil McCaw, \textit{George Eliot and Victorian Historiography: Imagining the National Past} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000) 16- 32. The scenes of ordinary life that Neil McCaw terms “a narrative totality” in Eliot’s historical realism, on Eliot’s project of \textit{“recreating history”} as a vehicle to provide what Raymond Williams has called “a knowable community” in the attempt at representing a historical period in all its partial facts and elements. Eliot’s use of verse further obscures the location of a community consensus in ordinary life, one which as Susan Graver shows, fuels her sympathetic conservatism. \textit{George Eliot and Community: A Study in Social Theory and Fictional Form} (Berkeley: U of California P, 1984).
\end{quote}
choice between heartbreak or genocide. The monstrous future of madness and cannibalism literalizes the horrors of racial mixing in degeneracy. To Hinda, Fedalma’s double bonds, or split self, is as abhorrent as Fedalma’s vision of the future. Within her Zincali “totality,” the division between love and life would be an unthinkable betrayal of her people and a loss of selfhood. For Hinda, there is no question of choice or opposition. Safe within the coherent bounds of her culture,

[...] life is one web
Where love, joy, kindred, and obedience
Life fast and even, in one warp and woof
With thirst and drinking, hunger, food, and sleep....
She sees no double path (388)

As I have shown, *The Spanish Gypsy* does not offer inter-marriage as the romantic solution to a political plot; rather it presents the argument of racial survival and racial exclusion (the two sides of separatism) in the voices that carry on the debate of nation. Against Fedalma’s hopes that marriage between Spaniard and Gypsy will be the solution to a racial, political crisis, the poem’s dramatic form moves away from any “solution” at all. Framing the story as an argument of racial survival, the lines of contention are drawn around the very question of racial “purity,” and it is a continued and unresolved discussion that becomes the focus of the poem. In the racial debate of *The Spanish Gypsy*, Silva’s cosmopolitan humanism and his disavowal of racial difference reflect an anachronistic naivete, one that is rejected by both the oppressive center and by the resisters from the margins. Neither Spanish nor Gypsy nor Jew subscribes to his desire for a “heart without livery,” that is, a race-blind humanity without partisanship.
For Prior Isidor, intermarriage and miscegenation is equated to heresy, and Silva’s private marriage bespeaks a larger threat to Christian borders. His point of contention, in the anxieties about race and miscegenation, mirrors Zarca’s own fear of racial dissolution from the opposite side. Their fears of racial falling are conflated within the individual’s religious and sexual crises. For the public bodies of Silva and Fedalma, marriage is equated with threatening the coherence of the national body. Prior Isidor objects to Fedalma’s unknown origins, quite possibly of illegitimate and mixed blood, implying the history of sexual falling in her past. He asks, she is “fit for what/ To make the sport of Moorish palaces. A lewd Herodias”? Fedalma’s dance is read as sexual display and a sign of promiscuity. The “evidence” of tainted origins and heresy span several “outcast” races, the Moors, the Jews, and the Gypsies. In her Gypsy dance, she becomes a lewd Herodias, a dancing Salome:

She bears the marks
Of races unbaptised, that never bowed
Before the holy signs, were never moved
By stirrings of the sacramental gifts.” (258)

Despite Don Silva’s insistence that Fedalma is Christian, and “no Jewess, bears no marks/ That tell of Hebrew blood,” Isidor argues that heresy can be read in the skin, in her “marks of race.” To the fanatical Isidor, Fedalma is as Christian “as a thousand Jewesses, who yet/ Are brides of Satan in a robe of flames.” He connects the two disinherited races of Europe, the Jews and the Gypsies, in the possible dangers of Fedalma’s unknown origins, and finds in her racial ambiguity a threat that will undermine the Spanish nation. In the national body, the Gypsies (and the Jews) remain hidden within the Spanish
population, like Fedalma’s unknown origins, moving across its borders, until they threaten the cohesion of the nation from within.

Between private bodies, Fedalma presents a sexual temptation to Silva’s Christian loyalty and a threat to his Christian heirs by “diminishing” their blood and their faith. The concept of the national family plays on Isidor’s fears for Silva’s potential family. Fedalma’s latent heresy is as dangerous as the hidden races that reside within the boundaries of the nation. In Isidor’s polemic, cultural and spiritual difference manifest themselves much like racial difference, as hereditary conditions that transmit culture as an inheritance of the soul; nurture is ingrained in nature:

I read a record deeper than the skin.
What! Shall the trick of nostrils and of lips
Descend through generations, and the soul
That moves within our frame like God in the worlds –
Convulsing, urging, melting, withering –
Imprint no record, leave no documents,
Of her great history? (258)

Indeed, the soul cannot be transplanted by conversion, not any more than “the trick of nostrils and of lips” or “the mere curl of eyelashes.” According to Isidor, these physical traits (feminine, sexual, and objectified as “fancies of their palate”) are passed on to sons as a spiritual record of the mother’s hidden history. Cultural marks are imprinted on the body, “god-enshrining symbols [...] of tremors reverent” (259). Prior Isidor’s fanatic objection points to the poem’s recurring problem with double bonds and double life: between two cultures, one ultimately erases the other. The humanist sympathy that Don Silva offers is impossible when religious conviction marks race as heresy upon
the body; loyalty, like heresy, does not occupy a double space. Just as Zarca had asked of Fedalma (Can you change your blood?), Prior Isidor asks Don Silva: “What honour has a man with double bonds?” (257). He predicts, quite accurately, that “you will walk/ For ever with a tortured double self” (260).

Neither Don Silva nor Fedalma finds a possible recourse in their double bonds. When Fedalma leaves the Duke to follow Zarca, Don Silva joins her and the Gypsies, attempting to become one, not to discover a fantasy of idle freedom, but to assume another duty to another people’s nation. In the end, provoked by Zarca, Don Silva kills the Zincali leader, ending any possibility of marrying Fedalma. She leaves alone to lead her people out of Spain, to Africa where they will not be persecuted. Eliot’s tragedy found no possibility for “double bonds” in 15th century Spain; indeed her historical setting rejects the anachronistic liberalism of Eliot’s own period. Through the Gypsy dream, Eliot evokes the fantasy of rootlessness associated with Gypsies in the nineteenth century, but in the urgent dream of Zarca’s nationalism, reinterprets nation-building as a moral imperative. She does not offer any easy resolution in “the mixing of races” or by assuming and discarding racial identity. The Spanish Gypsy continually compares the struggle of the Gypsies in Spain with the persecution of the Jews, and indeed, the many debates over nation, settlement, history, racial memory and identity outgrow the urgency of the plot. Eliot’s Spanish Gypsies do not provide any viable solution for ambition in nationalism, and neither do the Jews. An early dialogue between Don Silva and his friend Sephardo, the Jewish astronomer, points to Eliot’s concern with divided duties of race and a liberal humanity “beyond” race, a question her Jewish novel Daniel Deronda will explore again. In The Spanish Gypsy, Don Silva wearily asks for a confessor in “a heart without livery—naked manhood”
(334). Because of his love for Fedalma, Don Silva feels that his own Spanish
“kinship scorches [him] like hate,”; he refuses accept birth as an “inherited
rage/ Deep-down, volcanic, fatal, bursting forth/ From under hard-taught
reason” (338). Compared to Prior Isidor, and later Zarca, the Jewish
astronomer is, to Don Silva, an unprejudiced scholar, peaceful, and above all
non-partisan. Sephardo, however, replies,

[T]here’s no such thing.
While my heart beats, it shall wear livery-
My people’s livery, whose yellow badge
Marks them for Chrisian scorn. I will not say
Man is first man to me, then Jew or Gentile. (334)

Sephardo recognizes what Don Silva does not, that disregarding race erases
the oppressed from history. The individual’s duty to nation involves a serious
moral purpose. As Sephardo declares,

I am a Jew;
And while the Christian persecutes my race,
I’ll turn at need even the Christian’s trust
Into a weapon and a shield for Jews. (337)

Don Silva’s liberalism cannot find a place in the poem’s many arguments for
nation and duty, but despite the poem’s insistence on survival, his exploration
of “double bonds” emerges again in Eliot’s ongoing dialogue of divided
identity. In Daniel Deronda, Eliot returns to this duty toward race, where the
individual willingly seeks his racial inheritance. In her final novel the double
bonds and multiple allegiances that failed Don Silva and Fedalma, are
employed by Deronda and Mirah to re-imagine their identity of birth.
CHAPTER FOUR

Daniel Deronda’s Adopted Family: Identity, Vocation, and Conversion

In his essay, “Civil Disabilities of the Jews,” Thomas Babbington Macaulay compares patriotism with filial devotion, setting up the nation and its people within a dynamic of family kinship. Macaulay contests the problem of according civil rights according to assimilation:

If the Jews have not felt towards England like children, it is because she has treated them like a step-mother. There is no feeling which more certainly develops itself in the minds of men living under tolerably good government than the feeling of patriotism.83

In April 1830, the newly elected Thomas Babbington Macaulay made his maiden speech in the House of Commons, in favor of Sir Robert Grant’s bill for the removal of civil disabilities for Jews. In January of the following year, Macaulay wrote the expanded and not less forceful essay on the subject in the Edinburgh Review. Instead of berating the “unnatural” child for his lack of gratitude, Macaulay’s national family focuses on the predicament of the child, whose mother is a parent by law not by nature, suggestive of fairytales where

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the orphan is mistreated by a cruel stepmother. The expanded family structure that includes orphans and “unnatural” kinship complicates the association of family love with patriotism. The Jews, inherently alienated from the state, and in effect its adopted children, can be brought around to a loving patriotic citizenship, a relationship developed over time as a matter of conscious assent. Instead of demanding the blind loyalty of obedient, “natural” children, Macaulay insists on “good parenting” and good government, regardless of “natural” kinship. To the argument that Jews could never become truly English, Macaulay suggests, “Let us first try the experiment by making Englishmen of them. Then we shall see whether or not they will become members of the national community.”

Macaulay’s argument for national fostering and its reversal of filial gratitude, however, provide a useful metaphorical framework for reading George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda*, descent, and Jewish identity in the trope of adoption. Exploring the metaphors of descent and its extensive possibility, Gillian Beer points out Eliot’s concern with two concepts of kinship, “kinship as descent” and “kinship as lateral connection,” the latter influenced by Darwin’s

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84 Macaulay 157.

85 “We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.” Although attempting to extend general English education to the British colonial territories, Macaulay’s comparative liberalism is complicated by his moments of sweeping jingoism. “I have never found one among them [Orientalists] who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is, indeed, fully admitted by those members of the Committee who support the Oriental plan of education.” From “Macaulay’s Minute on Indian Education.” *The Complete Works of Lord Macaulay* (London: Putnam, 1898) 381.
“infinite web” of connections between living forms. For the adopted child who casts an infinite net to imagine who his birth parents are, the ties of kinship are built on imagining the self as another. Fostering extends the boundaries of sympathy to include strangers as family, and at the same time demystifies the privileged fictions of blood and birth. In what Judith Modell has termed a “kinship with strangers,” fostering connects the triad of foster parents, the foster child, and the birth parents, into a web of imagined relationships, “a fiction of adoption” that defers the meanings of "real" and "made" relations.

National and racial allegiance is imagined in terms of kinship, but the family structure is extended to include adoption and the kinship of strangers, allowing Deronda to escape a restrictive racial determinism. In Daniel Deronda, Eliot does not create Englishmen out of imperial subjects. Instead of the Jew adapting to become English, the narrative is concerned with Deronda, who unaware of his Jewish birth is adopted and raised in an English household, and discovers his Jewish origins just as he develops an interest in the struggles of the race as a sympathetic outsider. As we have seen in Eliot’s The Spanish Gypsy, Daniel Deronda uncovers the secret identity of birth, and employs this newfound racial loyalty to involve the individual in the cause of nationalism. However, as the narrative shifts the problem of self and community away from the disappointed heroine to the national heir, Eliot’s last novel shifts the emphasis of racial inheritance to the possibility of agency.

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86 Gillian Beer, Darwin’s Plots (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983). Gillian Beer uses the metaphors of Darwinian descent, of contained possibilities and futures within the discovery of origin to illustrates the narrative performance of the plot itself as conjecture and possibility. Thus, as possibilities, "origin" points to a determinism that does not exclude the variable outcomes of descent and extensions, instead offering the ‘manifold potentialities of the world, not all of which could be realized” (172).


Through the narratives of “natural” families and fostering, Daniel Deronda, nevertheless, does not insist that individual choice be subsumed under inherited duty. Thus, the adopted children of this narrative are not caught in the impasse of The Spanish Gypsy where familial, traditional, and racial duty opposed and overruled Fedalma’s will. In Daniel Deronda, the determining parent, the mothers whose presence would confirm Deronda’s Jewish identity and Mirah’s Jewish faith are absent, and their attempts to imagine and recreate the absent parent informs their reinstatement into their racial inheritance.

By dissociating nation and kinship from the “natural,” the narrative avoids binding Deronda’s duty and vocation entirely to descent. Conversely, it releases racial identity from its limited expression as a repressive and onerous heritage for its disinherited daughters. For the young Jewish singer, Mirah, her mother becomes a spiritual guide, a vaguely remembered model for both religious and gender roles, made more persuasive by her absence. In Mirah’s rescue and resistance to conversion, Eliot draws on the works of contemporary Jewish women writers to offer a possibility for women’s agency that operates with the boundaries of racial identity. In Daniel Deronda, the structures and tropes of kinship organize the process by which marginalized people become national subjects. In order to arrive at a secure sense of national—and thus personal—identity, Eliot’s characters must wrestle with the conflicting claims of “natural” and adoptive families. Through adoption and recovery in Daniel Deronda, Deronda and Mirah acknowledge their identification with their culture of birth, despite the inadequacy and absence of birth parents, and negotiate the relationships between nature, nurture, and nation.
Macaulay’s rebuke of expecting unwarranted patriotism suggests that love for one’s “fatherland” (*patria*) depends on “good government.” Civic sentiment resembles a *quid pro quo* of loyalty to the nurturing state. In Macaulay’s argument, England’s “step-children” will respond according to how she treats them. The Victorian “Jewish Question,” whether Jews can be truly be incorporated into England or remain an intractable alien presence, is inverted. Extending the national family through the trope of adoption suggests kinship that is not limited to the “natural” connection of immediate blood relations. Moving beyond the claim of racial cohesion, adoption includes the narratives of children raised by outsiders and of communities fostering children who were not born to them. The new model offers a more fitting analogy for both by the extension of civil liberties and the incorporation of imperial and marginal subjects into the “family” of England.

The Anglo-Jewish community, however, did not respond to Jewish emancipation with widespread approval. The Jewish Disabilities Act did not address any politically urgent problems for the Anglo-Jewish community. Nor were their leaders agreed on the subject, many viewing it as an unnecessary, and possibly dangerous, move toward assimilation.\(^\text{89}\) The restrictions on which groups could hold municipal office were not specifically a Jewish issue. The Acts of 1828 and 1829 extended civil liberties to Protestant Dissenters and Roman Catholics, and the Jewish Bill of 1830 was carried forward on this wave of English libertarian tradition.\(^\text{90}\) Macaulay’s celebrated speech was

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\(^{90}\) The Reform Bill of 1832 allowed the House of Commons to pass Grant’s Jewish bill, supported again by Macaulay in 1833; it was rejected in the House of Lords.
scathingly critical of English hypocrisy in the legal exclusion of Jews from Parliament despite the relatively affluent economic status of the Anglo Jewish community in London.  

In the 1830s, the “Jewish debates” were a matter of academic and cultural importance in continuing a history of English libertarianism debated by the English, rather than a struggle of a racial community against anti-Semitism. Indeed, within the Anglo-Jewish community, the Jewish Bill was a political gesture that directly affected its most celebrated members. Lionel de Rothschild was elected to Parliament in 1848, though prevented from taking his seat by his refusal to take a Christian oath. Professing Jews, however, had exercised parliamentary franchise since the Act of 1835. The Jewish Disabilities Act in 1858 allowed Lionel de Rothschild to take his seat as the first professing Jewish Member of Parliament. It dramatically concluded a political struggle that was sensationalized by his great wealth and reputed power in international financial markets, an event which, as Israel Finestein remarks, constituted “a convenient milestone rather than the end of Anglo Jewish history.”

As Lionel de Rothschild’s triumph was remote from the struggle of the Anglo-Jewish middle class, Daniel Deronda’s Jewish narrative separates the classes through Deronda’s and Mirah’s narratives. The broad racial caricatures of “the Jew” are elided in the narrative of inheritance, instead

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91 Of roughly 35,000 Jewish population in England in 1830, 20,000 were concentrated in the City of London, and settled middle class mostly of English birth – a disproportionate 42% had an income between £100- £1000, putting them above the laborer – were engaged in trade, insurance, lending and brokerage generated by London’s centrality in national and international banking. See W.D. Rubinstein, A History of the Jews in the English-Speaking World: Great Britain (New York: Macmillan Press, 1996).

92 Not until the mass immigration from Eastern Europe in the 1880s did the Anglo-Jewish population in London lose its distinctively large urban middle-class and give rise to anti-Semitism from without and an active Zionist real-politik from within the Jewish community. See Katz, David S. The Jews in the History of England, 1485-1850 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994).

presenting Jewish identity as a hallowed cultural addition that invites an intellectual brotherhood of membership. The pressing concerns of race and anti-Semitism are articulated through the fears of class conflicts, but Deronda’s upper-class fostering does not invite the danger of the “dark” child of unknown origins brought into the family hearth. Unlike the anxieties around the secret Jew infiltrating English society in Trollope - Melmotte in *The Way We Live Now* is a broadly anti-Semitic example – Deronda’s Jewish origins are never a danger to English inheritance. The “timeless” figure of the grasping Jew is avoided.94 Eliot’s sympathetic narrative does not allow Deronda to ever become a threat to the domestic circle of his friends and adopted family. Neither does his place in Sir Hugo’s family impede the legal succession of English estates. Though long suspected as Sir Hugo’s illegitimate son, Deronda’s ambiguous place in the household puts Sir Hugo’s three daughters at no disadvantage, nor does it compete with Sir Hugo’s overbearing nephew Mallinger Grandcourt’s claim to inherit his lands and titles. Indeed, Deronda’s ambiguous place in Sir Hugo’s family places a latent challenge to rightful inheritance. The narrative of the “secret child” teasingly vex the solution; certainly Sir Hugo’s family and Gwendolen, instead of being threatened, would be better served if Deronda was revealed to be the heir.

Instead, the “stereotype of the Jew” who threatens English inheritance is dismissed as insular by an alternate model of the Jew in the bohemian cosmopolite, the musician Herr Klesmer. The threat of the “hidden Jew,” and

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94 Brian Cheyette’s work on Jewish stereotypes focus on Jewish figures and their cultural status in the English literary imagination through a post-colonial critique of race and history in anti-Semitism. See *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations 1875-1945* (1993) and *Between 'Race' and Culture: Representations of 'the Jew' in English and American Literature* (1996). Cheyette’s work questions the discourse of race in a historiography that presents a “timeless” and ahistorical Jewish stereotype.
the fears of dissolution from within the English family, are not absent from the narrative. In the portrait of Herr Klesmer, who marries Catherine Arrowpoint in the neighboring estate, however, these stereotypical anxieties of “the hidden Jew” are dismissed as ridiculous. The novel’s ideal cosmopolite, Herr Klesmer announces quite casually to an annoying rival that “my name I Elijah. I am the Wandering Jew” (206). While Catherine attempts to salvage the situation, he goes on to aggravate the provincial suitor, saying that he “looks forward to a fusion of races” (206). Herr Klesmer Jewishness is elusive and suggestive at best, but he is introduced nonetheless as a “felicitous combination of the German, the Sclave, and the Semite” (37), a “fusion of races” himself.

Catherine’s father objects to her choice, pointing out, rather ineffectively, that Klesmer “won’t do at the head of estates. He has a deuced foreign look – is an unpractical man,” a man “who is nobody knows what – a gypsy, a Jew, a mere bubble of the earth” (210). Catherine herself refutes her father’s claim that English inheritance should remain in English hands. Just as the Arrowpoints have newly acquired their estate and fortune, so will others: “if our land were sold tomorrow it would very likely pass into the hands of some foreign merchant on ‘Change. It is in everybody’s mouth that successful swindlers may buy up half the land in the country. How can I stem that tide?” (211).

Despite her parents’ protests to think of “the public good,” Catherine counters their disapproval. She names the expectation that heiresses marry impoverished noblemen a “public evil,” and throws in her lot with the “foreign” Klesmer. Certainly, neither the narrative nor Catherine equates him with the dangerous tide of “successful swindlers” endangering England. In contrast to Grandcourt’s oppressive (though legitimate and English) hold over both Gwendolen and the Mallinger estate, Herr Klesmer’s liberal and intellectual
bohemian is preferable as the successor to English fortunes. Herr Klesmer’s use of “the wandering Jew” is figurative, however, erasing the mark of race. He alludes to race as a slippery array of choices, “a gypsy, a Jew, a mere bubble of the earth,” a “felicitous combination of the German, the Sclave, and the Semite,” easily worn and exchanged for another. Klesmer’s loyalties are not called to question, as the freedom of the bohemian artist answers only to a higher calling in music. This bohemian freedom of the artist regards race as a voluntary identity, a freedom that is later denied to the Alcharisi, who so readily cannot escape her inheritance without punishment.

Herr Klesmer’s voluntary ambiguity provides no answers to Deronda’s case. Daniel’s fostering is split between the unencumbered choice of the landed gentleman that Sir Hugo wishes to give him, and the fictions of “fallen,” illegitimate origins that Daniel himself cannot help imagining in the absence of his mother.

The unknown past of literary orphans indicates a criminal element or a shameful past, instead of granting freedom from inherited duty to the lost child. Both *Oliver Twist* and *Wuthering Heights* place the literary orphan as a central figure of class convergence. The lost child and his criminal associations can enter into the middle class home, and this intrusion to fragments the sturdier structures of inheritance. Heathcliff—the stray, the Gypsy, the foundling, the “street Arab,“—thoroughly disrupts the domestic order of the Earnshaws and

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95 The miserable conditions of the poor orphan were obviously far removed from his counterpart in the middle or upper families that would provide friends or family as custodians before the parents’ demise. Although the 1926 Act made adoption of legal in England, the concerns behind them and the issues of adoption developed from the Poor Laws concerning abandoned and illegitimate children in workhouses. The fear of descent, into the lower classes, however, is inextricably bound to the sympathetic case of the deserted child. See George K. Behlmer, *Friends of the Family: The English Home and Its Guardians, 1850-1940* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998) and Penny Kane, *Penny. Victorian Families in Fact and Fiction* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995).
Lintons. His presence interrupts the order of families, first as an unequal, and uncertain, addition to the family (a stepbrother, a servant, or a friend?). Later, through his own marriage and arranging the unions of the younger generation, he attempts to change the rightful order of succession. In *Oliver Twist*, the orphan’s return restores rightful inheritance, but even more so than Heathcliff, *Oliver Twist* opens the door for the criminal underclass to enter and threaten the genteel family that rescued him. Retracing the history of Oliver’s mother and her marriage, recognizes the “true gentility” of his origins, and dissociates him from the taint of crime, poverty, and illegitimacy, but exposes and implicates the family with these instabilities in the process.

The orphan’s tale conveys not only the taint of illegitimacy, but through speculations of “natural” and “unnatural” origins, contest the structures of inheritance and the ideal of domestic harmony, from the family to the nation, by absorbing the narratives of outcasts, abandoned children and the mothers who abandoned them. As both a threat to the family and its redemption, the role of the orphan, as Laura Peters argues, is “[unsettling to] the notion of belonging for both the family and the nation,” while at the same time, “is necessary for the reaffirmation of [their] ideals.”96 The attempt to fashion the “artificial” family along the lines of the biological one assumes the deferral of the former in favor of the latter. Victorian legal historian Henry Maine draws attention to cultural fictions in the development of the adopted family.97 In *Ancient Law*, he writes that “we must try to regard the fiction of adoption as so closely simulating the reality of kinship that neither law nor opinion makes the slightest difference between a real and an adoptive connection.”

Despite the “artificial” family’s attempt to assimilate lost members, doing so is akin to acknowledging “crimes” against the family. Nancy Lammetter in Eliot’s Silas Marner voices the resistance to adoption as an “unnatural” act: “to adopt a child because children of your own had been denied you was to try and choose your lot in spite of Providence.” She echoes the sentiment of Glanville’s common law dictum that “only God can make heirs, not man.” The fictions of the natural family censure the adopting parents for going against the dictum of Providence, but go further to pursue the forgotten “natural” mother, who has been so “unnatural” as to give up her child. The birth mother connects the romance of the lost child with the dark side of domestic fiction. The “fallen woman” has failed not only in terms of governing her own sexuality, and consequently is ejected from the circuit of marriage and family, but in doing so has also become a mother who has relinquished the role of mother. George Eliot’s Hettie Sorrel (Adam Bede), Elizabeth Gaskell’s Ruth Hilton (Ruth), Mrs Henry Wood’s Isabel Vane (East Lynne), Dickens’ Lady Deadlock (Bleak House), form the group of “bad mothers,” whose sexual falling, subsequent punishment, and repentance (in death) become the preoccupation of the narrative. The narratives of “bad mothers” are the expanded variation on a theme of Oliver’s mother, mothers who must be removed, either in disappearance or death, for the lost child to be redeemed and to re-enter the family.

To the adopted child, the shame of the unknown mother is based on the fictions of the middle-class family that dominate the cultural consciousness. Outside the protective sphere of kin and the immediate family, orphaned or abandoned children inevitably were associated with the taint of illegitimacy and crime. The literary orphan, however, bridges the social distance in the
care of abandoned children, introducing the cultural image of the miserable orphan within the middle and upper class home. The social concerns surrounding legal adoption and abandoned children were not the concerns of middle and upper class inheritance, and the questions regarding the status of adoption were focused on the workhouse and criminal elements, but literary orphans brought the two questions to a head. Deronda’s initial idea of his unknown mother from childhood has been with “the shame associated” with the fallen woman, from whom “he must have been taken away” (142). His origins are shrouded in ambiguity, further blurring the lines between sexual misconduct and a criminal behavior, both resulting in the traffic of unwanted and unclaimed children.

The freedom of a gentleman’s upbringing that Deronda receives from his foster father figure, Sir Hugo, competes with the fictions of unknown birth. The aspersions of illegitimacy from the beginning make it clear that Deronda cannot inherit from Sir Hugo, even before he discovers his Jewish identity and realizes that he is not related to Sir Hugo at all. His indeterminate relations to the Mallingers unsettle his place in the family, and compel him to associate his origins with “fallen” sexuality. Reading about popes and their numerous “nephews” in Sisimondi’s History of the Italian Republics, a thirteen year-old Deronda realizes that the “indulgent and cheerful” man he has called his uncle could most likely be his father. Where he had so far been content and “too fond of Sir Hugo to be sorry for the loss of unknown parents” (140), his newfound awareness insists on creating a shamed and wronged mother in her absent place. On loosening his ties with his foster family, he immediately imagines another. Deronda’s fictions of family, however, are not like Maggie Tulliver’s fantasy of sympathetic kindred, where she believes her “wildness”
originates from her secret kin. Instead, his fiction of loss rewrites a ghostly substitute that expunges his existing history and erases his privileges for an imagined suffering. Daniel reads a palimpsest of the illegitimate son over the history of the indulged nephew, immediately debunking his previous position in the family. Rather than leave a gap in the family chronicles, this disclosure overwhelms Deronda with a doubled narrative. Through the fictions contained in the place of “nephew” he discovers the story of the hidden son and the wronged mother, creating a space of loss in the doubly maintained identity of the nephew/son. Jacob Press reads the ambiguity of identity in his reading of “Eliot’s language of circumcision” in both Eliot’s allusions to his childhood memories of the physical event and the “primary metaphor for the thirteen-year old Deronda’s traumatic initiation into shameful difference.” A double knowledge of rewriting a suspicious new identity is acknowledged but unspoken. Deronda feels his new identity like the “presence of a new guest who seemed to come with an enigmatic veiled face, and to carry dimly-conjectured, dreaded revelations” (141). This ghostly other writes painful narratives of lost possibilities over his familiar surroundings, in the secrets of his birth that he imagines is whispered all around him like an open secret: “Did Turvey the valet know? – and old Mrs French the housekeeper? – and Banks the bailiff, with whom he had ridden about the farms on his pony?” (144).

Sir Hugo wants Daniel’s choices to be utterly unconstrained, as did his mother when she asked that the knowledge of his race be concealed. But what Sir Hugo thinks is a privilege, a freedom from the duties of birth, Deronda

98 “Same-Sex Unions in Modern Europe: Daniel Deronda, Altneuland, and the Homoerotics of Jewish Nationalism,” Novel Gazing, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (Durham: Duke UP, 1997) 299-329. Press argues that the novel is devoted to constructing Deronda’s masculinity as particularly Jewish, presenting the problem of his “alienated impotence” that is racialized by his unspeakable circumcision, and Mordecai’s initiation of Deronda into a homosocial brotherhood reconciles the separated identity categories of ‘Jew’ and ‘man.’
experiences as alienation, and further, a mark of disgraced origins. When he first suspects his own hidden past, Daniel is already familiar with the romantic historical narratives of national heroes, but he does not wish to associate his lot with theirs. He has read stories that turn illegitimate birth into a narrative of heroism, constructing an individual’s rise within a national myth, but recognizing the “secret of his own birth” in theirs, does not wish to emulate them:

   [M]en who were born out of wedlock and were held unfortunate in consequence, being under disadvantages which required them to be a sort of heroes if they were to work themselves up to an equal standing with their legally born brothers. (141)

However much he might imaginatively lose himself in the existence of Robert Bruce, he is accustomed to the “dignified ease” of a gentleman’s life, and has “appropriated it all with affection.” Though he has mined the literary narrative for his own past, he does not readily embrace the heroic lot of glorified poverty for his possible future. He considers that it might be possible to,

delight in no splendour but what has open doors for the whole nation, and to glory in having no privilege except such as nature insists on; and noblemen have been known to run away from elaborate ease and the option of idleness, that they might bind themselves for small pay to hard-handed labour. (143).

Indeed, young Daniel looks askew at such outlandish rebellion against a gentleman’s life, which he is accustomed to. The narrator pronounces that his tastes “were altogether in keeping with his nurture.” Although the determining his true station requires a search for origins, Daniel balks at the fictions of nature involved in the founding myths of heroes, as resisting the “natural” lot of
The choice of vocations that Sir Hugo offers him suggests that he must work for his living, unlike a gentleman who need not, and thus reinforces his belief that his shameful origins place him forever “below” his peers. The idea of a “natural” origin that exclusively motivates the hero, and proves his worth and identity, obscures the web of relations connecting the individual to his family and community. Furthermore, it excludes the “nurture” in family relations, emphasizing only isolated “nature” and “inborn” character in these abandoned, illegitimate heroes. Daniel insists on his “nurture,” resisting the primacy of birth alone to determine the narrative, but nonetheless, is bound by the misgivings of his own birth. After singing in front of Sir Hugo’s admiring friends, young Daniel feels a burning shame that Sir Hugo should ask whether he would like to be a great singer, “to be adored by the world and take the house by storm” (143). That Sir Hugo considers a career for him not possible “among the destinations for the sons of English gentlemen” is damning proof to Deronda that there is “something about his birth” that sets him aside as merely “a wonderful toy” (144). His uncertainty continues to plague him, though he is momentarily relieved to find that Sir Hugo expects him to go to Eton, then on to Cambridge. He agrees with this direction, “if that is what a gentleman’s son must do” (146).

However, the unconstrained freedom that later troubles Deronda is akin to that which distinguishes the landed English gentleman. When he turns to Judaism, Deronda, far from seeking unearned luxury, in fact, is yearning for constraints of family and duty, precisely the moral imperative and social bonds that his indeterminate relations to the Mallingers cannot provide. Unlike the demands of parental and racial obligations in The Spanish Gypsy, Deronda’s
fostering and gradual discovery of his “true race” makes no oppressive demands on his choices. Rather, the absence of such duties drives Deronda to actively search for an identity that will tie him to necessary obligations. Sir Hugo’s fostering eliminates the pressures of tradition to dictate individual choices, even as Deronda wishes to be bound to duties that will prove his place and position. Family, and subsequently, racial duty constrain individual choice, but Deronda yearns to be constrained; to be so would be a sign of family membership. Sir Hugo is oblivious to young Daniel’s misgivings, and rather untroubled with Daniel’s turmoil over his suspected parentage; he is pleased with the suspicions that “such a fine boy” as Deronda is thought to be his son. The education Sir Hugo has planned does not meet with Deronda’s demand for affiliation, like a weary Jane Eyre who asks for fate to “grant me at least a new servitude.” Sir Hugo’s fostering does not constrain Deronda by any expectations other than what he wishes for himself. When Deronda demands a definite answer to who he is and what he should be, Sir Hugo is not the foster father to provide him with one. To Deronda’s question, “What do you intend me to be, sir?” Sir Hugo answers, “Whatever your inclination leads you to, my boy. […] What I wish you to get is a passport in life” (149-50).

Although his adolescence was agitated by the suspicious fictions of his past, later Deronda embraces and profits from the latitude Sir Hugo has allowed him. At the end of Deronda’s formal education, he seems to have taken Sir Hugo’s ambiguous plans to heart: “He longed now to have the sort of apprenticeship to life which would not shape him too definitely, and rob him of the choice that might come from free growth.” (153). Supported by a gentleman’s income, and unlike others who have “more definite place and duties,” Deronda’s uncertain parentage gives him “an excuse for lingering
longer than others in a state of social neutrality" (153). Where he had once struggled with the urgent problem of being a real English gentleman, now that he has become one, Deronda eases into a more inclusive cosmopolitanism, not wishing to confine himself to limited loyalties. Sir Hugo asks,

“So you don’t want to be an Englishman to the backbone after all?”

“I want to be an Englishman, but I want to understand other points of view. And I want to get rid of a merely English attitude in studies.” (155)

What Deronda benefits from his fostering is the “adopted” space from which to both identify and distance himself from the freedom of the English gentleman, in order to elect his constraints in Judaism. The foregone conclusion of Eliot’s “self-consuming plot” does not so much propel the narrative forward, as it progressively selects and recreates Deronda’s Jewish identity.

The proleptic narratives of origin in Daniel Deronda return vocation to descent, but the discovery of origin is preceded by the fiction of sympathy. Deronda’s pursuit of Jewish heritage reverses the causal relationship of duty attributed to birth. His vocation of identity begins with his kinship with strangers, Mirah, and later with Mordecai who forms his nascent Jewish identity. In a deconstruction of the narrative process of the novel, Cynthia Chase shows the rhetorical principles of the text at odds with the narrative mode, “not only as a history of the effects of causes, but also as a story of “the present causes of past effects.”99 This “double reading” of Daniel Deronda shows how the narrative distorts causal relationship, presenting the revelation

of Deronda’s Jewish birth as a result of his affinity to Judaism (217). Deronda’s loyalty is torn between his leanings toward the Jewish tradition “fostered” by Mordecai and the identity Deronda believes he was born into, his foster childhood with Sir Hugo. Instead of negating his kinship with Mordecai, however, his mother’s revelation affirms his “kinship with strangers” by turning out to be the “kinship of descent.” Deronda’s vocation of “becoming a Jew” leads to discovering himself to already being one, but the end result of “Jewishness” is revealed to be a process of identity rather than a coherent “original” state to which one can return. The connection Eliot makes between sympathy and fostering, as Gillian Beer has pointed out, extends the reach of sympathy beyond the necessity demanded in biological relationships.100

As a restoration of birthright, returning to the mother would confirm origin as the primary determinant of his future. Daniel Deronda, nevertheless, does not insist that individual choice be subsumed under inherited duty. Rather, the reunion with his mother interrupts the trajectory of return by resisting the demand for maternal sentimentality. Deronda’s mother rejects the expectation of tearful reunions and gentle maternity in his the narrative of recovering identity. Deronda’s childhood ghost, the wronged and shamed mother of his imagination, follows the patterns of fiction Deronda himself was loathe to apply to himself. Recovering the fallen mother with the lost child restores both child and parent to their rightful place. The novel, however, avoids this expectation of the family romance. Deronda’s fostering and descent, nature and nurture, is complicated not only by the child’s place between birth and adoptive traditions, but also by the confrontation with the mother who refuses to acknowledge the precedence of inheritance. Deronda

100 Gillian Beer, George Eliot (Brighton: Harvester, 1986)
needs that “attraction of devoted service” to a “larger duty,” a moral devotion that racial and national identity will allow him,

On the eve of meeting his mother, Deronda is the tourist imagining himself sympathetically into another people’s politics. In Genoa, aware of the current Italian war of independence against Austria, he nevertheless is tangentially moved by one nation’s struggle, by imagining another. At the moment of the Italian war, Deronda is reminded of Mordecai’s Zionism, and imagines the fifteenth century Jewish diaspora from Spain onto the city of Genoa. The detached beauty of the tourist’s Genoa, “oleander in the tubs along the wayside gardens looking more and more like fatigued holiday makers,” contrasts with the war against Austria that is carried in “the very air of Italy” (533). Deronda is aware of the “march of crowded Time towards the world changing battle of Sadowa,” but the historic reality of the Austro-Prussian War (1866) is obscured by the pleasant lull of tourists on an Italian holiday. This historic moment converges with another in the history of the city. His affinity to Judaism under the instruction of Mordecai paints a poignant scene of Jewish diaspora in 1492 onto his contemporary Genoa:

[t]he multitudinous Spanish Jews centuries ago driven destitute from their Spanish homes, suffered to land from the crowded ships only for a brief rest on this grand quay of Genoa, overspreading it with a pall of famine and plague—dying mothers with dying children at their breasts—fathers and sons agaze at each other’s haggardness, like groups from a hundred Hunger-towers turned out beneath the mid-day sun. (532)

However, he withholds from immersing himself fully into this imagined suffering. His private revelation is framed by a panorama of action and inaction. Like another English tourist, Arthur Hugh Clough’s Claude, he finds sympathy is not enough for action. Like the tourists who separate themselves from present politics, Deronda is not allowed to embrace his historical connection with the world, suspended from action before the revelation of his identity. Indeed, he worries that aligning himself with others means betraying his true parentage. Despite his wish to imagine himself into the racial and urban history of Genoa and Spanish Jews, the prospect of determining his place in the closed circuit of heredity circumscribes the kinship of sympathy:

[h]e had never yet fully admitted to himself that he wished the facts to verify Mordecai’s conviction: he inwardly repeated that he had no choice in the matter, and that wishing was folly – nay, on the questions of parentage, wishing seemed part of that meanness which disowns kinship: it was disowning by anticipation. (532)

[2. Recovered Mothers, Resisting Daughters: The Alcharisi and the Jewish Woman’s Complaint]

“My father had tyrannized over me—he cared more about a grandson to come than he did about me: I counted as nothing. You were to be such a Jew as he; you were to be what he wanted. But you were my son, and it was my turn to say what you should be. I said you should not know you were a Jew” (544)

In her revelation to her son, the Alcharisi objects to her absent place in
the family. As an obedient Jewish daughter whose father had no son, her own place disappears as soon as she has given birth to her son, making amends for her father’s disappointment by continuing the line of succession from grandfather to grandson. The unwanted daughter is seamlessly shifted to the role of mother, who, as she notes, “counts for nothing” in her father’s family history. The meeting of mother and son, then, is a site of competing narratives produced by the constantly changing roles within the family. Mother is Deronda’s original fiction, whom he has imagined in his childhood as a wronged “fallen” woman. The narrative of the lost child attempts to return the fallen mother back into the sanctity of the family, through the process of reinstating the child’s birthright. In his reunion with the Alcharisi, Deronda desires to restore them both into the family, but the Alcharisi refuses the role of the repenting mother, just as she had objected to being the obedient, invisible daughter. The Alcharisi’s account refuses to be absorbed into the family narrative. Instead, the failed mother stops the causal relationship of succession. Although she confirms Deronda’s Jewish identity in her revelation, the confrontation with the Princess draws attention away from the child. Instead it brings the mother’s own place as an ambitious woman within the structures of inheritance to the center, as one who attempts to erase the marks of race and remove both herself and her child from racial obligation.

Deronda’s sympathetic understanding has developed from creating his fiction of mother. He has thought of her “more than any other being in the world,” and concerned that she might be suffering, wished to have been “a comfort” to her (536). This narrative of mother follows the family romance, one mapped closely on the cultural fictions of family sentiment. Their reunion should bring closure to the plot of lost heirs. As Marianne Novy describes the
adopted child’s meeting with his birth parent, “if this were a reunion that reconstituted a family, the novel might end there.” United with her child, the fallen mother is brought back into the fold of the family, thereby forgiven and erased, and the ideals of family are reinstated. Revealing his Jewish origins, Deronda’s mother confirms his fictional self-production with the reproduction of genealogies. The imagined identity Deronda has nurtured through his study of Judaism is sanctioned; his kinship of birth gives his sympathies a moral imperative. Through his mother, Deronda can trace a direct correlation from family kinship, to racial and national duty.

The Alcharisi and her revelation, however, halt the move toward equating kinship, identity, and sympathy to a limited racial determinism, and avoid this reductive collapse of identity to birth. She refuses to extend her maternal sympathies to Deronda, and disputes his possible understanding of her suffering, further distancing herself from the “natural” maternal role. Princess Leonora Halm-Eberstein, the Alcharisi, redirects the course of Deronda’s fiction, separating the connection between family sentiment and loyalty to race. Love for his culture of birth, its people, and patria is compared to a child’s love and duty to his parent, but the Alcharisi refuses his sentiments. She begins their dialogue by rejecting his sympathy and renouncing the bonds of mother and son: “I have not the foolish notion that you can love me merely because I am your mother, when you have never seen or heard of me all your life” (536). She rejects the fiction of family explaining that she released him from the duty she had found onerous, “from the bondage of being born a Jew” (537). Even Deronda’s sympathy and his

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imaginative understanding of other lives are denied. The Alcharisi refuses to become the mother he has imagined, repeating throughout her narrative, “I had a right to seek my freedom”; “I will not deny anything I have done”; “I reject nothing”; “I have a right to resist.” She responds not only to the past and her dead father, but to the current narrative expectation that attempts to pull her back into the fold of the family romance, the penitent daughter forgiven in the course of restoring the rights of inheritance to the lost child.

The Alcharisi is unrepentant in her rejection of familial and racial duty; instead of the “unnatural” mother, she brings to focus her place as the ambitious daughter at odds with the culture of her birth. Although Deronda’s sympathies follow women’s experiences, imagining his absent mother’s, Mirah’s, Gwendolen’s struggles as his own, the Alcharisi draws attention to difference between sympathy and the experience of being a woman:

You are not a woman. You may try – but you can never imagine what it is to have a man’s force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl. To have a pattern cut out – ‘this is the Jewish woman; this is what you must be; this is what you are wanted for; a woman’s heart must be of such a size and no larger, else it must be pressed small, like Chinese feet; her happiness is to be made as cakes are, by fixed receipt.’ That was what my father wanted. He wished I had been a son; he cared for me as a makeshift link. (541)

Deronda’s mother comes closest to voicing Fedalma’s complaint in *The Spanish Gypsy*, where the dilemma of desire and ambition descends into a restrictive duty to racial survival. Both women are constrained by the demands of race, as well as gender. The Alcharisi’s presumes that the “slavery of being a girl” is doubly oppressive within an “ethnic” community with outlandish
cultural practices, where a “woman’s heart” is “pressed small, like Chinese feet.” The restrictions of being a Jewish woman are presented as more limiting than the general experiences of women outside the community. Certainly, she sees that passing as a Gentile will free her from the constraints of gender.

Refusing her father’s “fixed receipt” of the Jewish woman, the Alcharisi describes her experience as a proto-feminist struggle. She asserts that “it was my nature to resist, and say ‘I have a right to resist!’” (545), repeatedly and vehemently: “I had a right to be free. I had a right to seek my freedom from a bondage that I hated” (537). In the spectrum of responses to Victorian patriarchy, Deirdre David identifies the Alcharisi at the extreme end of opposition, where Eliot creates the tension of “evasion and contradiction” through the “adoption of strategies of containment to manage the ideological contention.”103 The Alcharisi’s reception of Deronda is pitiless and unmoving, stirring up his repugnance at her assault on his “cherished emotions and principles.” Indeed, the mother places Deronda within the same oppressive structure as her father: “You are the grandson he wanted. You speak as men do” (568). Her narrative, however, is treated not without sympathy. As Gillian Beer puts it, the mother makes a “thrillingly sustained argument for the right of a woman to vary in motives, passions, needs, and not to subserve always the assumptions of society or the demands of race and inheritance.”104 While the narrative progresses toward reclaiming racial identity, the mother’s protest halts the movement of valorizing all tradition at the expense of the individual, presenting the counter-argument of her ultimately failed vision.

In her interview with Deronda, the Alcharisi attributes the constrictions

104 Gillian Beer, Darwin’s Plots, 209-11.
placed within women to Jewish patriarchy, where a self-denying motherhood upholds its own restrictions. Deronda’s mother is one of Eliot’s most vocal and unrepentant, speaking with “a passionate self-defense in her tone” as she “flings out the last words against some possible reproach” using the “intensest words she could find” (537). Deronda’s meeting with his mother is unbearable and painful, as his expectations of a fond reunion are shattered. By denying her son and denying him his birthright, she ruptures the link of descent as well as “natural” maternal sentiment: “I did not want a child” (537). When she gave up her son, she attempted to disrupt the chain of descent, and dissociate herself from the pattern of female obedience: “Every woman is supposed to have the same set of motives, but I have not felt exactly what other women feel- or say they feel, for fear of being thought unlike others” (539).

The Alcharisi’s narrative presents the dichotomy of female ambition that is opposed by Jewish tradition, a constrictive bind where she must escape and relinquish all claims to racial inheritance in order to nurture her art. The restrictions placed upon her by her father stands in for all Jewish patriarchy. Daniel Deronda’s other cosmopolitan artist, Herr Klesmer can jokingly choose to be “Jewish” or not and belong to the “family of man.” He can, like Arnold’s “best culture” rise to the top of “universal appeal” without constraint from national or racial particularities, but for the Princess, belonging to a community of artists is to disavow the racial community of birth. Of the three female singers in Daniel Deronda, Gwendolen can only aspire to the achievements of the Princess’s past acclaim, and Mirah falls short of her artistic breadth. As the model of artistic ambition and worldly success, the Princess Leonora Halm-Eberstein can assume artistic self-expression only by escaping from the Jewish community into the freedom of a continental cosmopolitanism.
Gwendolen’s own claustrophobic marriage to Grandcourt indicates that gendered constraints endure in English, as well as a Jewish, community. The Alcharisi’s narrative, however, temporarily erases the intricacies explored in Gwendolen’s narrative, by equating the Alcharisi’s Jewish inheritance with all restrictive patriarchal tradition. In the mother’s account, Judaism and its cultural inheritance are represented as a closed community stagnant in the production of culture, lacking in individuals with the recourse to creative desires. In her dichotomy of freedom and restriction, the “wide world” of Christianity contrasts with the limits of Judaism, and her conversion to Christianity is framed as the escape of the individual. Baptism becomes freedom. She explains the process of her second marriage: “I was baptized; I made myself like the people I lived among. I had a right to do it; I was not, like a brute, obliged to go with my own herd. I have not repented” (544). To stay Jewish and follow the traditions she has been born into is described as “brutish” and animal; in contrast, conversion signals freedom from “the herd.” Her desire for the stage requires a wider audience, to “[care] for the wide world and all that I could represent in it.”

Despite the widespread presence of Jewish singers in the novel, the Alcharisi is compelled to escape from the demands of her family to practice her music. For Deronda, the stage as a vocation threatens aspirations to gentility. To Deronda’s grandfather, the stage is a site of racial shame, one in which Jewish women are “thought of by the Christian world as a sort of ware to make public singers and actresses of.” (541). The younger Deronda’s

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105 It is interesting to note that in the Princess Leonora Halm-Eberstein’s stage name, “the Alcharisi,” Eliot chose an allusive homonym to Yehuda/ Judah Alharizi, or Alcharizi, the famous 12th century Rabbi and poet, and in the Princess’ escape from Judaism, she assumes the name of Rabbinical tradition. See Saleel Nurbhai, and K. M. Newton. George Eliot, Judaism, and the Novels: Jewish Myth and Mysticism. (New York: Palgrave, 2002) and George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda Notebooks (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996; Ed. Jane Irwin).
humiliation at the possibility of being made a singer by his own adoptive father, Sir Hugo, is echoed by his grandfather’s fury at the shame of Jewish women on stage. The younger Deronda rejects it as a proper vocation for a gentleman, and “set[s] himself bitterly against the notion of being dressed up to sing before all those fine people who would not care about him except as a wonderful toy.” (144). The role that Deronda’s grandfather had denied his mother, a conventional, if not traditional, Jewish women’s role, is one she would joyfully have accepted, “as if we were not the more enviable for that!” (541).

Eliot’s sympathetic approach to Judaism in *Daniel Deronda* complicates the resistance of female ambition. As with Zincali nationalism in *The Spanish Gypsy*, Eliot’s treatment of cultural inheritance accords a solemn reverence to Jewish history and custom that is missed in the portrait of Maggie’s Aunt Glegg and English domesticity. Indeed, Eliot feared the public’s “stronger resistance and even repulsion” to the Jewish element, “precisely because I felt that the usual attitude of Christians toward Jew is- I hardly know whether to say more impious or more stupid.” In her letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe, Eliot complains of this unpalatable intolerance:

“Can anything be more disgusting than to hear people called ‘educated’ making small jokes about eating ham, and showing themselves empty of any real knowledge as to the relation of their own social and religious life to the history of the people they think themselves witty in insulting?” (29 Oct, 1876).

On the publication of *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot received letters from the heads of

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Jewish communities expressing gratitude for her favorable depiction of Jewish
collective and its heroic vision of its national spirit. The Alcharisi’s rejection
of Judaism, however, presents the limitations that racial duty placed upon the
artist as a woman, avoiding stereotype by placing the anger at restrictive
tradition in the voice of the insider. The Alcharisi unsettles ambivalent
sympathies. For the Alcharisi, the origins did not reflect the self: “I was to feel
everything I did not feel, and believe everything I did not believe.” Her litany of
Jewish self-hatred echoes Eliot’s complaint to Stowe, “[I was] to dread lest a
bit of butter should touch a bit of meat [….] I was to love the long prayers in
the ugly synagogue, and the howling, and the gabbling, and the dreadful fasts,
and the tiresome feasts” (540). The Jewish life that she wishes to escape is
described in terms of the very stereotypes and stigma that it draws, “the
Jewish tatters and gibberish that make people nudge each other at the sight of
us.” For the Alcharisi’s brief moment in the narrative, the novel’s scholarly and
reverent tone does not ignore the difficulty of reconciling the individual’s and
the artist’s desire with the dictates of inherited culture. Although she provides
no model for survival as a Jewish woman artist, Eliot is aware of the
implication of assimilating into a mainstream Christian society, especially the
perfunctory recourse to conversion that her Jewish contemporaries would take
to guard against manifold restrictions and continue their separate traditions.

The reunion with mother is striking in its refusal of sentimentality.
Throughout her forceful defense of her choices, painful to both her son and to
the reader, the Alcharisi’s narrative suggests that her failure as an inadequate
and unloving mother is punished by the loss of her voice. Her confession
reveals that she is not less vocal or repentant because of her retreat from the

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107 Haight George Eliot, 486.
stage. While lacking in sympathy, the Alcharisi does not retract or “repent” the crimes of unnatural motherhood committed for the sake of ambition. She is a “remarkable-looking being,” “not quite a human mother, but a Melusina,” otherworldly and reptilian in her “unnatural” coldness, giving their meeting an air of staged formality. Queenliness is often the only possible response for Eliot’s failed heroines. Eliot’s ambitious women seldom take on the reproductive role while they pursue their elusive dreams, and in this the Princess stands apart; she is at once a mother, and she isn’t one. Dorothea, Romola, Maggie, Fedalma, and even Gwendolen, don’t have children. Others don’t have children themselves, but take on the mother’s role, at a social and sometimes national level. Dinah Morris’ evangelism is nurturing and supportive. Romola first presides over a group of Jewish outcasts, like a “Madonna” ascending to a spiritual level of queenship and motherhood, and later adopts her husband’s illegitimate family. Fedalma reluctantly becomes the mother of her fledgling gypsy nation, only after by being denied the conventional role of wife and reproductive mother to take on her public role. Unlike the sexuality and sensuality that undercuts the serious-mindedness of female ambition, queenliness is a possible avenue for Eliot’s heroines whose ambitions are hampered by her realism. And certainly, Daniel’s mother the Princess is, if not a queen in name, one in demeanor.

In assuming the distant, queenly role of Eliot’s ambitious, childless female heroines, the Alcharisi severs the ties to familial sentimentality that Deronda is looking for. The “unsentimental” reunion with the unloving mother prevents Deronda’s identity and vocation from being reduced to the duty of a

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grateful “natural” son. Deronda does not owe his Jewishness as a reciprocal filial duty, with discovered blood ties. Cut off from the immediate ties to his mother, the assumption of his Jewish birthright becomes a rational choice rather than a sentimental imperative. The narrative returns Deronda’s racial identity and his duty to the community of birth, but dissociates the nation from the “natural,” and escapes the conclusion of binding duty and vocation entirely to descent. The discovery of Deronda’s birthright vindicates the intellectual longing fostered by his acquaintance with Mordecai, and his matrilineal descent gives him a legitimate position within the Jewish community. Deronda’s desire and duty, however, through his mother’s denial, are relayed to a Judaism by choice.

Despite returning to the traditions of his inheritance, Deronda is thoroughly Christian in his upbringing, ignorant of his Jewish origins until maturity. Although he will acquire the intellectual traditions of Judaism, he cannot re-fashion himself into the same mold as his grandfather:

The Christian sympathies in which my mind was reared can never die out of me,” […] “But I consider it my duty—it is the impulse of my feeling—to identify myself, as far as possible, with my hereditary people, and if I can see any work to be done for them that I can give my soul and had to, I shall choose to do it. (566)

While the natural mother is separated from the national mother in Deronda’s search, the novel returns to the influence of domestic education. The matrilineal descent of Deronda’s Jewish birth becomes a stepping-stone for acknowledging his birthright, but his true “Jewish” loyalty does not descend from the mother but from Mordecai and his family. For Deronda, the national family is extended into a brotherhood. Deronda’s education in Judaism is
nurtured, not by mother, but by the fraternal sympathy nurtured by Mordecai. Instead of privileging the sentimental family ties of birth, Deronda’s Jewish identity finds its strength through the fostering of the English gentleman in the intellectual and arcane history of Judaism that gives it the serious weight of scholarly (and masculine) learning. He finds the connection of family, instead of returning to the birth family, in his lateral relations with Mordecai and Mirah. Indeed, it is not Deronda who reconciles the lost heir with the abandoned mother, but by the other abandoned child who reclaims her Jewish identity, Mirah Cohen. The question of conversion and female will is resumed with Mirah, as the narrative returns again to the choice of sympathy and family. The conflicting demands of racial loyalty and women’s freedom is cursorily “resolved” in the next generation of orphans and lost children, through Mirah’s resistance to conversion that relies on the nostalgic recreation of mother.

[3. Sentimental Education: Jewish Women’s Writing and Women’s Education in Grace Aguilar]

Considering the weight of matrilineal descent in determining Jewish identity, *Daniel Deronda* does not eliminate the mother’s role in nurturing sentimental loyalty. Deronda’s national son is not alone in inheriting the nation, but his national future is shared in the narrative of the “disinherited” daughter, Mirah Lapidoth. Through the process of re-creating, then distancing the sentimental ties of identity and origin, Deronda’s place in the narrative emphasizes intellectual choice; his search for vocation cannot be reduced to birth. The conflict of duty and desire that resulted in the uncompromising tragedy of *The Spanish Gypsy* is resolved in Eliot’s final novel. Unlike
Fedalma, Deronda is not faced with the choice between will and descent; that dilemma was abandoned a generation before by his mother. Indeed, the Alcharisi’s vehement refusal to re-enter the family begs the question: do the limitations of gender roles bar the disinherited daughter from entering the national future? Is Fedalma’s problem of will and duty only resolved by the national son and heir? The trope of adoption in Deronda’s narrative untangles the threads of descent and choice from solely being determined by traditions of birth. By emphasizing both the distance and sympathy of fostering, Deronda’s inheritance creates a modern cosmopolitan future, by embracing the traditions of Judaism as an Englishman who can claim to be Jewish.

It is not Deronda who inherits the spirituality of a mother’s Judaism, but Mirah. Against the leanings of modern liberalism, Mirah’s faith seems to be a throwback that privileges birth. Compared to the ambitious women of Daniel Deronda, Gwendolen Harleth or the distant Alcharisi, Mirah’s faith and will seem distinctly less complicated. In racial, familial, and religious loyalty, her choice is all bound in “one warp and woof.” Mirah’s narrative, however, does not collapse Deronda’s complicated negotiation of will and duty back to the determinism of race. Rather, it reflects and re-orders the representation of “the Jewish woman” to separate the will to inheritance in Daniel Deronda’s adopted Judaism in Mirah and Deronda.

Through the conventional models of resisting conversion and her own fiction of mother, Mirah’s return to Judaism emphasizes the necessity of domestic and maternal education in constructing and maintaining her racial and spiritual identity. For Mirah Lapidoth, unmoored from her culture of birth as a child, the memory of mother is what sustains her connection to her Jewish birth and faith. Her plot incorporates the theme of nationalism fostered by
mothers that Jewish writers such as Grace Aguilar employed in the mid-nineteenth century, against the assault of popular conversion tracts, where the Jewish woman is “rescued” by converting to Christianity. In Mirah’s narrative conversion to Christianity is not a rescue but a betrayal of family, religious faith, and more dangerously, chastity. Through a recreation of a mother’s spiritual education, Mirah resists conversion. Although she escapes from her unscrupulous father who exposes her into a dangerous sexual market of the stage, she retains her sympathetic longing for her racial identity by imagining its traditions through mother. Both Deronda and Mirah return to Judaism through imagined mothers, but for Mirah, the mother becomes central. Mirah’s narrative does not locate her birth and the Jewish tradition as the source of the heroine’s problem, as in The Spanish Gypsy’s Fedalma, but as the solution to inheriting her place in the national future, through the religious education passed on from mother to daughter. Diverting Jewish descent through mothers from Deronda’s narrative, Mirah’s Jewish loyalty brings the dialogue of dis inherited daughters back into the national narrative.

Michael Ragussis places the popular conversion tract in the 19th century alongside its historical relationship with the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst Jews.109 Liberal England’s self-image as a tolerant and inclusive modern nation was troubled by the place of Jewish conversion in the persistent anxiety over who belonged to the nation. Criticized for its mismanagement of funds and the personal scandals of its members, the London Society went against the cultural leanings toward “tolerance” where conversion appeared outdated. The reputation for liberalism in a modern English nation prevailed in the public consciousness, and the Anglo-Jewish

community strategically appealed to this self-image, in their protest against the London Society.

The conversion tract presented personal accounts and “memoirs” of conversions, romances, and Jewish histories, “rescuing” Jews from their misguided faith into Christianity. “The secret text” was a prominent theme in conversion tracts, one where the discovery of the Bible led to a private conversion to Christianity. Reading his secret Bible, the Jew is converted by the evident “truth” of Christ as the promised Messiah. The narrative reverses persecution by drawing sympathy to this “converted Jew” who in turn is punished by the Jewish community for his conversion to Christianity. Like the social effort to “convert” Gypsies into giving up their “gypsying,” the reversal of intolerance was not the only approach employed by the London Society. They produced popular Jewish “histories,” “explaining” and “defending” Jewish traditions, as part of an evangelical project of converting and assimilating this internal Other into the fold of the English nation, as fellow Christians as well as fellow citizens. Through the form of romance, the conversion novel drew upon the familiar figure of the “Jewish woman” who is rescued from her own people through romantic love and her conversion to Christianity. Publications such as *The Converted Jewess: A Memoir of Maria, Leila Ada, The Jewish Convert: An Authentic Memoir, Miriam; or the Power of Truth: A Jewish Tale*, easily transformed the “memoirs” of converted Jews into a romance, This popular narrative focused on young Jewish women converting to the draw of Christianity. This conversion not only allows her to enter the Christian family, but also rescues her from an oppressive Jewish tradition, in the figure

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of her father, portrayed as an anti-Semitic caricature. In his reading *Miriam*, Ragussis shows the conventional story of the widowed Jewish father and his only daughter, the young Jewish woman who, “in need of a special liberation” from the “degradation and contempt” of Judaism, is rescued through her study of the New Testament.\(^{111}\)

Evangelical groups such as the London Society claimed to speak on behalf of the Jews, by representing “tolerance” as assimilation. “Making Englishman out of Jews” involved drawing this internal “outsider” Jew into a benevolent, Christian English nation. Responding to these efforts at conversion, the Jewish community appealed to the self-image of England as the model of modern tolerance and refuge for Jews: “for here we are used well, and treated better than in any other country: here we enjoy ease and security.”\(^{112}\) They presented a counter-narrative to conversion by emphasizing separate coexistence as the modern direction for “tolerance,” untangling it from an evangelical construct. As an English woman writing from outside the Jewish community, yet speaking *for* the Jews, Eliot relies on a sympathetic representation of Jewish life, through the more secular and “tolerant” climate of the 1860s and 70s. In Mirah’s resistance to conversion, her memory of mother and early religious education, Eliot draws on the dialogue of resistance that arose from Anglo-Jewish women writing against the narratives of conversion.

The Victorian Jewess, whether in myth or modernization however, must invariably refer back to the popular and familiar figure of Sir Walter Scott’s Rebecca in *Ivanhoe* (1819), his popular historical novel about a disinherited

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\(^{111}\) Ragussis *Figures of Conversion* 38-42.

Saxon knight returning from the crusades and the beautiful and virtuous “Jewess” Rebecca as the oriental Other. Her heroic resistance to conversion runs parallel to her suffering at the hands of Templar Brian de Bois-Guilbert’s sexual advances; sexual persecution leads to religious persecution. In the end, Rebecca and her father leave England for Spanish Grenada, stepping aside to guarantee the Saxon union of Ivanhoe and Rowena. England’s nascent nationalism has no room for Jews. Her rival Rowena naively proclaims that, “she who nursed the sickbed of Ivanhoe […] can have nothing to fear in England, where Saxon and Norman will contend who shall most do her honor.” Rebecca’s wryly responds that though Rowena’s “speech” and “purpose” are fair, “it may not be—there is a gulf betwixt us. Our breeding, our faith, alike forbid either to pass over it.” (500).

Scott’s Rebecca is idealized, contrasting the image of exotic, but chaste Jewess with the more familiar Jewish stereotype in her grasping father. Isaac of York bears an anti-Semitic resemblance to The Merchant of Venice’s Shylock and Daniel Deronda’s Lapidoth pater, a familiar and “timeless” literary figure. As generous as her father is stereotypically stingy, the beautiful Jewish woman, well-educated, strong-willed, and resisting conversion, remains an alluring romantic possibility for Ivanhoe throughout the novel and beyond. It inspired a hilarious parody by William Makepeace Thackeray, Rebecca and Rowena, in his frustration with Ivanhoe’s choice of the uninspired Rowena over Rebecca. Reminiscing on the effect of Rebecca on his imagination, Thackeray writes that, “ever since I grew to love Rebecca, that sweetest
creature of the poet’s fancy, and longed to see her righted.”113 When her union with Ivanhoe is denied, Rebecca leaves England with her father, still an unmarried, un-violated paragon, un-English and un-Christian to the end. However, she is not expelled in the reader’s sympathy, even as Scott’s conservatism nods toward a modern English nationalism. The Jewess, in contrast to her father’s grasping Jew, is not presented as a threat, but as a virtue, even though the refusal of conversion coincides with their exile from England. The possibility of the unconverted Jewess in England remains a powerful and alluring figure, and Jewish writers employed Rebecca’s “gulf” in their narratives, not as an insurmountable cultural difference, but as a chaste and virtuous faith, recognizable both in Christianity and Judaism.

The most widely read of Jewish women writers in the mid-nineteenth century, Grace Aguilar addressed Jewish and Christian readers alike in order to “explain the Jewish faith,” emphasizing the similarities between Jewish and Christian domestic ideologies. Writing from within the Anglo-Jewish community in the mid 1830s to her death in 1847, Aguilar’s poetry, romances, historical novels, and theological treatises on Judaism, attempted to provide a “diplomatic” bridge between Jewish and Christian understanding. While resisting conversion and assimilation, Aguilar stressed the need for reform and modernization within Jewish tradition, focusing on the responsibility of “the mothers and daughters of Israel” to whom she “especially entrusted the regeneration of Israel.”114 The majority of her novels, published posthumously,  

113 Thackeray’s Rebecca and Rowena parodies Ivanhoe’s choice and his “English” marriage ten years after, and “rights” Rebecca by converting her in the end, a sudden and secret conversion fueled by her love for Ivanhoe and Thackeray’s sense of the ridiculous: “‘Yes, always, My prayers are his, my faith is his. Yes, my faith is your faith, Wilfrid, Wilfrid! I have no kindred more—I am a Christian!’ in Rebecca and Rowena (London: Hesperus, 2002; 1850, Ed. Matthew Sweet) 84.

114 Grace Aguilar, “Preface” to Spirit of Judaism (Ed. Isaac Leeser) 10,
offered models of domestic influence and a mother’s role in religious and moral education. *Home Influence* (1847), *A Mother's Recompense* (1851), and *Woman's Friendship* (1850), however, are set in Christian households, not Jewish. Her most popular novel was her Scottish historical romance, *Days of Bruce* (1852). Exploring the common space of domesticity as a space for middle-class moral education made her writing commercially viable. She advanced her cause to “explain” the Jewish faith to Christians, while at the same time carefully presenting it as palatably “domestic” and not overtly religious. In the preface to *Home Influence*, Aguilar reiterates that she will avoid “all doctrinal points.” She is writing as a “the author of Jewish works and as an explainer of the Hebrew Faith,” and claims to “illustrate the spirit of true piety” and “Christian virtues.”115 Although she identifies herself as a Jewish writer, in the preface Aguilar addresses the potential fears of Christian mothers by eliding differences in theology. Instead she points to shared, domestic sentiments, “to incite a train of serious and loving thoughts towards God and man, especially towards those with whom He has linked us in the precious ties of parent and child” (viii). The family structure as shared experience is echoed in her theological writing, not only to explain Judaism to Christians, but also to argue for reform within the Jewish community, to revise religious services, to translate and distribute religious texts, and to teach Hebrew to Jewish women.

In *The Spirit of Judaism*, she writes as a Jewish woman not only to a general Christian readership, but to a Jewish one as well. Aguilar’s establishes the common ground of maternal sentiment to serve as the basis for religious education. She explains that although mothers are “deemed too heart-springing, too feminine, too clinging to find its reply amid the sons of her

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115 Appended to the “Preface” of *Home Influence* in January of 1847.
people," early religious education is most effective in its use of sentiment.\textsuperscript{116} Here, she does not dismiss the power of domestic affections. Instead she stresses the need for a woman to be educated in order to perform her duties as a mother. Aguilar’s domestic strategies are “principally addressed” to Jewish mothers and to Jewish daughters “fitting them in turn to lead their offspring in the same blessed path, render them worthy helpmates of regenerated Israel” (11). The mother’s private education is vital to resisting conversion. In the main text, she argues that in private religious education “far more depends on Hebrew parents than on Christian.” Given the lack of public worship and public validation of his faith, the cultural alienation between a Christian public life and a Jewish private life, the Jewish son is easily tempted by conversion. He is “debarred from the public exercise of devotion,” and “never hearing public prayers in a language he can understand” (119), he will suffer a lapse in faith. Mother’s example, however, teaches “the religion of the heart. He is more likely to “prostrate himself before the God that his mother worshipped, and pray again even as in childhood” (127).

Aguilar’s domestic education becomes a model for resisting conversion. The national son is anchored to his faith by the fond memories of mother’s “first lessons of virtue” against which “few hearts could remain cold and unmoved.” Religious instruction from the domestic hearth is crucial to “far more than the Nazarene, the sons of Israel.” This sentimental education becomes a religious, textual, and historical education that is requisite for the training of Jewish daughters. Aguilar argues that educating mothers and daughters in Hebrew and religious history allows them to responsibly instruct Jewish sons. Careful domestic instruction safeguards the son as “we instill

\textsuperscript{116} Aguilar, Spirit of Judaism 8.
their religion with their growth." Later in life, this early training protects him from the dangers of conversion later in life, and “the very weapons which the Nazarene would use against them, have become in their hands weapons of defense.” (131). In Aguilar’s writing, Jewish tradition is matrilineal, not only in tracing the descent of birth, but also in the transmission of culture. National mothers not only hold national sons by the bonds of sentiment, “young man thinking back on mother,” but also by educating him in the traditions, language, and religion of his race. Aguilar’s vision of religious reform transforms the unschooled, uneducated Jewish woman of the conversion narratives into the learned Jewish mother. Later for Eliot’s Mirah Lapidoth, this model of the Jewish mother serves as the guide to religious and racial faith for the lost daughter.

Grace Aguilar’s historical romance, *The Vale of Cedars*, centers on the trials of a Jewish woman threatened with conversion. Unlike Scott’s Rebecca, however, Aguilar’s version does not benefit from the contrast of the Jewish father as anti-Semitic caricature; the daughter’s faith is in accordance with her father’s. The daughter’s pledges her duty first to her father, then her nation. Set in the late 15th century Spain, under the threat of the Spanish Inquisition, Aguilar’s Jewish heroine Marie is torn between a Christian lover and religious (and racial) loyalty. *The Vale of Cedars* depends on scenes of virtuous womanhood, combining sexual chastity with religious faith against the threats of torture, rape, and even conversion. Like *The Spanish Gypsy*, the only daughter struggles with her father’s mandate to give up her Christian lover and return to her race. However, unlike *The Spanish Gypsy* where Fedalma’s divided allegiances escalate into a clash of wills, in *The Vale of Cedars*, the daughter’s loyalty to her racial inheritance develops as an extension of her
father's faith not in conflict with it.

Published posthumously in 1852, the heroine of The Vale of Cedars undergoes a similar crisis of choice (but not faith) as Eliot’s Fedalma in The Spanish Gypsy. Aguilar’s narrative, however, is focused, less on the dilemma of desire and duty, as on the heroine’s resistance to conversion. Living with her father in a secret “vale” of cedars, Marie, the “secret Jewess,” is betrothed to her cousin Ferdinand, but falls in love with the English knight Stanley, who has escaped civil war in England. When Stanley is accused of murdering Ferdinand, Marie is called forward to testify against him, but in doing so reveals her Jewish birth, thus rescuing Stanley by sacrificing her secret. Stanley’s trial changes its focus to persecuting the Jewess, and Marie is tortured under the Inquisition and is threatened with rape from the man who is revealed to be the actual murderer. Ultimately, the efforts at conversion turn from physical torture to “gentle” persuasion from Queen Isabella herself, but worn out from her ordeal, Marie dies, still holding fast to her religion. In Aguilar’s epilogue, Stanley leaves Spain for England, where he resolves to live in tolerant coexistence with the English Jews to honor her memory. Although Stanley’s future with Marie is denied, Marie’s faith and resistance finds a place for Jewish history in England beyond her death. Michael Galchinsky argues that in Grace Aguilar’s historical novel, the Jewish woman’s martyrdom is not concluded as “timeless” and relegated in the remote past, but continues as a history of resistance and survival, connecting the past and future of Jewish history for the contemporary reader in England. In Scott and in Aguilar, the Jewish daughter is the resisting daughter.

Mirah evokes the familiar literary image of Rebecca, and in the role of Scott’s famous Jewess, notably unconverted, romantic, and exotic, she is welcomed as a figure outside the ordinary, as English as Scott’s *Ivanhoe*. Mirah’s Christian rescuers dissociate her from the prevailing anti-Semitism, just as Scott separates the virtuous Rebecca from her father Isaac of York. Mirah is literally distanced from the grasping Jewish stereotype when she flees from her mercantile and “panderous” Jewish father. The narrative of *Daniel Deronda* does not ignore the various “figures” of anti-Semitism; both Mirah and Deronda recognize these caricatures and the aversion conveyed by them. Deronda himself is self-consciously aware of his own prejudice. He searches for Mirah’s lost kindred, reluctant that he might find her family to embody a distasteful stereotype. As the narrator notes wryly, “I confess, he particularly desired that Ezra Cohen should not keep a shop” (322). Mirah’s fears are more direct. She is familiar with being recognized and hated. Upon her rescue from the river by Deronda, she asks if he despises her for being Jewish, deflecting his possible disgust by directly identifying it herself. To Deronda’s response, “I am not so foolish,” Mirah and Deronda echo each other’s sweeping verdicts. Mirah apologizes for her race: “I know many Jews are bad,” and Deronda responds in kind: “So are many Christians” (164). She has two strikes against her when introduced to his friends the Meyricks, “I am a stranger. I am a Jewess.” Mirah already anticipates a prevailing anti-Semitic response: “You might have thought I was wicked” (170).

Instead of the common stereotype of the “Jew,” the Meyricks see Mirah as embodying the figure of “the exotic Jewess,” timeless, mythical, and set
aside from a historical connection with her race. In the Meyrick’s drawing-room, Mirah becomes a model for the Rebecca of their imaginations. Indeed Deronda hopes that this familiar literary figure will provide Mirah with an invitation to the Meyrick’s hearth, predicting that the mother and daughters will, “at once associate a lovely Jewess with Rebecca in ‘Ivanhoe’” (165). In their broad spectrum of orientalization, the Meyricks transform Mirah from the “beautiful Jewess” into “Queen Budoor” of The Arabian Nights. Like the Jewish Rebecca’s yellow turban, Mirah’s otherness is made exotic and alluring, if not ethnically exact. Mirah’s steadfast hold on her Jewish faith, however, is “less reconcilable with their fantasies than in that of Scott’s Rebecca” (305). Rebecca’s resistance to Christian conversion is read as nostalgic romance; Mirah’s Judaism brings her unpalatably close to the “common” stereotype of contemporary anti-Semitism.

At the same time, the narrator emphasizes her child-like body and mannerisms, divesting the oriental woman’s sexual threat, and presenting her solely as a victim of sexual predation. From Deronda’s first meeting, he sees her as “a girl hardly more than eighteen, of low slim figure, with the most delicate little face, her dark curls pushed behind her ears” (227). Mirah alternates between an “oriental” beauty and a child scrubbed clean of sexual desire. Alicia Carroll provides a useful reading of Mirah’s plot with “The History Prince Camaralzamann and Queen Budoor” from The Arabian Nights, a story of sexual passion between two secret lovers similar in appearance, “like brother and sister.”\(^\text{118}\) Carroll frames orientalized sexuality in the parallel characterization of Camaralzamann with Deronda and Budoor with Mirah. The beautiful Prince Camaralzaman believes women will corrupt his pursuit of

\(^{118}\) Carroll, Dark Smiles.
higher learning, and Budoor refuses a man’s dominion over her “queenly” sovereignty, “for I am a princess, and a queen, ruling over men, and I desire not a man to rule over me.” The story introduces a necessary sexual undertone missing from Deronda and Mirah’s union. Carroll suggests that the story serves as textual doublespeak for the negotiation of “sexuality and vocation which has long been thought absent,” by inserting an erotic footnote into the child’s plot of duty. The hidden eroticism of the Arabian tale parallels Mirah’s nurture under the Meyrick’s care, where the element of sexual desire seems to be erased in favor of chaste spirituality.

Neither Mirah nor the Meyricks ignore the cultural resonance of the “beautiful Jewess” as a sexual object, but what Hans Meyrick reads as romantic fiction, Mirah incorporates as a representation of Jewish suffering. As a stage actress unable to throw herself into a part, sitting as “Berenice” she nevertheless “performs” from the heart a role she imagines to be her cultural inheritance. For Hans Meyrick’s painting “Berenice,” Mirah sits as a model for Titus’s Jewish mistress, who was expelled from Rome after his ascension to emperor. Mirah’s experience as a Jewish stage performer makes her no stranger to such roles, which she had detested as careless attention that commodified and sexualized her for public consumption. As Deronda indignantly notes, “the name “Jewess” was taken as a sort of stamp like the lettering of Chinese silk ” (477). Sensitive to such stereotype, Deronda objects to this overly sexualized role, as a “model for a heroine of this sort.” Unrepentant, Hans Meyrick blithely informs him that he has recreated the nostalgic setting, adding the element of racial suffering to Berenice’s private pathos:

Mirah takes it as a tragic parable, and cries to think what the penitent
Berenice suffered as she wandered back to Jerusalem and sat desolate amidst desolation. That was her own phrase. I couldn’t find in my heart to tell her I invented that part of the story. (393)

Almost a hundred years later, Jean Paul Sartre echoes Deronda’s ire over the objectification of Mirah as a sexual commodity. In *Anti-Semite and Jew*, he sums up the treatment of Jewish women in the novel:

> There is in the words ‘a beautiful Jewess’ a very special signification… [The Jewish Woman] has a well-defined function in even the most serious of novels. Frequently violated, those who keep their virtue are docile servants or humiliated women in love with indifferent Christians who marry Aryan women” (48).

Certainly, Sartre has Rebecca in mind, as well. While both Hans Meyrick and Deronda contend over the sexual interpretation of “the Jewess” in the painting, Mirah herself reads the story as an extension of racial history, one that cannot and should not be erased. She interprets the threat of violation and expulsion faced by “the beautiful Jewess” as a fable for a Jewish history of suffering.

Likewise, Mirah’s own hardship becomes part of a shared history, from which she affirms her Jewish identity. Mirah locates a mirror image of her own flight and exile in the expulsion and wandering of her race. Her portrayal of the penitent Berenice is cleansed of indecorous sexual experience through the extension of suffering invented by Meyrick, and becomes a representation of shared racial history.

In identifying with Berenice, Mirah employs the figure of the Jewess, who is alluring exactly because of the tragic history contained within the

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penitent and beautiful woman. However, Mirah invites this sexually focused attention to divert its gaze to racial history. What is read as “timeless” and tragic, Mirah identifies in her own experience, and in the ongoing history of the Jews. The Jewess sitting on the ruins of Jerusalem emphasizes the racial rather than the sexual aspects of the Other. Mirah’s performance goes no farther than seeing racial history as a deeply personal one. The prevalent cultural image of “the Jewess” is taken as a transparent identity that originates from within the herself: “But it is what I am really. I am not pretending anything. I shall never be anything else.”

Later, interested in Mirah as a wife rather than a model, Hans Meyrick increasingly rejects any staging of Mirah in “Jewish roles.” Much as Deronda had disapproved of the sexuality contained in the Berenice tableau, Meyrick objects to the overt racial aspect: “It looks a little too theatrical. We must not make you a role of the poor Jewess—or of being a Jewess at all.” The narrator notes that “Hans had a secret desire to neutralize the Jewess in private life, which he was in danger of not keeping a secret.” Mirah calmly responds that, “I always feel myself a Jewess” (418). To her, it is not a role but an identity that she cannot choose or discard at will. In Mirah’s self-performance, even the overly sexualized Jewess becomes part of an ethnic identity she must embrace and ultimately transform. She associates every slur upon herself as part of a common history:

It darted into my mind that the unhappiness in my life came from my being a Jewess, and that always, to the end the world would think slightly of me and that I must bear it, for I should be judged by that name, and it comforted me to believe that my suffering was part of the affliction of my people, my part in the long song of mourning that has
been going on through ages and ages. (483)

Although Mirah attempts to reconcile representation with identity, her self with the history of her race, the threat she is escaping originates from within the family. In contrast to the respectful and intellectualized treatment of Judaism in Mordecai, Mirah, and Deronda, Eliot’s portrait of Mirah’s father, Lapidoth Cohen does not escape caricature. Mirah and Mordecai’s father bears a close resemblance to Isaac of York and Shylock, the wily, covetous, “theatrical” Jew, whom the virtuous daughter must disavow in order to remain within the circle of gentility. Urging a reluctant Mirah into the life of the stage, Lapidoth Cohen is later complicit in encouraging sexual predation. He urges Mirah to accept a rich gentile lover, attempting to sell his daughter to pay his debts. Before her flight, Mirah overhears men around the theatre discuss her father’s plans: “there’s no race like them for cunning in the men and beauty in the women. I wonder what market he means that daughter for.”(183). She already recognizes that “a nobleman and one who was not a Jew could have no love for me that was not half contempt” (186). Lapidoth Cohen descends to an unscrupulous anti-Semitic stereotype, reproduced in the ominous figures of Dicken’s Fagin or George Du Maurier’s Svengalli. Mirah is driven to escape from her father to protect her virtue, but this filial denial does not lead to a refutation of Judaism. Instead, even as the Lapidoth children reluctantly provide for their father, Mirah denies her father in order to seek spiritual guidance from her mother. It is the father’s stereotype of the grasping Jew that is disowned from the family and its cultural inheritance.
From his early boyhood Deronda developed his sympathy by imagining the plight of his absent mother. Later, when he rescues a drowning Mirah from the river, he wonders if, “perhaps my mother was like this one” (175), a fallen woman ready to end her life. Both are Jewish singers, neither the Princess nor Mirah turn out to be “fallen,” and both have escaped the rule of their fathers. The resemblance of Mirah to the Alcharisi is as striking as the difference. Deronda’s mother confirms his Jewish birth even as she rejects it as the source of identity, either for herself or for him. In the opposing story, Mirah’s remembered mother confirms her in her Jewishness despite the father who wants to deny it. For Deronda, Mirah’s inheritance provides the ties between mother and nation that his own mother has denied him.

But Mirah, with her terrified flight from one parent, and her yearning after the other, had flashed on him the hitherto neglected reality that Judaism was something still throbbing in human lives, still making for them the only conceivable vesture of the world…. “ (306) Just as Deronda sees his mother in Mirah, Mirah’s unwavering image of her own mother becomes the basis of her own imagined identity, extended into a possible model of action, for both herself and Deronda. What Mirah and Deronda locate in mother is the national mother that we have seen in Aguilar’s writing on Jewish mothers and domestic education. Within the discourse of the family in the Meyrick’s drawing room, the “threat” of conversion is introduced as acceptance into a “larger” family, where Jewishness is assimilated and erased.
In *Daniel Deronda*, conversion is mildly ridiculed in passing, never becoming the violent threat as in *The Vale of Cedars*, but in their friendly drawing room, the Meyricks draw upon the similarities between adoption and conversion. When she hears of Mirah, the diffident Lady Mallinger brings up the “Society for the Conversion of the Jews,” suggesting shyly that perhaps “Mirah would embrace Christianity, but perceiving that Sir Hugo looked at her with amusement, she concluded that she had said something foolish” (192).

The Meyricks’ attempt at conversion is likewise gentle, almost diffident: “They kept silence out of delicacy to Mirah, with whom her religion was too tender a subject to be touched lightly.” The sisters “cautiously [propose] the smallest item of difference” in the different observation of rituals that signal inequality for women, echoing the practices of the Alcharisi’s complaint and also of Aguilar’s call for religious reform.

For the modern Rebecca, the greatest threat of conversion from “these generous little people” comes from the appeal of family affection. Amy Meyrick contrasts a “tolerant,” modern Christianity with the singularity of Judaism: “It is so strange to be of the Jews’ religion now.” She hopes that Mirah’s Judaism “would gradually melt away from her and she would pass into Christianity like the rest of the world,” gradually easing into conversion through the love of her adopted family. She suggests that if Mirah “got to love us very much, and never found her mother,” the Meyricks could substitute for Mirah’s lost family and her faith. It is the allure of the family that anchors faith, for Mirah and for the Meyricks. Kate Meyrick suggests that “I cannot help wishing that her mother may never be found. There might be something unpleasant.” (305-6). Like Deronda, the Meyricks fear that Mirah, “a beautiful Jewess, who has not a fault,” will have “vulgar Jews” as relations, and wish to bring her into the fold.
“Amalgamation,” as Hans Meyrick terms intermarriage, is the future for a fragmented, modern, liberal England. Mrs. Meyrick’s contends that this domestic conversion in no way betrays filial sentiment: “one may honour one’s parents, without following their notions exactly, any more than the exact cut of their clothing.” She cheerfully elides and erases both religion and race in her “tolerant” view of conversion: “if Jews and Jewesses went on changing their religion, and making no difference between themselves and Christians, there would come a time when there would be no Jews to be seen.”

Escaping her father and resisting a Christian family’s desire to convert and adopt her, Mirah’s resistance and loyalty are based on the memory of her mother and her “mother’s people”: “But I will always cling to my people. I will always worship with them.” (317). Stolen away from her mother at an early age by her father, Mirah has been raised away from her community, as Deronda has been. Unlike Deronda, however, she has been aware of her identity and her memories of early religious education are bound up in her longing. She must discover her own identity as an outsider would, “piecing together what I read in plays and other books about Jews and Jewesses.” She attends the synagogue alone because she remembers “sitting on her [mother’s] knee and looking through the railing and hearing the chanting and singing.”

I remember my mother’s face better than anything; yet I was not seven when I was taken away, and I am nineteen now…. I think my life began with waking up and loving my mother’s face: it was so near to me, and her arms were round me, and she sang to me. One hymn she sang so often, so often: and then she taught me to sing it with her: it was the first I ever sang. They were always Hebrew hymns she sang; and
because I never knew the meaning of the words they seemed full of nothing but our love and happiness. (179)

Later, when Mirah is asked to sing this “little hymn,” a song she claims is “too childish,” “like lisping,” she declares that even if she were to learn the Hebrew words later, she should “still go on in my own way with them.” (306). The lisping is “full of meaning,” as Deronda and Mrs Meyrick agree, keeping Mirah unthreatening, as she continues to perform as a child and remember as a child. Her voice is pronounced by Herr Klesmer to be fit only for the drawing room, lacking the range needed for the stage. Mirah retreats farther into the domestic hearth, but is not absorbed into the Meyrick’s comforting Christian family. Rather, the domestic imagination, extending from mother, to race, to nation, is what sustains her Judaism and her identity without disappointment.

On the national stage, however, Mirah’s vocation as identity complements Deronda’s highly intellectual sympathy with a moral imperative. Her sentimental and religious education follow Grace Aguilar’s matrilineal Judaism. Deronda found his sympathy “too reflexive and diffusive”; understanding both sides too well, Deronda was paralyzed from acting for either. Like Clough’s tourist, he hesitates from acting without belonging to the nation. Mirah’s sympathies toward her own people provide the “special demands” of affiliation that Deronda desires, making him kindred to “an organic part of social life.” Unlike Deronda’s mother, Mirah’s (and Mordecai’s) mother remains a paragon in her death, unchallenged and venerated as the source of religious and racial loyalty. Through his kinship with Mordecai and Mirah, Deronda is included in her inheritance. As Mordecai proclaims: “She was a mother of whom it might have come…to be said, ‘Her children arise up and call her blessed.’ In her I understood the meaning of that Master who,
perceiving the footsteps of his mother, rose up and said, ‘The majesty of the Eternal cometh near!’" (462).

[6. The Place of “the Jew” in Zion: The Portrait of a Future Nation]

In Eliot’s vision of proto-Zionism, “Jewish life” does not take part in the new Jewish future in Israel. Mordecai, Mirah, and Deronda, too noble for England and England’s Jews, leave for “the East.” Relocating marginal voices to the center, Daniel Deronda relies on recreating the national family to speak to the broader questions of inheritance and community, privileging idealization and myth-making over everyday Jewish life. In doing so, the “figure of the Jew” is re-interpreted into their own national imaginary. For Eliot’s new Rebecca, Mirah Lapidoth inherits and re-affirms her Judaism, but her conclusion is not reduced to an “expulsion.” In Scott’s ending, Rebecca relinquishes her jewels and Ivanhoe at Rowena’s feet and departs from England with her father. Re-inscribed into the myth of the scorned Jewess, Mirah vindicates Rebecca when she leaves behind England and Gwendolen’s poisoned diamonds, to assume her role as mother of the modern Jewish nation.

In the Jewish plot of Daniel Deronda, Eliot continues to explore the fraught relationship of identity, racial inheritance, and the sympathy of kinship that she brought to a tragic close in The Spanish Gypsy. As in that poem, the arguments and counter-arguments regarding racial destiny and nation threaten to overwhelm the narrative’s realism. Occupied for the most with abstract arguments on Jewish descent and nation, its portrait of Jewish life shift between the extreme ends of idealism and stereotype. Although Eliot deeply admired Judaism and Jewish history, the novel does not completely
extricate itself from the discourse of Jewish stereotype in its treatment of the Cohens or Lapidoth *pater*. They remain figures far removed from the mythic elevation that Mirah and Mordecai are granted in their aspirations toward a Jewish nation. The noble idealism of brother and sister is differentiated from their “vulgar” relations through a distinction in class that is read as differences in nation:

The figure of Mirah, with her beauty set off by the quiet, careful dress of an English lady, made a strange pendant to this shabby, foreign-looking, eager, gesticulating man, who withal had and ineffaceable jauntiness of air, perhaps due to the bushy curls of his grizzled hair.

(632).

Mirah, who has guarded her Jewish faith, is transformed into an English lady, clothed in the respectability of the genteel middle class. In contrast, her father, who disavowed his Judaism, remains the stereotypical Jew, barely tolerated by his high-minded son. Mordecai’s cousins, the Cohens, are not as “foreign” as the father; however, the portrait of the unreflective Ezra Cohen firmly grounds him as a Jewish “type” excluded from the spiritual zeal of Zion. The other Ezra Cohen, who shares this name with Mordecai, holds his citizenship in the “other” nation of London’s shops, which Deronda regards with mild contempt:

Deronda, not in a cheerful mood, was rashly pronouncing this Ezra Cohen to be the most unpoetic Jew he had ever met with in books or life: his phraseology was as little as possible like that of the Old Testament; and no shadow of a Suffering Race distinguished his vulgarity of soul from that of a prosperous pink-and-white huckster of the purest English lineage. (331)
Ezra Cohen neither reflects the idealized, intellectualism Deronda admires, nor the romance of the “suffering race” that Mirah embodies. While the narrator points out that in his “soul” Ezra Cohen is no different from any English shopkeeper, his very similarity with the class reproduces him as a “type,” excluded from familiar England.

Writing ten years after *Daniel Deronda*, Jewish writer Amy Levy points out Eliot’s lack of “tenderness” in her brief scenes of Jewish life. Levy asks for a “serious treatment” of the complex problem of Jewish life and Jewish character:

The Jew, as we know him to-day, with his curious mingling of diametrically opposed qualities; his surprising virtues and no less surprising vices; leading his eager, intricate life; living, moving, and having his being both within and without the tribal limits; this deeply interesting product of our civilization has been found worthy of none but the most superficial observation.120

Levy acknowledges that Eliot makes a “sincere and respectful attempt” at representing modern Judaism. In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot’s idealized characters are “more noble than the king,” exacting a sigh and weary gratitude from Jewish readers who are “spurred by its influence to nobler effort.” In contrast, the narrative lacks the sympathetic realism that marked Eliot’s English novels, leaving only dissatisfaction at the “superficial smartness” in the sketch of the Cohens. In a later *Chronicle* article titled "Jewish Children," Levy objects to the “absence of tenderness” in Eliot’s humorous portrait of little Jacob Alexander Cohen, whose voice is “hoarse in its glibness, as if it had belonged to an aged

Thirty years before *Daniel Deronda*, George Eliot disagreed with Benjamin Disraeli’s Sidonia novels, *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, and *Tancred*, and their insistence on a distinct Jewishness tradition that kept itself separate from England. Eliot’s liberalism was skeptical of a fellowship of racial “idiosyncracies.” By *Daniel Deronda*, her position on cultural and racial inheritance had come full circle. The earlier liberalism that had called for a broader, inclusive cosmopolitanism, turned to the inescapable ties of family, race, and the duty of belonging to a community. *Daniel Deronda* continues the complications of dual loyalties that Eliot began in her historical novel *Romola* and debated in verse in *The Spanish Gypsy*: the place of cultural inheritance in the modern subject whose newly discovered race informs his national future. Deronda’s inheritance of identity and vocation is ultimately resolved, however, although both the Jewish and the Gypsy narrative, end with the subject leaving his land of nurture to found another nation. The “solution” of *Daniel Deronda* lies not in reducing the narrative to the causal relationship of identity and vocation, but in expanding upon the cultural fables and their historical contexts within the narrative, in the representations of family, kinship and inheritance. Eliot’s “national questions” are at one level resolved in Deronda’s adopted English Jew, through the various narratives of the family romance, that are reclaimed by the child and resisted by the mother. The plot of family and national family, of kinship and adoption in the national analogy, resonate with the arguments for conversion and assimilation of the Jews into the English nation, as well as deconstruct this structure in the double

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121 Levy, “Jewish Children.” *Jewish Chronicle*, Nov. 5 1886.
argument of “tolerance.” And alongside the fables of the family, the historical place of Jewish conversion and the arguments of Jewish women writers provide a solution, not only for the narrative’s national heir, but for its national daughter as well. Fedalma’s dilemma in *The Spanish Gypsy* finds divided solutions in *Daniel Deronda*, where national inheritance is explored not only through the father’s legacy, but the memory of the mother’s nurture, and inherited by both the lost son in search of vocation and the “disinherited” daughter who ultimately inherits the nation.
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