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The Romani and the Highland Clearances in Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering*

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ABSTRACT

In *Guy Mannering* (1815), Walter Scott provides a largely sympathetic portrayal of the Romani, or Gypsies, in Scotland, and the Gypsy heroine Meg Merrilies is the crucial lynchpin of the narrative that provides the impetus for the story's resolution. This focus on the Romani and their positive representation in the novel reveals an inclusive sensibility that emphasises the role of minority and underrepresented groups in national narratives and historical memory. In support of this effort, Scott's Gypsies are endowed with relatable and sympathetic qualities that stress their humanity, and one of the ways that this is accomplished is by associating the Gypsies with the Scots, and, in particular, with the Highlanders, a population that has been persecuted and oppressed in their own right.

The similarities between the Highlanders and Scott's Romani in *Guy Mannering* first become apparent in the violent eviction of the Gypsy community at Derncleugh, which points to the contemporary tragedy of the Highland Clearances. By reviewing first-hand accounts of the Clearances, Scott's personal writings, and passages from the novel, it becomes apparent that this comparison is most likely a purposeful one, which serves two simultaneous purposes: it draws attention to and provides a critique of contemporary events in Scotland, and it elicits sympathy through shared experience for the fictional Gypsies in the novel and their real-life counterparts, which helps to link them to Scotland and the imagined community of the nation.

KEYWORDS: Walter Scott, Scotland, Clearances, Highlanders, Romani, Gypsies

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The novels of Walter Scott display a frequent interest in presenting underrepresented groups and minorities in a sympathetic and dynamic way. From the heroic Jewess Rebecca in *Ivanhoe*, to the little person Elshie in *The Black Dwarf* and the Moorish Fenella in *Peveril of the Peak*, the minority characters in the Waverley Novels occupy significant roles while often experiencing trials that mirror the obstacles and discrimination faced by their real-life counterparts. Two of Scott's novels, *Quentin Durward* (1823) and *Guy Mannering* (1815), have Romani characters, also popularly known as Gypsies or Roma, who play integral parts in the narratives they inhabit. In *Guy Mannering* the hardships suffered by the Roma are detailed in several passages, and the Gypsy character Meg Merrilies is, according to the July 1815 issue of the *Augustan Review*, "the great agent" in the narrative, whose knowledge holds the key to the story's resolution (qtd. in Garside, "Picturesque" 145). Meg continually assists and saves the main protagonist, Harry Bertram, from disaster, and her actions make certain the narrative's resolution: she arms the heroes in their fateful battle with the novel's villains, and her dying revelations ensure the arrest of the antagonist Gilbert Glossin and secure the rightful inheritance of Bertram. Scott presents his Romani characters as positive forces who help to safeguard the future of Scottish protagonists, thus revealing a transnational sensibility that emphasises the role of minority and underrepresented groups in national narratives and historical memory. In support of this effort, Scott's Gypsies are endowed with relatable and sympathetic qualities that emphasise their humanity, and one of the ways that this is accomplished is by associating the Gypsies with the Scots, and, in particular, with the Highlanders, who were persecuted and oppressed in their own right. This association with the Highlanders is achieved primarily by Scott's usage of the Highland Clearances as an inspiration for the novel's removal of the Gypsy community at Derncleugh, an event which establishes sympathy for both the Gypsies and the real-life Highlanders who were dispossessed from their ancestral homes.

The minority characters in the works of Scott, while marginalised in traditional historical accounts, are indispensable to the narratives they inhabit and help to drive the central action. Kathryn Sutherland describes these characters, comprising "social outcasts, gypsies . . . [and] madwomen," as an essential part of the "unreadable core" of the Waverley Novels, asserting a postcolonial understanding through the texts of what Chad T. May terms "untold histories" of marginalised groups in society (98, 101). By using Romani

characters in his novels, Scott is able to provide an "untold history" of the Roma, and their importance in the narrative helps to provide them with a place in the history on which the work is inspired.

Scott's inclusion of Gypsy characters and their pivotal roles is quite remarkable, especially considering the plight of the Roma in British society during Scott's lifetime and afterwards. Deborah Epstein Nord uses Edward Said's critical perspective as a base to provide a summary of how the Romani were perceived and treated in nineteenth-century Britain:

> Like the "Oriental" or the colonized, racially marked subject, the Gypsy was associated with a rhetoric of primitive desires, lawlessness, mystery, cunning, sexual excess, godlessness, and savagery . . . . Gypsies were the victims of oppression, harassment, and discrimination and of persistent efforts to outlaw and destroy their way of life. They operated as a field for the projection of what was both feared and desired in that part of the British cultural self that was denied, reviled, or prohibited. Gypsies functioned in British cultural symbolism as a perennial other, a recurrent and apparently necessary marker of difference that, like the biblical Hagar and Ishmael, represented an alternative and rejected lineage. (3)

Nord highlights how the Roma were associated with degeneracy and primitiveness, and how they suffered intense persecution while their presence simultaneously confirmed the perceived superiority of British culture. Unfortunately, these stereotypes appear to have changed little since the nineteenth-century, as Imogen Tyler asserts that "embers of [Gypsy and Traveller] communities are widely perceived as workless, parasitical welfare dependents, a drain on local and state resources who cheat the system" (133). Tyler goes on to site the Commission for Racial Equality (which was superseded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2007) in stating that it "is well documented that Gypsies and Travellers are today the most ostracized, hated and feared ethnic minority populations in Britain and are subject to daily racism, including violent attacks and death threats" (134). The continued persecution of the Roma reinforces the need for positive depictions

in order to foster tolerance, a need that Scott's novels attempted to fill two centuries earlier.

Guy Mannering takes place in a Scotland only a few decades removed from the year in which the novel was published, so the harsh treatment of the Gypsies in the novel can be understood to be a representation of recent history. In fact, since the Gypsies first appearance in Britain, they had experienced state-sanctioned persecution, as noted by Abby Bardi:

> From their arrival in the early sixteenth century, the presence of the Romani people in the British isles was marked by oppressive legislation that arose in an attempt to regulate and contain their community . . . . [E]arly laws, the first of which was enacted in 1530 . . . threatened "Egyptians" with punishments including imprisonment, pillorying, enslavement, and deportation. Although the 1554 "Egyptians Act" allowed them to remain if they abandoned their "naughty, idle and ungodly life and company," the language of the statute suggests that from the beginning, Gypsies were subject to racist representations which led them to be victims of a vicious cycle: they were stereotyped, and then viewed as undesirable as a result of these stereotypes. (31)

This reveals why the depiction of the Gypsies in the Waverley Novels is so disruptive: by challenging the stereotype and providing Gypsy characters that were both sympathetic and heroic, audiences could see the Romani in a new light, which would hopefully lead to a break or alteration in the "vicious cycle". And this cycle continued in Britain up until the time of the novel's publication, as Bardi observes that while "over the course of the centuries the nature of anti-Roma legislation varied," she quotes Gypsy scholar David Mayall, who "points out that persecution was unceasing: 'Gypsies were under attack in the period after 1783 just as before, and the early laws intended to control the migrants, vagrants, and nomads continued into the nineteenth century and were further supplemented by a range of other measures which impinged on the travelling way of life'" (qtd. in Bardi 31-32). In 1783 the British Parliament passed another "Egyptians Act" that repealed previous discriminatory laws against the Gypsies, so it can be viewed as somewhat of a turning point in the state-sanctioned persecution of the Roma. It is also interesting as it is approximately

the year in which the novel takes place, perhaps indicating an intentional usage on the part of Scott. However, as noted by Mayall, discrimination against "migrants, vagrants, and nomads" continued into the nineteenth century, and, in fact, the UK Parliament passed the "Rogues and Vagabonds Act" just a few months after passing the "Egyptians Act" that seemingly replaced or reinforced some laws targeting the Romani. Therefore, the setting of 1783 is important, not only because it marks a time when there appeared to be changing attitudes towards the Gypsies, but also because it demonstrated that although some government action was taken to improve the treatment of the Romani, the status quo seemingly changed little in actuality. That the novel in regard to its setting seems to be commenting on these events is important in terms of the societal and political critique taking place in relation to the Gypsies, and also in reference to other contemporary events in Scotland. In sum, the harsh treatment of the Roma demonstrates how they are considered to be outsiders who are a destabilising or subversive force in society, a fact that cannot be overlooked when discussing the largely sympathetic portrayal of this minority group in the works of Scott.

As part of the project to create sympathy and tolerance, it is pertinent to detail the extent to which Scott himself had an emotional response to the plight of the Gypsies. In discussing the condition and treatment of Gypsies in Scotland, Graham McMaster writes that "Scott was disturbed by attempts to eradicate [the Gypsies] by force, attempts that paralleled attacks on the old-fashioned beggars" (157). McMaster then provides as evidence a passage from one of the articles Scott wrote for *Blackwood's* entitled "The Gypsies of Hesse-Darmstadt in Germany," where "his attitude is made clear:"

> I have dwelt longer on these dreadful scenes than you or your readers may approve; yet they contain an important illustration of the great doctrine, that cruel and sanguinary laws usually overshoot their own purpose, drive to desperation these [sic] against whom they are levelled, and, by making man an object of chase, convert him into a savage beast of prey . . . [this] may serve to stimulate the exertions of those humane persons who have formed the project of reserving this degraded portion of society from mendicity, ignorance and guilt. (157)

Scott explains how discriminatory and oppressive laws cause their intended targets to exist in desperation on the margins as they struggle to survive in a society that unduly persecutes them. In explaining the "great doctrine," McMaster notes that it was a "preoccupation" of Scott's (and a theme that appeared in several of his novels) in which he believed "it is the duty of society to look after its own, and all of its own, and not to drive any of its members, or groups of them, to despair or outlawry, by savage laws; that is, repression, or oppression, will lead to the fragmentation of society and the exclusion of individuals from its processes" (157). To extrapolate, it can be said that in the opinion of Scott the persecution of and discrimination against the Gypsies, especially when sanctioned by the state, will cause societal divisions and the further marginalisation of a minority group, which can only have negative consequences for national development. This idea is echoed in Tyler's assessment of the plight of Gypsies and Traveller communities in Great Britain today, where "as the state has increasingly made Traveller ways of life 'illegal,' this has led to a cycle of criminalization and criminality" (133). Tyler goes on to note that because of the harsh, and sometimes violent, measures taken by the state against Gypsies and Travellers, it has caused them to be "deeply suspicious and sometimes afraid of settled communities, local authorities and the police force," which has as a "consequence" made it difficult for them "to access the services, such as education, welfare and legal representation, that might enable them better to defend and represent their interests in the face of deep-seated xenophobia" (134). So not only have the Gypsies been forced into a "cycle of criminalization" due to discriminatory laws, but they are also reluctant to seek out avenues of assistance because of their distrust towards communities and authorities that they view as their oppressors, or at least enablers of those who persecute them, thus causing them to continue to exist on the periphery. It is remarkable that Scott articulated this notion almost two hundred years earlier, and his interest in and concern for the Romani demonstrates a desire for the improvement of society and the status of Gypsies that cannot be discounted when reviewing his fiction. Moreover, his comments about the persecution of the Gypsies of Hesse-Darmstadt reveals that in addition to being aware of the experiences of the Roma, he may have deliberately used their hardships as inspiration for his fiction that would engender sympathy for the minority as well as evoke the experiences of the

Highlanders that were extremely similar to what the Gypsies had endured for centuries.

In *Guy Mannering*, the similarities between the Highlanders and Scott's Romani first become apparent in the violent eviction of the Gypsy community at Derncleugh, which points to a contemporary tragedy of which readers were likely to be aware. Before the forced expulsion of the Gypsies at Derncleugh, Scott relates how their landlord Godfrey Bertram, father of Harry, has become a nuisance and bully to the local community due to his newly acquired political power, thus establishing the Laird's change into an unconscionable and debased actor. On the verge of his plan's commencement to expel the Gypsies, the "old servants shook their heads at his proposal, and even Dominie Sampson ventured upon an indirect remonstrance," which is somewhat surprising considering the Dominie's perceived harsh view of the Gypsies, thereby indicating the immorality and injustice of the action (Scott, *Guy Mannering* 40). However, Bertram continues with his plan, and a "strong posse of peace-officers, sufficient to render all resistance vain," resort to "violent measures of ejection" (40). The Romani homes are mostly demolished, and they "beheld the work of destruction in sullen silence and inactivity; then set about saddling and loading their asses, and making preparations for their departure. These were soon accomplished . . . and they set forth on their journey to seek new settlements" (42-43). The "gypsy procession" is vividly described:

> Four or five men formed the advanced guard, wrapped in long loose great coats, that hid their tall slender figures, as the large slouched hats, drawn over their brows, concealed their wild features, dark eyes, and swarthy faces . . . . Behind them followed the train of laden asses, and small carts . . . on which were laid the decrepid [sic] and the helpless, the aged and infant part of the exiled community. The women in their red cloaks and straw hats, the elder children with bare heads, and bare feet, and almost naked bodies, had the immediate care of the little caravan. (42)

This passage brings to mind scenes that were not altogether unfamiliar to a Scottish audience. Minus the ethnic descriptors, this tragic scene of impoverishment suggests that of the Highland Clearances, thus creating an empathetic response in which the wretched ordeal of the fictional Gypsies

evokes the real-life tragedy of those who were violently removed from their ancestral lands. For example, James Hunter recounts a letter by Donald MacKay, an Ascoilemore farming tenant whose family was violently evicted from their home that was destroyed, which details the severity of the eviction of an entire community in Sutherland:

> What had happened at Ascoilemore, Donald MacKay raged, was "so disgraceful to humanity" that he could not "find language . . . adequate" to describe it . . . . [O]n the day Donald Bannerman and his "gang" (the term MacKay used of the sheriff-officer's evicting party) were "demolishing every house [in Ascoilemore] . . . to the very ground," children who were "sick with the whooping cough" had found themselves without shelter in weather that was "very cold" because of there having been "a strong wind from the north-east." (ch. 2)

The similarities between MacKay's account of the clearance of Ascoilemore and the description of the Gypsy removal from Derncleugh are quite noticeable. In both passages, a "posse" or "gang" goes about "demolishing" or destroying the homes of the inhabitants, and the most vulnerable members of society, whether "decrepid," "aged," "infant" or "children who were sick," must cope with the elements as they search for shelter. The parallels between the real life accounts of the Clearances and the fictional experience of the Gypsies reveal the possibility that Scott knowingly made this comparison, and if so, the allusion to the Highland Clearances serves two simultaneous purposes: it draws attention to and provides a critique and condemnation of real contemporary events in Scotland, and it elicits sympathy, and even empathy, through shared experience for the fictional Gypsies in the novel and the real-life counterparts on whom they are based.

While the concept of the Roma expulsion mirroring that of the Clearances is not a new idea, it has yet to be seriously considered in regard to comparing the plight of the Gypsies with that of the Highlanders, and scholars have traditionally viewed the Gypsy removal as being a commentary on the changing socioeconomics of eighteenth-century Scotland. Peter Garside discusses how "[c]onventionally Scott criticism has interpreted the expulsion in broad Scottish/historical terms, with a new 'commercial' legalism sweeping aside the

quasi-feudalistic structures of the gypsy community" ("Meg Merrilies" 163): "the ejection of the gypsies from their homes at Derncleugh, followed by the supplanting of Godfrey Bertram by the corrupt lawyer Glossin, [offers] a microcosm of dubious Scottish 'progress' during the eighteenth century" of "a 'new' commercial society operating through the strict letter of the law" ("Picturesque" 149). Similarly, other scholars have pointed to the removal of the Gypsies as representing the consequences of the dual force of industrialisation and imperialism. For example, Katie Trumpener posits that for Scott the Gypsies "figure as the . . . first price of modernity" and they "come to represent both the traditional and the colonial unconscious of an industrializing, imperialist Europe—the trace memory of the traumatic cost of improvement and expansion" (868). Thus, similar to those who see the new "commercial legalism" of eighteenth-century progress in the expulsion of the Gypsies, Trumpener views the Gypsies' role in the novel as emblematic of the human cost of industrial and imperial growth. However, she does not mention the Clearances at all, which is unfortunate as the Clearance interpretation of the episode at Derncleugh would seem to reinforce and further support the idea of the Gypsy removal representing the "traumatic cost of improvement and expansion." For the Clearances clearly demonstrate the "price of modernity" in the forced eviction of Scottish farmers who lose everything in order to make way for newer, more profitable methods of farming and production by lords who have been granted their power and status by an expanding central bureaucracy in London.

The few scholars who have made the connection between the removal of the Ellangowan Gypsies and the Clearances have viewed it in terms of Scott subtly drawing attention to, critiquing or providing his own feelings about the Scottish tragedy, rather than, as this project contends, using the parallels to generate sympathy for both groups in terms of shared experience and in an effort to provide inclusivity to a maligned people perceived to be foreign. Garside states that McMaster and Elaine Jordan "have claimed a sharper relevance" to Scottish affairs in the Ellangowan removal, "pointing to a number of parallels with the Highland Clearances (e.g. the unroofing of cottages) to argue in favour of a displaced version of contemporary events" ("Picturesque" 149). The unroofing episode referred to is quite evocative of the actual experience of the Clearances: "the officers, in terms of their warrant, proceeded to unroof the cottages, and pull down the wretched doors and windows,—a

summary and effectual mode of ejection still practised in some remote parts of Scotland, where a tenant proves refractory" (Scott, *Guy Mannering* 41). The comparison to events still occurring seems to make the allusion to the Clearances substantial, and other passages in the novel support this interpretation of the Gypsy removal as providing a contemporary parallel to the Clearances, which had been ongoing for more than half a century by the time of the novel's publication. In addition to McMaster and Jordan, John Sutherland, in his critical biography of Scott, dedicates a couple of paragraphs to the Highland connection that is based on McMaster's work, and Nord also discusses the Clearances in a chapter on *Mannering* in her work on the representation of Gypsies in Britain. Rather than the Ellangowan removal being used to comment about the tragedy of the Clearances, Nord is focused on what the evocation of this tragic event means for the placement of Gypsies within society and history according to Scott: "Scott's ambivalence about the social and moral consequences of the 'Clearances' informed the plot of *Guy Mannering*, in which it became a question about the Scottish Gypsies' place both in society and in history, as well as a way of dramatizing the individual and communal dangers of banishing the past" (27). To sum up her position, Nord argues that Scott gives the Gypsies "a political identity by inserting them into a historical situation—the 'Clearances'—that did not necessarily involve them and figures them as the objects of legal harassment and persecution" (41-42). Nord views Scott's use of the Clearances as an inspiration that serves to place the Romani into a history of persecution within the narrative, which therefore grants them a "political identity," but since her work is focused on the Gypsies she understandably ignores what this placement also means for those actually affected by the Clearances and how Scott may have been commentating on these real-life events. While Nord comes close to this project's assertion about Scott's use of the Ellangowan removal as a means to evoke sympathy for the Gypsies that helps to link them to Scotland and the imagined community of the nation, it is this project's further opinion that the events in *Mannering* also provide a condemnation of the Clearances that reveals a sympathy towards the Highlanders and their tragic experience.

Upon reading any of Scott's novels with Highland characters, it becomes readily apparent that the "author of *Waverley*" views the Highlands and its people with a sympathetic eye, and intertwined with this sympathy is an interest in contemporary political and social conditions that is also present in Scott's

non-fiction works. Scott's first novel *Waverley* (1814) provides a foundational portrayal of the Highlanders that establishes sympathy for the oft-maligned population, which is a theme that continues throughout his works. There existed an early nineteenth-century appreciation of Scott's novels for their refiguring of Jacobitism (in regard to its associations with Scotland and especially the Highlands) to emphasize positive Scottish traits, which implied strength and hopefulness for the Scottish people. Caroline McCracken-Flesher explains this appreciation: "He replaced the eighteenth-century image of the degraded highlander—Sawney invading the bog-house that divides savagery and civilisation, plaid kilted up and a leg down each hole—with the striking Fergus Mac-Ivor of *Waverley*" (48). Even though Mac-Ivor is not necessarily a virtuous individual (although he does display some heroic traits), he is presented as a charismatic and cultured individual who possesses a complexity of character and motivation that casts aside the simple prejudiced stereotypes of the Highlanders, which shows how Scott directly challenges negative portrayals and creates sympathy for Highland characters. For example, Scott emphasizes the education and intelligence of his characters, especially by noting how they are well-read, as in the case of Mac-Ivor, in order to dismantle the perception of Highlanders as backwards and ignorant. In a relevant scene in *Waverley*, Mac-Ivor quotes a few lines from Shakespeare's *Henry VI* (though they are not exactly precise). He then remarks to Edward, "You see, my dear Waverley, I can quote poetry as well as Flora and you" (135). This establishment of sympathy for Highlanders becomes even more important when it is applied to the time in which Scott's novels were published, because even though the events in his novels may have happened in the past, the effects of these events were still felt in Scott's time. Those loyal to the crown still viewed the Highlands with suspicion due to decades of propaganda and popular histories that painted Highlanders with a wholesale brush of Jacobitism, so the act of rehabilitating the Highlands through fiction is in and of itself concerned with contemporary social and political issues. However, in some works Scott is even more explicit in his concern for contemporary matters, as Alison Lumsden notes in an article about Scott's experience as a literary and cultural critic for *Blackwood's Magazine*:

> Recent editorial work on Walter Scott's poetry reminds us of the extent to which his verse includes alertness to the political and

> social circumstances that he saw around him; the dedicatory epistles in *Marmion*, for example, show the extent to which he is responding to the political conditions of the time while close textual attention to his shorter verse uncovers a poet . . . responding both to national events and items of local interest. (215)

Scott's work reveals an author attuned to the developments of the world around him, so it falls within reason to propose that he injected present-day concerns into *Guy Mannering* and its depiction of the Romani. In regard to his non-fiction and personal writings, there exists at least two works by Scott that directly address the Clearances and their effects.

The first text that discusses the Clearances is a journal entry by Scott that was published in volume IV of the *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott* compiled by J. G. Lockhart. During Scott's tour of the Scottish islands in 1814, he makes a heartfelt observation about the future removal of tenants from Sir William Honyman's (also known as Lord Armadale) estate on Orkney: "On Lord Armadale's estate, the number of tenantry amounts to 300 . . . how is the necessary restriction to take place, without the greatest immediate distress and hardship to these poor creatures? It is the hardest chapter in Economicks [sic]; and if I were an Orcadian laird, I feel I should shuffle on with the old useless creatures, in contradiction to my better judgment" (Lockhart 95). In anticipating the prospective clearance of Honyman's tenants, a practice the lord had pioneered in Sutherland during the late 1700s, Scott lamented the tribulations they would face and empathised with the loss of their homes, going so far as to figuratively reject his own landed position in sympathy with the future exiles and their lost way of life. John Prebble notes that Honyman was one of the first landowners in the north that "had already begun to clear away untidy and uneconomic townships, packing the confused and bewildered inhabitants off to the coast or to the emigrant ships at Greenock, and offering the emptied acres of cotton grass and deer hair to any Lowland grazier ready to meet the increased rental" (72). Honyman's "great experiment" was an inspiration to George Granville Leveson-Gower, 1st Duke of Sutherland, also known as the Marquis of Stafford, who is recognised as one of the most controversial antagonists in the Highland Clearances and who also eventually purchased Honyman's holdings in Sutherland. Hunter describes the severity of the Sutherland Clearances perpetrated by Leveson-Gower, who, along with his wife, "ordered

the obliteration of Sutherland's interior settlements" that were "unmatched in scale and ambition" (ch. 1):

> [I]n the space of seven or eight years in the early nineteenth century, the interior of a large Scottish county was forcibly depopulated. This was accomplished by turning thousands of people out of their homes. Those homes, most of them in long-settled locations, were then destroyed.
>
> Nothing like this—certainly nothing so organised and on such a scale—had taken place in Britain before. Nothing quite like it would take place again. It was an extraordinary episode. (Introduction)

The Sutherland Clearances had begun in 1811, and when coupled with Honyman's history of ownership of Sutherland property and his own clearances, it is almost impossible to fathom Scott being unaware of these recent events, especially considering his own writing about Armadale's Orkney estate and the notoriety of the Sutherland Clearances in Scotland. In a short passage dealing with the Clearances and based on McMaster's work, John Sutherland asserts that the Orkney trip informed Scott's sympathy for the dispossessed Highlanders:

> Scott was writing *Guy Mannering* in the period when the Clearances had reached their awful climax. He had himself seen the effects on his northern voyage and was evidently conflicted on the subject . . . . As a Roxburgh laird—albeit only of a couple of years standing—he should have been of the rational party that approved the evictions. But evidently Scott could not steel himself to the human suffering. This sympathy with the evicted is conveyed in the scenes of Ellangowan's "root and branch" dispossession of the gipsies (and Meg Merrilies) from their traditional settlements. (182)

Nord also discusses Scott's journal entry, which she asserts shows his "personal experience [that] proved crucial to the particular history of the Scottish Gypsies that he wrote into *Guy Mannering*" (27), and, like the internal conflict described

by Sutherland, she especially notes that "although a landlord himself and so identified with landlords' interests, he lamented the evidence he saw of these changes in social relations and landscape during his trip to the Orkney Islands" (27). Both Sutherland and Nord link Scott's social status and presumed politics to his observation of the Clearances and assert that he had a sympathy for the Highlanders despite his position, and this sympathy formed the basis of the Gypsy expulsion from Derncleugh and the societal and political critique it possibly represented.

The Sutherland Clearances became notorious throughout Scotland, and a few high profile court cases resulted from the violent evictions that could have come to the attention of Scott. Elaine Jordan connects the expulsion of the Gypsies directly with the clearance of Strathnaver, a "contemporary parallel," which was a part of the Sutherland Clearances that occurred in June 1814 (148). Jordan writes:

> At Strathnaver the evictions were conducted with appalling impatience and callousness: they had been preceded in March by illegal burning of heath pastures, barns, kilns and mills, so that stock and people were deprived of sustenance and supplies for the future. (148)

The preliminary actions taken by Leveson-Gower make the events at Strathnaver particularly heinous, as the perpetrators conducted a deliberate programme of planned expulsion that mirrors the precision of military or state actions against an undesired group. Jordan continues:

> Now roof and house timbers, hard to replace, were burnt, in some cases with possessions still in the shielings, in some with bed-ridden sick and aged still lying there as the flames took hold; at least two old people died of the shock or exposure. A pregnant woman miscarried; sick children were among those who took to the unsheltered hills, or the road to the coast and the barren lands there that had been offered to some in replacement. (148)

Of note is how this account is similar to Scott's clearance of Derncleugh—though his is not as violent in cost of human life—much like the similarities

with MacKay's letter. The events at Strathnaver show direct parallels to Derncleugh, as the roofs and structures are destroyed, and whether old, "bed-ridden," sick or young, all are violently forced to leave their homes. However, Jordan's linking of these events is tenuous at times, as the date of the court trial that made it famous occurred in 1816, which Jordan concedes when she states that "news and gossip of the events leading to this trial could have reached Scott as he wrote *Guy Mannering* in six weeks during late 1814 and early 1815" (148). McMaster provides a more bullish opinion, writing that "there can be no doubt that Scott, as Clerk of the Court of Sessions, must have known of the affair before it came to trial," and that "it is at least arguable that this very trial was the origin of the episode in *Guy Mannering*" (159). Unfortunately, McMaster fails to provide any textual evidence of Scott's knowledge of the trial, but he does assert that the Strathnaver "account shows how closely the real and the fictional events resemble each other" (159). McMaster uses Ian Grimble's *The Trial of Patrick Sellar* to illustrate his point:

> The first witness to be called was William Chisholm, ... [who] described how Sellar had come to his home in June 1814, nearly two years before, with twenty men besides four sheriff officers, who had pulled down and set fire to the house and its barns. His mother-in-law, Margaret MacKay, was still in the house when it was set on fire, for she was a hundred years old and bed ridden though she was not ill. It was Sellar himself who ordered the house to be fired. (qtd. in McMaster 159)

A recurring theme across all accounts is the presence of sheriffs or factors who lead a gang to pull down, burn and destroy homes, often with inhabitants still inside, and the children, sick and elderly who are forced out into the elements to suffer as a result. As demonstrated earlier, all of these traits are present in the Gypsy expulsion scene in *Mannering*. The report of the trial then continues:

> Chisholm further stated that he had lost the roof timbers of his house; but he was not believed because he was "disreputable looking." Land at the other end of the strath had been offered to other tenants who had been ejected, but not to Chisholm, a tinker,

> "because of two years back complaints had been made against him as a worthless character." (qtd. in McMaster 159)

McMaster then notes all the "points of resemblance," including "the gypsies too were tinkers; the woman in the case was Meg M.; in both cases economic oppression was justified by the supposed bad character of the victim; the mode of eviction is identical" (159). While any of these points can be viewed as coincidental when examined on their own, it at least provides yet another possible piece of evidence that the Gypsy removal in the novel is a deliberate retelling of the Highland Clearances. Whether or not Scott knew of this specific trial, it is clear that he knew of both the Clearances and the activity on the Sutherland estate, as has been previously detailed.

That Scott would know of the Clearances and their severity cannot be doubted due to the widespread published accounts that were circulated during the time, which appeared to focus almost exclusively on the Highlands. In his comprehensive volume *The Scottish Clearances: A History of the Dispossessed*, T. M. Devine asserts that the Clearances were a nationwide phenomenon, although they had more serious consequences in the Highlands due to a lack of industrial and urban development, the failure of new settlements, and various other economic, political and societal issues that were unique to the Highlands. For example, Devine relates how "[m]any of the settlements optimistically planned to support a thriving fishery for the crofters in the eighteenth century . . . now became slum villages, packed with the dispossessed and destitute poor in the wake of the extensive clearances which became common after *c*.1820" (352). These failed settlements provided a visible testimony of those who had been dispossessed, which contributed to the sustained interest in the Highland Clearances and its victims. Compounding this was the fact that the Highlands experienced the worst of the clearances, as noted by Devine: "In the Highlands, the patterns of change were more convulsive but varied across the region" (352), and "[d]ispossession was undeniably more disruptive in most of Gaeldom and collective acts of clearance more common and dramatic" (354). The severity and frequency of the clearances in the Highlands made it a sensational story, and press accounts of incidents became commonplace: "The forcing out of people by factors, sheriff officers and police in the Highlands is the most notorious and best documented in press sources of the time and has by far the highest profile in popular understanding of clearance" (Devine 353). This

"forcing out" is readily apparent in the Sutherland accounts and in the removal from Derncleugh, and adds more weight to the idea that the eviction of the Gypsies on the Ellangowan estate intentionally mirrors that of the Highland episodes. Moreover, since the Highland reports were the "most notorious" of the time, it stands within reason that Scott was aware of their "profile in popular understanding" and utilised the recurrent themes in these accounts to portray the Gypsy removal, whose association his audience would be able to readily understand.

In addition to his Orkney journal entry, Scott directly addresses and expresses his opinion about the Clearances in his review of the *Culloden Papers* for *The Quarterly Review*. As if for emphasis, Scott ends his article with a condemnation of the Clearances and their effect upon the Highlands:

> In many instances, highland proprietors have laboured with laudable and humane precaution to render the change introduced by a new mode of cultivation gentle and gradual, and to provide, as far as possible, employment and protection for those families who were thereby dispossessed of their ancient habitations. But in other, and in but too many instances, the glens of the highlands have been drained, not of their superfluity of population, but of the whole mass of the inhabitants, dispossessed by an unrelenting avarice, which will be one day found to have been as short-sighted as it is unjust and selfish. ("Culloden Papers" 333)

Although Scott begins by commending those landowners who found "employment and protection for those families who were . . . dispossessed," he instantly pivots to denounce those who have completely eradicated populations from the lands of their ancestors. Scott emphasises that this is a more than common occurrence, as it happens "in but too many instances," and condemns the cause as an "unrelenting avarice" that is "short-sighted," "unjust" and "selfish," thereby reinforcing the opinion that the Clearances are a morally corrupt endeavour motivated by greed. Scott continues:

> Meanwhile, the highlands may become the faery ground for romance and poetry, or subject of experiment for the professors of speculation, political and economical.—But if the hour of need

> should come—and it may not, perhaps, be far distant—the pibroch may sound through the deserted region, but the summons will remain unanswered. The children who have left her will re-echo from a distant shore the sounds with which they took leave of their own—*Ha til, ha til, ha til, mi tulidh!*—"We return—we return—we return—no more!" (333)

Scott ends by poetically drawing attention to the families forced to leave their ancient home and travel to new lands across the sea, where they will be unable to answer the call of a nation that may need them. Jordan paraphrases John Prebble in echoing this assessment: "According to Prebble, Queen Victoria's government, needing troops for the Crimean War in 1854, was left asking 'Where are the Highlanders?', only to be answered by the baaing of innumerable sheep" (149). Scott's prescience is quite striking, and demonstrates both the emotion and thought that the Clearances evoked in his conscience.

Perhaps even more notable than Scott's foresight is the comparison that can be made between the last line of the review and a similar line found in *Mannering* that occurs after Meg has been shot in the smuggler's secret cave. As the authorities are debating "where she should be carried" and Hazelwood proposes to take her "to the nearest cottage," Meg exclaims "with great earnestness, 'Na—na—na! To the Kaim o' Derncleugh—the Kaim o' Derncleugh—the spirit will not free itself o' the flesh but there'" (336). Both lines are in response to calls for movement and utilise repetition to emphasise the emotion involved and the sentiment it engenders. In the review, the refrain can be understood as one of sorrow and defiance, where the speakers shall never return to a land that has displaced and seemingly rejected them, while Meg's statement is virtually a direct response to the former: to the exclamation of "we return—no more!," Meg declares, "Na—na—na! To the Kaim o' Derncleugh," thus demanding in a command filled with longing, urgency and defiance to return to her home in order to die at peace. That Meg is able to fulfil her dying wish makes the plight of those affected by the Clearances all the more severe, as they are unable to embrace the final resting place of their forebears. In the historical experience of the Clearances, those who have been expelled are unable to return, but in the realm of the imagination the dispossessed are able to poetically end their tale by returning to their birthplace, if only to pass into

memory—a cathartic denouement made possible by fiction. Both quotations focus attention on the loss that has been experienced by marginalised groups and the consequences of immoral policy and unethical practices. In sum, the review's conclusion demonstrates a determined hostility towards the Clearances and their consequences, and the closing line has a plausible parallel in the dying wish of Meg Merrilies, thus supporting the possibility that Scott may have included a veiled criticism in his fictional work, seeing fit to use it as a way to engender sympathy for both the Gypsies directly affected in the narrative (and in real life) and the Highlanders who lost everything.

This criticism is seemingly apparent in a passage that occurs when Meg is leading Bertram and Dinmont to the cave. On the way to their destination, Meg takes them through the "ruined hamlet" where her community once lived (328). She pauses "before one of the gables which was still standing" and in "solemn" tone relates the melancholy tale of what once was and is no more:

> "Do you see that blacked and broken end of a sheeling?—there my kettle boiled for forty years—there I bore twelve buirdly sons and daughters—where are they now?" (Scott, *Mannering* 328)

The "blacked and broken end of a sheeling" remains as a stark reminder of all that Meg has lost, for she has lost much more than just a home: she has lost a community, a family and a place of belonging and identity. In mentioning that she does not know where her "twelve buirdly sons and daughters are," Meg draws attention to how the destruction of their home caused a dispersal of the family, and perhaps even something worse, much as families affected by the Clearances were often forced to split up due to financial considerations or suffered the far worse fate of death due to starvation, disease or exposure. More immediately, Meg causes her audience to contemplate how her family and neighbours were forced off the land they had always known as home, and how they have lost their community and families as a result, which can be compared to Scott's emphasis in his *Quarterly* article that "the whole mass of the inhabitants" of the Highlands were "dispossessed by an unrelenting avarice." Meg continues:

> "—where are the leaves that were on that auld ash-tree at Martinmas—the west wind has made it bare—and I'm stripped

> too.—Do you see that saugh tree?—it's but a blackened rotten stump now—I've safe under it mony a bonny simmer afternoon when it hung its gay garlands ower the poppling water." (Scott, *Mannering* 328)

The idea of dispersal and loss continues in the powerful central metaphor that compares the destruction of the village and expulsion of its inhabitants to a dying or dead tree. The direct allusion is that the naked tree and "rotten stump" are symbolic of the now barren land stripped of the families that had lived there for generations. The life that once existed has disappeared: the "leaves" and the "gay garlands" are now gone forever, just as the lively children who once scampered though the village have been forcibly removed. Meg observes that the "auld ash-tree" has been stripped bare (as she has been "stripped too" of her home, family and history), which has been caused by "the west wind." In Europe, traditionally the west wind has been associated with mildness, which is perhaps owing to Zephyrus, the personification of the west wind and the messenger of spring who brings gentle breezes, so Meg's use of west wind appears to be incorrect, at least superficially, or she means something else. In a strictly literal sense, this could refer to the wind coming in from the Atlantic Ocean by way of the North Channel and/or Irish Sea, or, in a metaphorical sense, the west wind could be referring to the place where many Scottish refugees of the Clearances ultimately ended up, which were the nations to the west, the United States and Canada. Hunter details this emigration in his exhaustive tracing of multiple Sutherland families to the Ross-shire port of Cromarty, where they would board the ship *Ossian* that would take them to Nova Scotia (ch. 1). Thus, like the west wind blows the leaves from the tree, the victims of the Clearances are propelled westward by the lords forcibly expelling them from their homes and onto the boats whose sails are blown across the Atlantic. This brings to mind the "children" mentioned in Scott's *Quarterly* article, whose calls of "we return—no more" "will re-echo from a distant shore." Meg then closes her eulogy:

> "—I've sate there, and," elevating her voice, "I've held you on my knee, Henry Bertram, and sung ye sangs of the auld barons and their bloody wars—It will ne'er be green again, and Meg Merrilies will never sing blithe sangs mair." (Scott, *Mannering* 328)

Meg recalls the past in order to emphasise the great sense of loss of the Gypsies, both personal and historical. When Henry was a boy, Derncleugh was a place where history was transmitted through song, thus placing Meg, the village and its inhabitants within the imagined community of the nation as purveyors of its history and identity. Now that the village has been destroyed and its inhabitants scattered, it no longer acts as a site of transmission—"It will ne'er be green again"—and Meg has been robbed of her ability to sing "blithe sangs" because she has been displaced from her ancestral home, which results in her expulsion from the fabric of the nation and its history that she once sang. In short, she is now forced to exist on the margins of the national community. The desperation and sense of loss in this striking address evokes the narratives of those who were forcibly removed by the Clearances, and, furthermore, the vivid metaphors contained in Meg's speech can be seen as casting further light on the contemporary Scottish parallel of the Roma's removal from Ellangowan, and how the real-life Highlanders and fictional Gypsies were dispossessed of not only their homes, but their place in the nation and its ongoing history.

There also exists other evidence in the text of *Guy Mannering* to support the Clearance interpretation of the Gypsy removal from Derncleugh, including comparisons to actual events and the Highlanders. McMaster analyses the context of the Gypsy removal to question if it represents the Clearances:

> Chapter 6 of *Guy Mannering* displays Godfrey Bertram, who is moved only by a sort of vanity, in the act of offending against all those liberalities of society that he had previously encouraged, or perhaps connived at. Poachers, beggars and the village idiot all feel the weight of his hand together with the gypsies. The expulsion of the gypsies stands for something more general; why else is it framed by these other examples of rural injustice? (157)

In other words, since the Gypsy expulsion is included with these other more general "examples of rural injustice," it stands to reason that it may allude to another real practice that was occurring alongside these persecutions, like the Clearances. There are also numerous comparisons that can be made with the Highlanders, which is asserted by Jordan when she discusses the "uses" of "the gypsies whom Bertram has allowed to keep their camp on his estate:" they "are musicians, useful sportsmen, breeders of dogs, and offerers of blessings and

knitted goods. They had not only mended china, but fought for the laird in the past—quite like clansmen, though the novel is set in the Lowlands" (146-47). Jordan then provides additional evidence for her comparison of the Gypsies to a Highland clan by noting the following passage: "this mutual intercourse of good offices, which had taken place for at least two centuries, rendered the inhabitants of Derncleugh a kind of privileged banditti upon the estate of Ellangowan" (37). The long tenure of their inhabitancy at Ellangowan is quite unusual when considering the itinerant nature or stereotype usually associated with Gypsies, and Scott's description of their activities, loyalty and "service to the laird in war" (37) would not appear out of place in a description of a Highland clan. Jordan notes further support for her interpretation: the Gypsies "were 'considered in some degree as proprietors of the wretched shealings which they inhabited.' Consequently when the laird evicts them it is by means of 'a formal warning to remove at next term' from the factor—a procedure which implies payment of rent or some degree of tenure based on services" (147). Whether or not the Gypsies paid rent, a proposition quite unusual, they are noted to be "in some degree as proprietors" and, as Jordan puts it, there are "several signs of their having acquired certain rights by usage" (150), thereby indicating that the tenants at Derncleugh were more similar to the Highlanders than their real life counterparts. McMaster echoes this assessment as "some of the phrases [Scott] uses seem to betray an intention to make the gypsies symbolise some other, more settled and permanent, groups," and the passages quoted in this paragraph are "an almost perfect description of what was known as the 'customary' or 'kindly' tenant, particularly of the tenants of the Highland straths, who had also paid for their holdings by military service" (158). Moreover, the fact that they were given a formal warning strongly recalls the experiences of the Clearances, as tenants were usually notified that they would have to leave by a certain date.

One final note is that the usage of one group to represent another is not a foreign concept to Scott, and its usefulness for literary purposes provides a complexity that would be lacking with a simple retelling of factual events. Referring to Scott's journal entry from Orkney, Jordan writes that "[i]f Scott was haunted by the fate of the Highlanders . . . their displacement as gypsies seems like . . . a way of talking about what was going on without exactly talking about it" (151). This implies that Scott was sensitive to the controversy that could have resulted from a direct condemnation in popular fiction of events that

had been perpetrated by members of his own class. However, as stated earlier, Jordan's argument is centred on the Gypsy removal representing a criticism of the Clearances, rather than the removal being an event that simultaneously condemns the treatment of the Highlanders and the Gypsies, and which serves a greater purpose within the narrative that provokes sympathy for the Gypsies and provides them with a history and presence that includes them in the national project. The connection between the Gypsies and Highlanders is also supported by the prejudice both groups received from the English and Lowlanders, as McMaster brings to attention: "It must be added that for many contemporary observers of the social scene, the Highland tenants were neither blameless nor industrious, and were little better than gypsies" (160). The idea that Highlanders and Gypsies would be linked in such a way is less surprising when considering how they suffered from negative stereotypes. Jordan further notes that Scott's substitution of the Gypsies for the Highlanders is not without precedent, as "in the historical material appended to *Rob Roy* Scott does compare Rob to an Arab such as Saladin, and the Highlanders to American Indians" (152). The comparison of the Highlanders to Native Americans is fascinating, for Nord comments that "Gypsies were often compared" with "Native Americans" (23), so there exists a relationship of allusion between the literary and popular depictions of Highlanders, American Indians and Gypsies. Additionally, an example of a group comparison exists in *Guy Mannering*, when Scott "compares the resistance of the gypsy children when they are first banned from Bertram's estate to the Maroon wars—the resistance of free negroes, originally escaped slaves, to estate owners in Dutch Guiana and the West Indies" (Jordan 151). This comparison also elicits a post-colonial criticism of events in the novel and perhaps even of the imperial project, and, in this regard, it must be emphasised that the Gypsies are fully portrayed as the victims of immoral policy, while the Scottish authorities, especially as represented by Godfrey Bertram and Glossin, are shown to be corrupt. Jordan asserts that "Godfrey Bertram's eviction of his old neighbours in *Guy Mannering* is not presented as just or wise; not a moral improvement as the Lowland Tory ideology . . . would have had it. It leads to his own loss" (150), and McMaster concludes that "everything is related to the sin of Bertram in expelling the gypsies. The entire community suffers: the house of Ellangowan falls, and the community endures the imposition of the alien king, Glossin" (162). The consequences of the oppression of the Gypsies, and also the Highlanders that inspired their depiction,

leads to economic and societal decline, thus underscoring the importance of the Gypsies to the community, both local and national, and the Highlanders they represent by extension.

In total, the metaphorical conflation of the Scots and Roma is an empathic exercise that draws the contemporary reader's attention to both the lived horror of the Clearances and the oppression of a minority group that exists within their own nation. For the Gypsies, this comparison brings them into the domestic community as a constituent part, instead of remaining as outsiders on the periphery, for they are no different from the Highlanders who have suffered. As Shylock so eloquently put it in *The Merchant of Venice*, "If you prick us, do we not bleed?"

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