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Music in the Glen: Traveller Culture and Song

by Noelle Mann

Presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD in English Literature

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Summary

This thesis explores the cultural significance of music to Travellers, as described in their own words. By examining the songs included in Traveller memoirs, it aims to reflect cultural practices and concerns which are common to many Irish and Scottish Travellers. It also aims to critique the various negative stereotypes and assumptions which have been assigned to Travellers and their culture by mainstream society.

Beginning with an overview of Gypsy and Traveller song collection and the work of previous anthropologists and folklorists, this thesis develops a theoretical framework in order to interpret aspects of Traveller writing and song. It suggests that Antonio Gramsci's theory of 'organic' intellectuals can account for how Traveller activists are able to represent their own experiences and the interests of other Travellers through song. It also uses John D. Niles's definition of 'tradition bearers' to explain how individual Travellers function as a cultural repository for their community. By addressing Walter Ong's ideas surrounding orality and literacy, it explores how Traveller authors have engaged with the tensions arising from representing their oral culture in the written form. This thesis also challenges the depiction of Travellers as 'Other' in the media by engaging with Edward Said's theory of Orientalism. Finally, it traces how nostalgic presentations of Traveller culture have informed origin theories and the development of a 'scapegoat mechanism', as identified by Thomas Acton.

This thesis contends that Traveller music is the expression of a minority ethnic group which exists within the boundaries of settled society. Traveller songs, stories and memoirs speak against sedentary society's negative view of Travellers and document the culture of a group which has been occluded from official Irish and British history.

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A Note on the Text

The term "Irish Traveller" is used in this thesis to describe a traditionally nomadic group who are indigenous to Ireland. Individuals from the group may use the terms "Traveller", "Minceir" or "Pavee" to describe themselves. Members of the Irish Travelling community share a culture that is similar to some groups of Gypsies and Roma, but has developed separately. The common identity, language and culture of Irish Travellers make them distinct from the mainstream Irish population.

Scottish authorities use the umbrella term "Scottish Gypsy/Traveller" to define nomadic groups in Scotland, because different families choose to identify themselves in various ways, for example, as "Gypsy", "Traveller" or "Gypsy/Traveller." Some individuals, especially Highland Travellers living in the north of Scotland, use the term "Nawkens" to distinguish themselves from Gypsies. In other regions of Scotland, especially in areas near the Scottish and English border, there has been a close relationship between the Scottish Traveller and Gypsy communities for generations. Since the majority of the Scottish Travellers included in this thesis are Highland Travellers, the term "Scottish Traveller" has been employed throughout.

The term "Gypsy" is used in this thesis to refer to individuals who identify themselves as Gypsies, but may also use the term "Romany". Gypsies are believed to be the descendants of Roma who arrived in Britain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Single quotations marks have been employed in the thesis where terminology is used cautiously by the author.

Introduction

Music, its appreciation, performance and composition, is one of the cornerstones of Irish and Scottish Traveller culture. Along with nomadism, family, attendance at fairs and religious observance, music features largely in the lives of many Travellers, whether it reflects a skill handed down through generations, a means of income and pride, or simply a way of life. It is striking, therefore, that the subject of music has been overlooked by academics investigating the lives of Travellers. Music was not a focus point in the ground-breaking anthropological studies by Judith Okely and Jane Helleiner, who used participant observation to investigate the culture of Irish Travellers living in the UK and Ireland. Not every Traveller is a musician, and the individuals who interacted with Okely, for example, were simply not observed making music. Folklorists, including Tom Munnelly and Hamish Henderson, recorded and collected songs and stories from Irish and Scottish Travellers, but concentrated on the antiquity of the material, and its similarities to non-Traveller folklore, drawing only brief conclusions about Traveller culture. Other folklore enthusiasts, including Ewan MacColl and Donald Braid, explored the cultural significance behind the stories and song repertoires of individual Traveller families, singers or musicians more deeply. By building on this work, and investigating contributions by Travellers from a range of different families, and from Irish and Scottish Traveller communities, it is possible to determine the wider cultural significance of music to Travellers' lives.

Irish and Scottish Travellers have a strong tradition of transmitting culture orally. This means that many individuals have a wide knowledge of stories, songs, riddles and cures, which they have learned directly from other Travellers. Traveller languages reflect

each group's ancestry and the history of the region in which they live. For example, Irish Travellers speak a dialect based on the English language, known as "Cant", "Gammon", or "Shelta" among settled researchers. Some Scottish Highland Travellers speak a dialect known as "Beurla Reagaird", which is based on the Gaelic language, while Scottish Border Gypsies more often use Romani vocabulary. The use of "Cant" and oral culture is an important aspect of Traveller identity for many individuals, and has helped to preserve stories and songs. Some Travellers have avoided gaining skills in literacy in order to conserve their oral culture, or have pursued traditional working roles for which literacy is not required. When individuals wish to pursue education, both groups have encountered barriers to learning as a result of forced evictions and classroom segregation, and this has prevented many Travellers from receiving an education that is equal to that of settled people. Some Traveller parents also fear that mainstream schooling may cause their children to become culturally assimilated, and leave their oral traditions behind.

The main objective of this thesis is to explore the cultural significance of music to Travellers, as described in their own words. Many Travellers have recently begun to discuss their culture in autobiographies or memoirs, either writing accounts of their own lives, or through interviews and transcriptions by settled researchers. Often, these Travellers are also activists, and use their memoirs as a means to inform a settled audience about aspects of their lives, to challenge misconceptions, and to offer an alternative to official historical accounts which exclude them. In addition, some Travellers have contributed to publications generated by group initiatives and community projects. Many Traveller writers are also musicians, and are highly respected artists within their own communities. Some Traveller writers and their families are also well

known amongst wider Irish and Scottish traditional music audiences. For Travellers, music is not simply a 'hobby' to pass the time or a way of earning money. Musical performances often involve an entire family, with previous generations passing down skills on instruments, playing particular styles, or creating unique song and ballad repertoires. Certain Traveller musicians, such as the Uilleann piper Johnny Doran and the fiddler John Doherty, are held in the highest regard by fellow traditional musicians for their innovative and masterful techniques.

When songs are composed by Travellers, they often include details of nomadic life in the lyrics, giving the listener direct insight into the conditions of Traveller existence. Songs such as "Wexford Town" or "In a Tinker's Caravan", by Irish Traveller Pecker Dunne, express the hard life he led as a young man and give examples of the discrimination he faced from settled individuals. Other songs celebrate positive aspects of Traveller culture. "The Berry Fields of Blair", a ballad written by Scottish Traveller Belle Stewart, recalls her experiences berry picking in Blairgowrie with her family, and also the great companionship she found among fellow Travellers working and camping together. At the same time, certain songs written by Travellers celebrate the lives of particular family members or friends, and function as a collective memory bank to be sung at family gatherings such as weddings and birthdays. For other Travellers who may not be musicians, music and songs still punctuate their life stories, with particular songs prompting personal memories. An example of this is provided by Irish Traveller Mary

Warde, who describes her father and brother singing as they worked with tin in her autobiography *The Turn of the Hand* (2009).[1]

Songs composed and performed by Travellers often reflect aspects of their cultural identity, but being identified as a Traveller tends not to be a useful category in settled society. Travellers have historically been ascribed negative characteristics, such as deception and criminality, by sedentary society. For a small number of individuals, these qualities may be accurate, but they have been extended to represent the entire Travelling community in Ireland and the UK. Laws in both countries have forced many Travellers to camp illegally, and this has been exacerbated by the development of traditional camping grounds and the undersupply of halting sites; such changes have caused significant disruption and problems to many Travellers who are constantly in the process of being moved on. Commenting on the endemic anti-Traveller racism of Irish society, Jim Mac Laughlin baldly states that "keeping Travellers on the move has become a national obsession in Ireland."[2]

Halting site developments in Ireland and the UK have been suppressed and the authorities in both countries have favoured accommodation practices which promote assimilation. Travellers have been encouraged to move and 'settle' into housing, undermining their traditional nomadic lifestyle. Reports by national media along the lines of a 'moral panic' of Gypsy and Traveller invasions have added to the negative stereotyping. For example, the "Stamp on the Camps" campaign of 2005 by *The Sun* newspaper encouraged its readers to contribute their accounts of the misery it claimed

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[1] Mary Warde, *The Turn of The Hand: A Memoir from the Irish Margins*, trans. and ed. Michael Hayes (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 104

[2] Jim Mac Laughlin, *Travellers and Ireland: Whose Country, Whose History?* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995), 71

Traveller communities have caused, and printed a cut-out petition for readers to protest against the development of Traveller sites, or the "Gypsy Free-For-All".[3] A *Daily Express* article in 2008 entitled "Anger at Gypsy Invasion Near Jowell's Retreat", stated that an "invasion" occurred when a single Gypsy family purchased land from a local farmer and moved their caravans into the site.[4] Joanna Richardson explains that, despite the fact that there has not been a recent rise in unauthorized encampments, the public still perceives the opposite to be true. "Media discourse, by the public and politicians serves to socially construct the deviant Gypsy/Traveller, and there is much current debate on 'controlling' the 'influx' and 'invasion' of public spaces."[5]

Against this background of cultural misunderstanding, it is perhaps unsurprising that many Travellers believe that musicianship is an important aspect of their identity. Dunne describes himself first and foremost as a "troubadour", and takes great pride in his descent from circus or show-people and a long line of musicians. This self-representation as a performer first and Traveller second may be a defence against the homogenisation of the Irish and Scottish Traveller communities by mainstream society, something that obscures the fact that Travellers are made up of many distinct families with individual histories, circumstances and interests. Although Travellers are a heterogeneous group, many individuals share the common idea of a past 'golden age' of coexistence with settled people, when their identity was more visible and respected by the settled rural community. This leads some Travellers to favour songs from the past, and include

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[3] Imogen Tyler, *Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2013), 135
[4] Martin Stote, "Anger at Gypsy Invasion Near Jowell's Retreat", *Daily Express*, March 25, 2008, 6
[5] Joanna Richardson "Policing Gypsies and Travellers", *Travellers, Gypsies, Roma: The Demonization of Difference*, edited by Michael Hayes and Thomas Acton (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 104

celebratory songs about tinsmiths and horse dealing in their life-writing. Others choose to express the humour of everyday life, working at their trades, singing songs about rag-collection, or outsmarting the authorities and other tradesmen and women.

Because the emergence of Traveller writing is so recent, there is no established theoretical framework from within which one might interpret this body of writing. This thesis suggests that Traveller music is the expression of a minority ethnic group which exists within the boundaries of settled society. Travellers are viewed as an internal 'Other' by settled people, and Traveller songs, stories and memoirs speak against sedentary society's negative view of Traveller culture. Edward Said, in *Orientalism* (1978), described how colonial populations came to be defined as inferior, backward and in need of "civilisation" by their European occupiers: "Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analysed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved."[6] Like Said's Orientals, Traveller culture is typically judged as deviant and problematic by governments, who subjugate the lives of Travellers by supressing their nomadic lifestyle. The solution to the perceived "Traveller problem" is often deemed to lie in policies of cultural assimilation.

In addition to this, Gypsies and Travellers have been used by sedentary writers as exotic figures on which to project the negative attributes of settled society. Said describes European culture as "gaining in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self".[7] In a similar manner, Gypsies and Travellers have been deployed to symbolically test the boundaries of British and

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[6] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 207
[7] Ibid., 3

Irish society. Stereotypes of Gypsies and Travellers characterise them as dirty, criminal and violent, which can be evinced in the representation of Travellers in literary texts, newspapers, films, and reality television programmes. Said's work focuses on the construction and transmission of fixed ideas about colonial populations which were shaped by a number of nineteenth-century European writers. Just as Said mentioned that a writer using the word "Oriental" would prompt a reader to "identify a specific body of information" about the Orient, the mention of "Traveller" in a newspaper headline or television programme prompts the reader or viewer to recall the many stereotypes and "truths" about Travellers they have previously encountered. [8]

Applying Said's concept of Orientalism to representations of Irish and Scottish Travellers provides a way of explaining why Travellers are viewed and treated differently to other groups in society. Through misrepresentation by settled researchers, government policies and the mainstream media, Traveller culture has been reduced to a series of essentialist stereotypes which negatively contrast nomadism to sedentary ways of living. However, Said's theory of Orientalism has been criticised by a number of theorists for being too monolithic and, as Aijaz Ahmad has noted, for failing to include the voices of resistance among colonised peoples.[9] It also ignores the internal differences and political developments among minority communities. Dennis Porter has also pointed out that some Western writers represented colonised people and their culture in a progressive way that highlighted their heterogeneity.[10] Traveller songs and autobiographies, by presenting a range of experiences, speak against the practices of

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[8] Ibid., 205

[9] Aijaz Ahmad, "*Orientalism* and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said", *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992), 195

[10] Dennis Porter, "Orientalism and its Problems", *The Politics of Theory*, ed. Francis Barker et al. (Colchester: University of Essex, 1983), 182

homogenisation and respond to traditional representations by mainstream society. By including a range of songs and experiences from a cross section of different Traveller communities, the thesis also resists a homogenised portrayal of Traveller culture.

Antonio Gramsci's notion of a class of "organic" intellectuals who, in a capitalist society, emerge to give the proletariat ideological and political direction is a useful theory when considering how some Travellers create and transmit oral culture.[11] Unlike traditional intellectuals, "organic" intellectuals participate in the daily life of their group. Most Traveller musicians and singers earn their living from the same occupations as the rest of their community, and this is reflected in the many Traveller songs describing work. There is also rarely any perceived division between performers and their audience, who are often called to participate in the songs. The collective nature of Traveller music creates a sense of solidarity, which responds to the negative representation of Travellers by settled society. Many Traveller musicians use their songs as a platform to speak about concerns in their community. Travellers involved in organisations such as Pavee Point are also "organic" intellectuals, and provide important political direction in issues affecting Travellers. An example of this is the protest in 2013 organised by the Irish Traveller Movement against racist comments expressed by public representatives.[12]

Gramsci's model of "organic" intellectuals, if applied to Traveller singers and writers could explain how individual Travellers can speak both for themselves and also represent wider cultural issues. For example, Duncan Williamson's memoir and songs describe his personal experiences, but his struggle with the practicalities of a continued

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[11] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections From Cultural Writings*, ed. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, trans. William Boelhower (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), 3-23

[12] Irish Traveller Movement, "Political silence undermines our status and standing in Irish society", *Irish Traveller Movement website*, March 13, 2013. <http://itmtrav.ie/press/myview/61>

nomadic existence are common to many other Travellers, and Williamson's interaction with settled people allowed him to take on the role of spokesperson. Gramsci's concept is based on the idea that "organic" intellectuals emerge from within their own communities, outside the bounds of traditional intelligentsia. In reality, a number of Travellers have developed long-standing relationships with settled academics and folklorists, which has influenced their understanding and expressions of their own culture. Duncan Williamson eventually married Linda Headlee, a settled researcher who had worked closely with him for several years. This led to the publication of several volumes of his stories, and wider involvement with other settled academics, but Williamson's interaction with academia also led to his estrangement from a number of other Travellers.

Gramsci also identified that the majority of songs known within a community are often written "neither by nor for the people", but are instead selected and adapted to fit the norms and values of a community.[13] This possibly explains why certain songs written by settled musicians are just as popular in Traveller culture as those created by Travellers themselves. However, whilst recognising the sense of solidarity that Traveller music can create, it is also important to acknowledge that some individual singers and musicians are respected more highly than others. John D. Niles, in his study of traditional singers and storytellers, *Homo Narrans: The Poetics and Anthropology of Oral Literature* (1999), for example, found that Scottish Traveller Duncan Williamson was recognised as a specialist in a "valued art", and was "known and honored by name" in his community. [14] Niles holds Williamson to be an elite performer, a "strong tradition bearer", because of his

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[13] Gramsci, *Cultural Writings*, 195

[14] John D. Niles, *Homo Narrans: The Poetic and Anthropology of Oral Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999),128

passion for collecting the best songs, holding the widest repertoire, and his masterful performances.[15]

Through their strong oral tradition, Travellers have been able to represent their culture and circumvent some of the barriers created by a mainstream society, which privileges literacy over orality. Traveller writers, such as Sheila Stewart, are also able to express themselves directly to their readers, by composing their own words for publication. However, complications arise when non-Traveller editors and academics help to produce Traveller writing. In the process of selecting and shaping material into a particular narrative form, interview techniques and editorial interests often influence what material is discussed by Traveller narrators. In *Orality and Literacy* (1982), Walter Ong states that there can be no plot in a person's life unless there is "ruthless elimination of all but a few carefully highlighted incidents."[16] Even where Travellers have written their own autobiographies, they can only represent a fraction of their experiences, and can also omit any incidences they may wish to keep to themselves. The act of converting Traveller oral culture into written literature can also been regarded as reinforcing the inferior status of the oral form. By transforming oral material into print, Traveller culture is being made to fit the requirements of the dominant culture that has oppressed and marginalised it. However, many memoirs produced from interactions between Travellers and settled editors have created very progressive representations of Traveller culture. For example, works produced from collaboration between several Travellers and Micheál Ó

[15] Ibid., 180
[16] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word,* Second edition (1982; reprint, New York: Routledge, 2002), 140.

hAodha, including Pecker Dunne's *Parley-Poet and Chanter* (2004) and William Cauley's *The Candlelight Painter* (2004), are indicative of this.[17]

Ong provides one way of understanding the complex dynamics between oral and written culture that exist for Travellers. However, his concepts can be criticised on the basis of reductionism, primitivism, and binary opposition. Ong presents literacy as a successor to orality which has enabled human beings to develop social consciousness and self-awareness. In doing so, he suggests that acquiring literacy skills alter the way in which individuals think. However, fieldwork studies by psychologists, including Scribner and Cole, demonstrate that literacy alone does not alter cognitive function.[18] By representing orality and literacy as binaries, Ong implies that people existing in oral cultures must be intellectually inferior to those in literate populations, leaving him open to charges of primitivism. He also states that all oral cultures wish to gain literacy and struggle with the idea of leaving their oral traditions behind. Research undertaken by a range of linguists among different ethnic communities, including Shirley Brice Heath, has shown that the interactions between oral and written uses of language are varied and complex, and vary across different communities.[19] Many aspects of Ong's theories have been overtaken in recent years by more modern ideas about literacy, but the idea that communities which are primarily non-literate are culturally and intellectually inferior to

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[17] Pecker Dunne, *Parley-Poet and Chanter*, trans. and ed. Míchéal Ó hAodha (Dublin: A&A Farmar, 2004); William Cauley, *The Candlelight Painter: The Life and Work of William Cauley, Traveller, Painter and Poet*, trans. and ed. Micheál Ó hAodha (Dublin: A&A Farmar, 2004)

[18] Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole, *The Psychology of Literacy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: University of Harvard Press, 1981), 4-5

[19] Shirley Brice Heath, *Ways With Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)

those which privilege literacy, is still present in many western societies.[20] The study of Traveller memoir and song provides a way to engage with nomadic culture that encompasses both oral and literary representations, and debunks the myth that Travellers are in any way inferior to mainstream society.

Many Travellers and settled people appear to hold nostalgic views about Traveller culture. Svetlana Boym, in her study of former Communist bloc countries, *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), defines nostalgia as a generalised "longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed".[21] Nostalgia is also described as "a defence mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historic upheaval."[22] The process of industrialisation created massive cultural changes in the lives of Travellers and settled individuals, with both populations relocating from rural areas towards growing cities. Traditional ways of making money for Travellers, such as tin-smithing, have given way to occupations where Traveller identity is less visible, including wage work. Consequently, some Travellers and settled people believe that their communities had a more positive relationship with each other in the past, when Travellers could be seen working among settled people, and their songs reflect these views. Other Travellers, however, choose to represent the past more realistically, creating songs to document their political struggle. Origin theories of Gypsies and Irish and Scottish Travellers have also tended to represent the past in a nostalgic way, depicting nomadic peoples as symbols of an older, more rural society. Many of the contributors to the Gypsy Lore Society, the Irish Literary Revival, and the Scottish Folklore Revival emphasised the links that

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[20] New London Group, "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures" *Harvard Educational Review*, 66.1 (1996), 60-92

[21] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiii

[22] Ibid., xiv

Traveller culture may hold to the ancient past. In comparison, contemporary Traveller culture is often denigrated as inauthentic, as Travellers have moved on from the days of horse-drawn wagons and tin-smithing to embrace modern caravans and business opportunities such as scrap-collection. The difference between the fantasy of the idealised 'true' Gypsy and actual Gypsies and Travellers has created what Thomas Acton has termed a "scapegoat mechanism", where Travellers who do not fit the model of the 'true' Gypsy are perceived to be inauthentic and in need of assimilation into mainstream society.[23]

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter, entitled "Previous Research", sets out the most influential academic works which have shaped scholarship in the area of Irish and Scottish Traveller culture. By exploring the history of song collection, it is possible to trace the reasons why individual collectors compiled and published songs by Travellers. Collectors and folklorists have also influenced the representation of Gypsy and Traveller songs by choosing which types of song to collect. This chapter also provides an overview of the key sociological studies produced on Irish and Scottish Travellers. An examination of Traveller autobiographies, their emergence, and the different types of memoir produced in recent years follows, with a final section on specific studies which examine Traveller writing.

Chapter Two, "The World of Work", discusses how the variety of work undertaken by Traveller families is reflected in their songs, from rag collection to fruit-picking and tin-smithing. A number of these songs also emphasise the importance of

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[23] Thomas Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 89

adaptability and self-sufficiency when Travellers interact with the settled community. The chapter deploys Gramsci's theory of the "organic intellectual" to explain the importance of Traveller self-representation, as many of the songs reflect the negative issues surrounding Traveller lifestyles. Finally, a discussion of how the Traveller economy has changed in recent times contrasts traditional roles with contemporary work undertaken by Travellers.

Chapter Three, "Family Songs", explores the influence of family membership in Traveller culture and music. Family songs celebrate influential Traveller musicians, or individual family members who have died. Excluded from official history, Travellers pass down culture orally within their families, and record important events in the form of song. In this way, songs can be said to function as a collective memory bank. Certain individuals are recognised within their families and the wider community as "tradition bearers", and retain a vast amount of songs and stories, while also seeking appropriate new material. These individuals uphold the highest standards of performance and have often transmitted their material to non-Traveller audiences. In return, non-Traveller musicians have also composed songs to reflect their admiration for Travellers, including the Dorans and the Raineys.

Chapter Four, "Orality within the Text", investigates the tensions between oral culture and literacy in representations of Traveller culture. It traces the reasons why many Travellers have very low standards of literacy. This is partly due to evictions, bullying and discrimination, and is also driven by a fear of cultural assimilation. The chapter engages with the use of oral culture by Traveller parents as a means of education. Stories, songs and Traveller languages are employed to instil essential values and

attributes in children. The 'Jack' stories as told by Duncan Williamson, or the popular song "The Farmer of Cheshire", prioritise self-reliance and independent thinking among young Travellers.

Chapter Five, "Travellers in the Media", discusses the media portrayal of Travellers, including three studies of newspaper coverage, a selection of Traveller-focussed radio programmes, and the reality show *My Big Fat Gypsy Weddings*. It also draws comparative links between how Traveller singers and Blues musicians have been represented in the media. The chapter concludes with an overview of the growing field of Traveller-led media representation, including magazines, websites and participation in social media.

Chapter Six, "The Good Old Days", analyses the reasons why many Travellers believe that their lives were better in the past. This may be due to rapid social and cultural changes, as many Travellers are forced to live in standard accommodation, due to a dearth of official halting sites and the criminalisation of unofficial encampments. Healthcare concerns and changes in modes of work have also led many Travellers to believe that their lives were better in the past. Settled people are also influenced by nostalgia, as although many people recall Travellers making tin vessels or hawking houses, they do not recognise the many Travellers taking up professional jobs and 'passing' for settled people. The invisibility of Travellers working in contemporary roles leads to Travellers being accused of laziness and over-reliance on the welfare state. Some songs written by settled people to address the changes in Traveller culture are very nostalgic and romantic, while many Travellers' songs provide more realistic depictions of the past.

Chapter Seven, "Traveller Origins and Nostalgia", traces the influence of Gypsy Lore Society scholars and how their notion of the 'true' Gypsy has informed representations of Gypsies and Travellers. It examines how an interest in primitivism and the rise of industrialisation meant that Gypsies became symbolic figures of freedom and rural life in Britain. The chapter also discusses the extent to which Scottish folklorists and Irish Literary Revivalists were influenced by the work of the Gypsylorists, whose scholarship often considered Irish and Scottish Travellers to be as inferior to 'true' Gypsies, and labelled them 'didakai' or 'tinkers'. This "scapegoat mechanism" continues to influence representations of Gypsies and Travellers, and permeates many discussions over the creation of halting sites, Traveller ethnicity and the value of Irish and Scottish Traveller culture.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of the overall value of Traveller songs in representations of Traveller culture and also points to areas of further study. A section of appendices follows, which correspond to each chapter, and provide full versions of the songs under discussion. The songs collected in the appendices have never been brought together in this way before. The appendices also present contextual information about each song, and chart the development of multiple variations of the same song, where appropriate. Each song is supplied with at least one reference to a recorded performance, which retains the oral and musical aspects of the material under discussion.

The thesis develops an interdisciplinary reading of Traveller culture, which approaches Traveller music through the context of memoir writing. Its innovation lies in tracing the complex connections between literary studies, oral communication and wider social interactions between Travellers and sedentary society. Together, the thesis and the

appendices form an essential and unique comparative discussion of Romany Gypsy, Irish Traveller, and Scottish Traveller songs, and provide an original contribution to this important area of study.

Chapter One

Previous Research

Folk Song Collection

The collection and publication of folk songs in the English language has a long history. Some of the earliest examples of songbooks were anthologies of broadside ballads. Dating from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, "broadsides" were single songs printed on a sheet of paper and sold by chapmen to the public in city streets, in markets, and at fairs. Balladeers would sing the songs printed on broadsides to encourage their customers to buy them. Cheap songbooks, known as chapbooks, could be formed by folding several broadsides together. Larger songbooks were also produced for wealthier markets. Thomas D'Urfey's *Wit and Mirth: or, Pills to Purge Melancholy* is one of the best-known early anthologies of English songs, which expanded over the course of several decades and reprints from an original single volume published without music in 1661, to a six-volume collection in 1719-1720. [1] In Scotland, a variety of small songbooks appeared around the same period, but two of the most extensive publications appeared later: *Scots Musical Museum* (1787-1803) by James Johnson in collaboration with Robert Burns, and Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–03).[2] In Ireland, *The Charms of Melody* (1776) by John Colles collected one hundred popular

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[1] Thomas D'Urfey, *Wit and Mirth: or, Pills to Purge Melancholy; Being a Collection of the Best Merry Ballads and Songs, Old and New, Fitted to All Humours, Having Each Their Proper Tune for Either Voice, Or Instrument*, 6 vols. (London: W. Pearson for J. Tonson, 1719- 1720)

[2] James Johnson, *Scots Musical Museum* (Edinburgh: James Johnson & Co., 1787-1803); Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border: Consisting of Historical and Romantic Ballads, Collected in the Southern Counties of Scotland; With a Few of Modern Date, Founded Upon Local Tradition, In Two Volumes* (Kelso: James Ballantyne for T. Cadell Jun., and London: W. Davies, 1802-1803)

songs in the English language.[3] Another collector, Charlotte Brooke, translated songs from Irish into English for her compilation *Reliques of Irish Poetry* (1789).[4] Other Irish music and song collectors, such as George Petrie, aimed to collect Irish-language songs in their entirety. Petrie died in 1866 with his work unfinished, but other scholars carried on his project, and *The Complete Collection of Irish Music* was published in three volumes between 1902 and 1905.[5]

In the late nineteenth century, simple anthologies of popular ballads were replaced by large systematised compilations, as collectors developed a more scholarly interest in folk song. American academic James Francis Child, the first song collector to attempt to record and classify all the known ballads and variants in England and Scotland, published *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* in ten parts and five volumes between 1882 and 1898.[6] Child used thematic classifications to arrange the songs in order, creating a reference system which is still in use today. Songs which are included in this collection are known as "Child Ballads". Members of the London-based Folk-Song Society, created in 1898, focused on collecting and publishing folk songs from Britain and Ireland in their *Folk Music* journal. Cecil Sharp, a member of the Folk-Song Society, combined the organisation with the English Folk Dance Society in 1932 to form the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS). Sharp, being both a musician and an academic, placed great importance on collecting songs from singers 'in the field', rather than simply treating them as poems. He sought out singers directly,

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[3] John Colles, *The Charms of Melody: Being a Select Collection of the Newest and Most Approved Humorous, Drinking, & Loyal Songs* (Dublin: Printed for John Colles, 1776)
[4] Charlotte Brooke, *Reliques of Irish Poetry: Consisting of Heroic Poems, Odes, Elegies, and Songs, Translated into English Verse: with Notes Explanatory and Historical; and the Originals in the Irish Character. To Which is Subjoined an Irish Tale by Miss Brooke* (Dublin: G. Bonham, 1789)
[5] George Petrie, *The Complete Collection of Irish Music*, 3 vols. (London: Boosey & Co., 1902-1905)
[6] James Francis Child, ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, 10 parts in 5 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1882-1898)

rather than approaching them through local officials, as had been done previously. Sharp published extensively from his field notes and arranged songs with piano accompaniment for use in schools to encourage children to perform folk music. Sharp also travelled to North America to record the songs of English emigrants, publishing *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* in 1932.[7] The songs he collected in Britain were published posthumously, as *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs*, in 1974.[8] Both publications use a slightly different classification system to Child's. Many other collectors documented the folk songs of their region, generating their own classification systems. For example, *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*, initiated in 1902 by Gavin Greig and James Bruce Duncan, collected ballads in standard English and also Scots dialect songs from singers in northeast Scotland. Because Greig and Duncan allowed their singers to choose what material should be recorded for the collection, some of the resulting entries were considered too bawdy for general consumption, which partly explains why a full publication of the collection came so late (this full publication began in 1981 and continued until 2002).[9] George Malcolm Laws, a member of the American Folklore Society, created yet another system. One of his collections, *American Balladry from British Broadsides*

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[7] Cecil J. Sharp, *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians, Comprising Two Hundred and Seventy-Three Songs and Ballads with Nine Hundred and Sixty-Eight Tunes Contributed by Olive Dame Campbell*, ed. Maud Karpeles, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1932)

[8] Maud Karpeles, ed., *Cecil Sharp's Collection of English Folk Songs*, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974)

[9] Patrick Shuldham-Shaw and Emily B Lyle et al., eds. *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*, 8 vols. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press; Edinburgh: Mercat Press, for the University of Aberdeen in association with the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1981-2002)

(1957), concentrated on ballads of American origin which had become assimilated into British folk song.[10]

In more recent times, the development of computer databases and the internet has provided the opportunity to create ever larger and more accessible folk song collections. It has also enabled researchers to listen to or watch performances of songs instantly. In 1993, London librarian Steve Roud began to develop an extensive song database, the *Folksong Index.* This collection documents all previously-recorded traditional English-language songs in any medium, including books, journals, newspapers and manuscript collections, between 1900 and 1975. An adjunct database, the *Broadside Index,* originally concentrated on songs published as part of the printed street literature trade, between the late sixteenth to late nineteenth centuries. It also now covers a much wider range of popular and vernacular songs up to around 1920. Originally only available via CD subscription, Roud's collections can now be accessed online from the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, a website maintained by the EFDSS.[11] In 2013, the EFDSS launched their own project, *The Full English*, the world's biggest digital archive of traditional music and dance tunes.[12] Their ongoing archive project has 44,000 records and over 58,000 digitised images. More specialised collections are also available online, for example *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist O Riches*, a Scottish song collection containing over 34,000 oral recordings made in Scotland from

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[10] G. Malcolm Laws, Jr., *American Balladry from British Broadsides: A Guide for Students and Collectors of Traditional Song*, Publications of the American Folklore Society, Bibliographical and Special Series, vol. 8 (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1957)

[11] Steve Roud, *Folksong Index* and *Broadside Index.* Combined online at *Vaughan Williams Memorial Library website.* Accessed August 23, 2012. <http://www.vwml.org/search/search-roud-indexes>

[12] English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), *The Full English*. Accessed August 23, 2014. <http://www.vwml.org/browse/browse-collections-full-english>

the 1930s onwards.[13] In Ireland, the Irish Traditional Music Archive maintains a number of different online song collections.[14] As one example, the *Inishowen Song Project* is an online library of material based on the traditional singers and songs of the Inishowen peninsula in County Donegal.[15]

In *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British 'Folksong' 1700 to the Present Day* (1985), Dave Harker points out that although many folk song collections were produced for profit, collectors or "mediators" never published songs without an intellectual reason.[16] Therefore, songs were chosen, manipulated and utilised to fit the interests of the collector. D'Urfey used his *Wit and Mirth: or, Pills to Purge Melancholy* to promote his own compositions, ensuring that his songs "had metres compatible with common tunes and could therefore be sung in the streets."[17] Other collectors published song collections to improve their academic or professional status in society. Two nineteenth-century publications, supposedly composed of previously undiscovered ancient ballads, were subsequently found to have been fabricated by their "collectors". James Macpherson claimed that his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland and Translated from the Gallic or Erse Language* (1760) were translations from the songs of Ossian, a fabled third century Scottish bard.[18] In fact, much of the material was pieced together from existing Scottish ballads, with a framing device

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[13] Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches, *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches website*. Accessed August 23, 2014. <http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk>
[14] Irish Traditional Music Archive, *Irish Traditional Music Archive website*. Accessed 13 July 2014. <http://www.itma.ie>
[15] Irish Traditional Music Archive, *Inishowen Song Project*. Accessed 13 July 2014. <http://www.itma.ie/inishowen>
[16] Dave Harker, *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British 'Folksong' 1700 to the Present Day* (Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1985), 2
[17] Ibid., 5
[18] James Macpherson, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland and Translated from the Gallic or Erse Language* (Edinburgh: Printed for G. Hamilton and J. Balfour, 1760)

borrowed from Irish mythology. Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) was apparently entirely based on the contents of an old manuscript which he had rescued from a fire.[19] The manuscript did exist, and has been studied by later scholars, despite Percy tearing out pages and writing notes directly onto the copy. However, Percy used only a small number of these ballads, in a heavily re-written form. Other material came from broadsides and more modern sources. Scott, perhaps more concerned with representing a strong sense of Scottish nationalism than personal gain, also rewrote and added verses to some songs in *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. Finally, Child wished to catalogue only traditional ballads, and differentiated between what he regarded as traditional ballads and more recent compositions, which were excluded from his collection. Since Child died before he could provide an explanation for his selection process, it is impossible to know the exact reasoning behind his choices.

Gypsy and Traveller Song Collection

In a manner similar to folk-song collection, the gathering and publication of stories, songs and Traveller language from British Gypsies, Irish Travellers and Scottish Travellers has been shaped by the interests of settled researchers and collectors. Although a definitive history of song collection from these groups remains to be written, no significant research in this area appears until the late nineteenth century, and no specialist songbooks appear until the twentieth century. Heinrich Grellmann's

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[19] Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and Other Pieces of Our Earlier Poets, (Chiefly of the Lyric Kind) Together with Some Few of Later Date* (London: J. Dodsley, 1765)

Dissertation on the Gipsies (1787) is considered to be the earliest 'scientific' enquiry into European Gypsies and their culture.[20] Among his observations, Grellmann mentions that music is "the only science in which the Gipsies participate, in any considerable degree".[21] However, he does not include examples of Gypsy songs, and declares them instead to be compositions in the style of "rude unpolished people."[22] Grellmann's attitude appears to have influenced many early researchers of English Gypsies and Scottish Travellers, as they display little interest in collecting songs. John Hoyland, in *A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits, and Present State of the Gypsies* (1816) makes only a passing reference to Gypsies "fiddling at feasts and fairs".[23] James Crabb, in *The Gipsies Advocate* (1832) only mentions a Gypsy singer who "sang her song very gaily" up to the advanced and improbable age of one hundred and twenty years old.[24] In his observations of Scottish Border Gypsies, *The Gypsies of Kirk Yetholm* (1884), William Brockie provides a single line of reference to music, stating that the Gypsy men he saw played the violin and bagpipes.[25]

The highly influential publications of George Borrow, which helped to inspire the creation of the Gypsy Lore Society in 1888, engage more fully with Gypsy songs. His 1841 book *The Zincali*, was a study of Spanish Gypsies, featuring examples of

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[20] Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipsies: Being an Historical Enquiry Concerning the Manner of Life, Economy, Customs and Conditions of this People in Europe, and their Origin*, trans. Matthew Raper (London: G. Bigg, P. Elmsley, T. Cadell and J. Sewell, 1787)
[21] Ibid., 64-65
[22] Ibid., 65
[23] John Hoyland, *A Historical Survey of the Customs, Habits, and Present State of the Gypsies* (York: William Alexander,1816), 213
[24] James Crabb, *The Gipsies Advocate, Or Observations on the Origin, Character, Manners, and Habits, of the English Gipsies* (London: Nisbet, 1832), 30
[25] William Brockie, *The Gypsies of Kirk Yetholm* (Kelso, J. & J.H. Rutherfurd, 1884), 77

Gypsy poetry, stories and Romani vocabulary.[26] However, his later semi-fictionalised works *Lavengro; the Scholar, the Gypsy, the Priest* (1851), and *Romany Rye: A Sequel to Lavengro* (1857), detail Borrow's experiences with English Gypsies.[27] These books feature a handful of Gypsy songs in Anglo-Romani language. Borrow's final publication on Gypsies, *Romano Lavo-Lil* (1874), is mainly comprised of a "word-book" or glossary of Romani vocabulary, with examples of Gypsy songs and observations of various Gypsy groups around the world.[28] A section of twelve songs he collected from English Gypsies appears in Anglo-Romani with English translations. Despite his interest in Romani language, Borrow does not appear to have represented it accurately: Gypsy academic Ian Hancock has criticised Borrow for his poor understanding of Romani, his tendency to mix together the lexicon of different dialects, and his habit of generating words and grammar of his own.[29]

It would appear that many early British researchers of Gypsies and Travellers were preoccupied with a quest for exoticism. They regarded Gypsy music and songs from the Balkans, Hungary, Romania, Spain and Russia as being far superior to those of local nomads. Frances Hindes Groome, author of *In Gypsy Tents* (1880), an account of his experiences with a group of Welsh Gypsies, notoriously proclaimed that "the Anglo-Romani muse is dead, if indeed she ever lived: but on the Continent collections

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[26] George Borrow, *The Zincali; or, An Account of the Gypsies in Spain. With an Original Collection of the Songs and Poetry, and a Copious Dictionary of their Language* (London: John Murray,1841)
[27] George Borrow, *Lavengro; the Scholar, the Gypsy, the Priest*, 3 vols. (London: J. Murray, 1851); *Romany Rye: A Sequel to Lavengro*, 2 vols. (London: J. Murray, 1857)
[28] George Borrow, *Romano Lavo-Lil: Word Book of the Romany; or, English Gypsy Language. With Many Pieces in Gypsy, Illustrative of the Way of Speaking and Thinking of the English Gypsies; with Specimens of their Poetry* (London: J. Murray, 1874)
[29] Ian Hancock, "George Borrow's Romani", Pater Bakker (ed.) *The Typology and Dialectology of Romani* (Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1998), 67

have been formed of genuine Gipsy poetry."[30] This search for evidence of the "genuine" or 'true' Gypsy, particularly by members of the Gypsy Lore Society, resulted in the undertaking of far greater research on foreign Gypsy songs than those of Britain and Ireland. For example, George Black's *Gypsy Bibliography* (1914) lists one hundred and twenty entries on the songs and music of Travellers, with only twenty-seven featuring British Travellers and Gypsies, or Irish Travellers.[31] The search for cultural authenticity also appears to have influenced the researchers who did focus on British nomads, as they chiefly focussed on 'true' Gypsies over Scottish or Irish tinkers, and sought out songs featuring Romani language at the expense of those sung in English. For example, John Sampsons's contribution to the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* (*JGLS*), "English Gypsy Songs and Rhymes" (1890), consists of eighteen Anglo-Romani song fragments, with only one song translated into English.[32]

Andrew McCormick maintained contact with a family of Border and Galloway Gypsies for over twenty years, yet he only included four of their songs in his book *The Tinkler-Gypsies* (1907). McCormick's attempts to coax a group of Gypsy children into singing betray his limited research focus: he sang Romani songs to the children which he "had learned from the book published by Leland" in the hope that they would know similar songs.[33] The book he referred to is Charles Godfrey Leland's *English-Gipsy Songs* (1875).[34] Further scrutiny of this publication raises the issue of another type of authenticity: the legitimacy of the collector's material. Folk song collector Peter

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[30] Francis Hindes Groome, *In Gypsy Tents* (Edinburgh: William P. Nimmo, 1880), 146
[31] George Fraser Black, *A Gypsy Bibliography* (1914; updated edition, Mansfield Center, Connecticut: Martino Fine Books, 2000)
[32] John Sampson, "English Gypsy Songs and Rhymes", *JGLS* 1st series 2.0 (1890), 80-93
[33] Andrew McCormick, *The Tinkler-Gypsies* (London: Simpkin, Marshall Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1906), 247
[34] Charles Godfrey Leland, *English-Gipsy Songs. In Rommany with Metrical English Translations* (London: Trübner & Co., 1875)

Kennedy, in his song collection *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland* (1975), comments that Leland's publication "contains mainly rye-songs by Leland, Palmer and Tuckey, and a handful of genuine Romany jingles".[35] Leland was not alone in creating his own 'true' Gypsy songs, as Groome quoted sections of fifteen songs in English, in his work *In Gypsy Tents* (1880). The majority of the songs featured were standard British ballads, but two obscure Anglo-Romani songs were later found to have been translated from English ballads by Groome himself. Although Groome was one of a minority of researchers in this period to represent Gypsies singing English folk songs, the inclusion of his own compositions reinforces the sense that his desire, as with similar researchers, was to provide language-appropriate examples of 'true' Gypsy culture for his peers.

Although many Gypsy 'experts' overlooked the songs of British Gypsies and Travellers, some early song collectors also overlooked them when seeking new material. For example, Gavin Greig (of *The Greig-Duncan Folk Song Collection*) knew Scottish Traveller Geordie Robertson, lived within walking distance of his croft, and asked him to play bagpipes at one of his comedy productions. Yet, Grieg never attempted to record any folksongs from him. Hamish Henderson and Francis Collinson, in their introduction to the second volume of *Scottish Studies*, explain Greig's omission as a symptom of social prejudice. "Greig got the bulk of his wonderful music from the farming community, and Geordie Robertson was a tinker – a settled tinker, a crofter and 'made horseman', but still a tinker. In Greig's day this represented a real social barrier."[36] Greig did include a handful of songs from Scottish Travellers in his collection, but they were posted to him by other settled people. However, other song

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[35] Peter Kennedy, *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland* (London: Cassell, 1975), 748
[36] Hamish Henderson and Francis Collinson, "New Child Ballads Variants from Oral Tradition", *Scottish Studies* 9 (1965), 2

collectors recognised the value of Gypsy and Traveller singers and approached them directly. The song collector Laura Alexandrine Smith recorded a handful of original songs from Gypsies, including them in her collection *Through Romany Songland* (1889).[37] Despite this, the majority of the songs in her publication were second-hand, taken from the works of McCormick, Leland and Borrow. Sharp had his first meeting with Gypsies in 1907, when he was collecting for the Folk-Song Society in Devon.[38] Sharp recorded songs from various Gypsies in the southwest of England over the course of his lifetime, until he died in 1924, publishing them intermittently in the *Journal of the Folk-Song Society (JFSS)*. Other members of the Society continued to publish Sharp's work after his death, but often grouped songs thematically, mixing together songs collected from Gypsies with those from other singers.

Although this perhaps illustrates that members of the Folk-Song Society regarded songs recorded from Gypsy singers as being equal to those collected from sedentary people, this approach makes it difficult to gather together all their Gypsy material. Sharp collected songs from Gypsies who lived in wagons, but he may also have unknowingly recorded many Gypsies who were living more sedentary lives, or who were "passing" as settled people. Folk singer Yvette Staelens recognises that a number of Sharp's field notes and photographs suggest that other singers, such as Emma Glover, were also Gypsies. [39] Alice E. Gillington, a member of the Gypsy Lore Society, published the first song collection solely devoted to songs recorded directly

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[37] Laura Alexandrine Smith, *Through Romany Songland* (London: David Stott, 1889)
[38] Arthur Henry Fox Strangways, *Cecil Sharp: His Life and Work* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 41
[39] Yvette Staelens, "English Folk Music on the Margin - Cecil Sharp's Gypsies", in *Sharing Cultures 2011:Proceedings of the International Conference on Intangible Heritage* (Barcelos, Portugal: Greenlines Institute, 2011), 247-253.

from English Gypsies in 1910: *Old English Carols of the Southern Counties*.[40] A second volume, *Songs of the Open Road: Didakei Ditties & Gypsy Dances*, appeared in 1911.[41] The composer Ralph Vaughan Williams also used a number of songs collected from local Gypsies in his compilation with Ella Mary Leather, *Twelve Traditional Carols from Herefordshire* (1920).[42] However, Jeremy Sandford, in the introduction to his compilation of English Gypsy, Scottish Traveller and Irish Traveller songs, *Songs from the Roadside* (1995), remarks that Vaughan Williams did not "appreciate the richness of the words" of the Gypsy carols because he changed them prior to publication.[43]

The 1950s folk music revival created a surge of interest in the songs of British Gypsies, and, for the first time, Scottish Traveller and Irish Traveller singers. The BBC began to record folk songs for Peter Kennedy's radio programme *As I Roved Out* in the early 1950s. Collectors including Kennedy, Hamish Henderson and Irish folklorist Séamus Ennis recorded songs from across Britain, and some of the material they collected came from Gypsies and Travellers. In his study of British Gypsy song, *Now Shoon the Romano Gillie* (2001), Tim Coughlan also points out that the folk music revival shifted the attention of collectors away from songs performed in the Romani language, in order to provide songs in English for a mainstream audience.[44] Song collectors began to record material from Gypsies and Travellers that had either been adapted from songs written by settled people, or composed by Gypsies and Travellers

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[40] Alice E. Gillington, *Old English Carols of the Southern Counties* (London: Curwen, 1910)
[41] Alice E. Gillington, *Songs of the Open Road: Didakei Ditties & Gypsy Dances* (London: Joseph Williams, 1911)
[42] Ralph Vaughan Williams and Ella Mary Leather, *Twelve Traditional Carols from Herefordshire* (London: Stainer and Bell, 1920)
[43] Jeremy Sandford, *Songs from the Roadside* (Clun: The Red Lake Press, 1995), 7
[44] Tim Coughlan, *Now Shoon the Romano Gillie: Traditional Verse in the High and Low Speech of the Gypsies of Britain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 135

in the English language. In 1951, Henderson established the Edinburgh School of Scottish Studies, with fellow folklorist Calum Mclean. A significant amount of the fieldwork Henderson undertook for the School involved recording the culture of Scottish Travellers. He produced articles exploring the many singers he recorded, including Duncan Williamson, Stanley Robertson, and the Stewart family of Blairgowrie, in the school's journal, *Tócher*. A simple search for "Travellers" on the *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist O Riches* website reveals the huge volume of recordings undertaken by Henderson.

The influential American folk music collector Alan Lomax also took a field trip to Ireland in 1951 while undertaking recordings of songs and interviews for the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress. Lomax recorded Irish Traveller singer and banjo player Margaret Barry, and included her version of "She Moved Through the Fair" on the Colombia World Library Irish volume of 1955.[45] Lomax later invited Barry to London and recorded more of her material, producing an album of songs and interviews.[46] In Scotland, Hamish Henderson learned of a Scottish Traveller with a reputation as an excellent singer, and visited Jeannie Robertson at her home in 1953. Henderson introduced Robertson to Lomax, and later in the same year, Robertson and Barry were recorded for the BBC series *The Song Hunter*, presented by Alan Lomax. This was the first time Irish and Scottish Traveller singers appeared on national television. Lomax and Henderson went on to include several of Robertson's songs

[45] Alan Lomax, *The Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music Volume I: Ireland* (Colombia, 1955)
[46] Margaret Barry, *I Sang Through the Fairs* The Alan Lomax Collection: Portraits (1953; reissue, Rounder 1998)

across many different musical releases, including *Jeannie Robertson: Songs of a Scots Tinker Lady* (1954).[47]

Around this period, amateur collectors also discovered the music and songs of Irish Travellers. Tony Knowland, Professor of English at Magee University College, Derry, was visiting his parents-in-law in Connemara when he met Irish Traveller brothers Paddy and Stephen Rainey. He later recorded the two fiddle players, with Paddy's wife Biddie providing the voice to several ballads, at a pub in Letterfrack in 1956. A CD of this session was released in 2006 as *The Raineys* by Pavee Point Travellers' Centre.[48] Photographer Alen MacWeeney visited a halting site in Ballyfermot in 1967, with the intention of recording stories and songs to accompany the photographs he had taken of Travellers two years previously. His recordings were later released on CD by Pavee Point as *Whisht...Irish Traveller Folktales and Songs* in 2002.[49]

Folk singer Ewan MacColl was one of the most influential figures in the folk music revival and held the contribution of Travellers to folk music in the highest regard. He commented that, after many years of recording Gypsy and Traveller singers, their traditions and way of life made them "the real custodians of English and Scots traditional song".[50] In the 1960s, MacColl produced a series of programmes for BBC radio. The "Radio Ballads" series was a revolutionary presentation of folk music, combining field recordings, excerpts from interviews with the public, and new

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[47] Jeannie Robertson, *Jeannie Robertson: Songs of a Scots Tinker Lady* (New York: Riverside Records, 1954)
[48] The Raineys, *The Raineys*, (Pavee Point Travellers Centre, 2006)
[49] The Cassidys, *Whisht... Irish Traveller Folktales and Songs* (Pavee Point Travellers Centre, 2002)
[50] Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, *Travellers' Songs from England and Scotland* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977), 15

arrangements of traditional songs performed by MacColl and Peggy Seeger. One of these programmes, *The Travelling People* (1964), included comments recorded from Travellers and the views of anti-nomadic councillors and members of the public.[51] MacColl used melodies based on traditional Traveller songs to create new compositions, many of which became some of his best-known work. Examples of these songs are "Go! Move! Shift!" and "The Thirty Foot Trailer." In 1977, MacColl and Seeger compiled a songbook from the many field recordings they had taken of English Gypsy and Scottish Traveller singers, publishing *Travellers' Songs from England and Scotland*. The book was noteworthy for MacColl's statement about having to "defend the *bona fides* of his informants" against the myths surrounding the 'true' Gypsy during his recording sessions. [52] After being introduced to the Stewart family by Hamish Henderson, MacColl and Seeger went on to produce a book detailing the family's culture, stories and extensive song repertoire: *Till Doomsday in the Afternoon: The Folklore of a Family of Scots Travellers, the Stewarts of Blairgowrie* was published in 1986.[53] This volume departs from the previous emphasis by past collectors, who often recorded songs as discrete material that had been 'looked after' by Travellers, and instead begins to investigate where songs, stories and other examples of oral culture fit into Traveller culture.

Other song collectors published significant compilations of material recorded from Gypsy and Traveller singers in the 1970s. Peter Kennedy's extensive *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland* (1975) has a large section of songs by English Gypsies, Scottish

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[51] Ewan MacColl, Charles Parker and Peggy Seeger, *BBC Radio Ballads: The Travelling People* (BBC Home Service August 1964; Topic, 2008)
[52] Ibid., 1-2
[53] Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, *Till Doomsday in the Afternoon: The Folklore of a Family of Scots Travellers, the Stewarts of Blairgowrie* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986)

Travellers and Irish Travellers, with copious notes on word variations, Anglo-Romani and Cant vocabulary, and ethnographical details. He also cites details about Gypsy recordings made by members of the EDFSS for their journal. Unfortunately, Kennedy also recycled some information about various Gypsy sub-types and myths, including marriage ceremonies which involve the mingling of blood. Because Kennedy had direct contact with his singers who could have discredited these myths, it is possible that some individuals simply provided what they thought he expected to hear. When constructing his introductory section on Gypsies and Travellers, Kennedy also had to rely on the scant and out-dated research on Travellers and Gypsies that was available at the time. More importantly perhaps, he provided another reason as to why many early song collectors presumed that Gypsies did not have any songs of their own: many of the oldest songs survive only as fragments, with the missing sections filled in by mouthed sounds. These would not have resembled 'songs' as recognised in the standard form.[54] An entirely different style of songbook from this period, *The Romano Drom Songbook* (1971) by Denise Stanley, was produced to bridge the cultural gap between Gypsy children and their teachers, allowing school classes to sing together and act out songs, and to inspire further creative work. A greatly expanded second edition of the songbook in 1986 focussed primarily on "hitherto unpublished Romanes song", although it also included songs originating from Scottish and Irish Travellers.[55]

The collection of Irish Traveller songs in Ireland has been minimal when compared to that of the School of Scottish Studies or by contributors to the EFDSS. Most collectors from the Irish Folklore Commission, formed in 1935, sought material

[54] Kennedy, *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, 747
[55] Denise Stanley, *The Romano Drom Songbook* (1971; second ed., Romanestan Publications: London, 1986), 2

about Travellers from the settled population, but very few worked in depth with Travellers themselves. One exception to this is Tom Munnelly, the most prolific collector of songs from Irish Travellers in Ireland. Many of his early recordings were taken from Travellers, and he continued to record songs and stories in camps and halting sites for over thirty years. Munnelly formed the Folk Music Society of Ireland in 1971, and published articles in the journal, *Béaloideas*. He also began working at the Department of Irish Folklore at University College Dublin a year later. John Reilly was an Irish Traveller living in County Roscommon when Munnelly first met and recorded him in 1965. His recordings of John Reilly were issued as *The Bonny Green Tree* in 1978, and proved hugely influential to many Irish musicians, including Christy Moore.[56] A wider selection of Munnelly's Traveller recordings, *Songs of the Irish Travellers 1967-75*, was released in 1983, and re-released for Pavee Point in 2007.[57] Details about these singers and their songs were taken from an article Munnelly had written in 1975 for a special edition of the *Folk Music Journal*, dedicated to "Music of the Travelling People".[58] Other articles in this edition included an obituary of Jeannie Robertson by Ailie Munro, an exploration of Scottish Traveller songs from the School of Scottish Studies by Peter A. Hall, and an account of Irish Traveller singers by Jim Carroll.[59] Carroll recorded Irish Travellers, mainly in London, beginning in 1972, and continued to visit certain individuals, such as Mikeen McCarthy, into the 1990s. A selection of his recordings were released in 1986 by the EDFSS as *Early in the Month*

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[56] John Reilly, *The Bonny Green Tree: Songs of an Irish Traveller* (Topic Records, 1978)
[57] Tom Munnelly, *Songs of the Irish Travellers* (Pavee Point Travellers Centre, 2007)
[58] Tom Munnelly, "The Singing Tradition of Irish Travellers", *Folk Music Journal* 3.1 Music of the Travelling People (1975), 3-30
[59] Ailie Munro, "Jeannie Robertson, 1908-1975", *Folk Music Journal*, 93-94; Peter A. Hall "Scottish Tinker Songs", *Folk Music Journal*, 41-62; Jim Carroll, "Irish Travellers Around London", *Folk Music Journal*, 31-40

of Spring, and was later reissued with further songs added as *From Puck to Appleby: Songs of Irish Travellers in England* (2003).[60]

Some of the most recent songbooks devoted to Traveller songs have attempted to go further than describing each song's links to other song variations or the antiquity of the ballads they have collected. They also include contextual notes, suggesting why certain songs might be significant to individuals and their nomadic culture. One example of this is Sandford's *Songs from the Roadside*. Mike Yates's *Traveller's Joy: Songs of English and Scottish Travellers and Gypsies 1965-2005* (2006) is a more conventional songbook, but has up-to-date ethnographical information and an accompanying CD.[61] Yates's introduction also traces the historic forms of Gypsy and Traveller song, from broadsides and street cries to compositions which address modern Traveller concerns. One of the most unusual publications about Traveller music, *Free Spirits: Irish Travellers and Irish Traditional Music* (2011) by Tommy Fegan and Oliver O'Connell, is a 'coffee table' book which charts the involvement of Travellers in the development of Irish music from the nineteenth century onwards.[62] Alongside Traveller musicians John Cash, the Fureys, Pecker Dunne and the Raineys, the book also features settled musicians who have been influenced by Travellers' techniques and performance styles. *Free Spirits* is more of a historical outline of Traveller music than a songbook, but it does include songs written about famous Traveller musicians, such as "The Pat Rainey Song", and a section of musical transcription written by various

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[60] Jim Carroll and Pat Mackenzie, *From Puck to Appleby: Songs of Irish Travellers in England* (Musical Traditions, 2003)
[61] Mike Yates, *Traveller's Joy: Songs of English and Scottish Travellers and Gypsies 1965-2005* (London: The English Dance and Folk Society, 2006)
[62] Tommy Fegan and Oliver O'Connell, *Free Spirits: Irish Travellers and Irish Traditional Music* (Ennis: MPO Productions, 2011)

Travellers for the Uilleann pipes. It also displays the range of Traveller families who are involved in traditional music and hints at the significance of musical performance in their lives.

The recent CD collections produced by Pavee Point have provided an important outlet to highlight Irish Traveller music. All these musical releases have extensive booklets which contain details about the featured singers and their songs. A further collection entitled *Travellers and Fellow Travellers: Keepers of the Flame* (2006) combines recordings of musicians from the past, such as John Doherty, with contemporary artists like Finbar Furey. Emerging talents, such as John Rooney, also appear.[63] Another Irish Traveller association, Meath Travellers' Workshops Limited, have developed a *Traveller Heritage* website to assist in "preserving, promoting and celebrating Traveller History and culture".[64] Their webpages contain interviews with Irish Travellers that are interspersed with participants' songs, and there is also a further selection of songs which can be streamed directly from the webpage.[65] Possibly due to the smaller numbers of Gypsies and Travellers in Scotland, and the extensive collecting undertaken by the School of Scottish Studies, there is no equivalent Traveller-based website to showcase Scottish Traveller songs and culture. However, numerous streamed recordings are available on the *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist O Riches* website. Mike Yates has also released two collections of Scottish Traveller recordings on CD. *Travellers' Tales* (2002) is a collection of stories and songs Yates recorded from

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[63] Various Artists, *Travellers and Fellow Travellers: Keepers of the Flame* (Pavee Point Travellers Centre, 2006)

[64] Meath Travellers Workshops, "Home", *Traveller Heritage website.* Accessed March 15, 2013. <http://www.travellerheritage.ie/default.asp>

[65] Meath Travellers Workshops, "Music and Song", *Traveller Heritage website.* Accessed March 15, 2013. <http://www.travellerheritage.ie/music.asp>

Scottish Travellers in two volumes.[66] A later release, *Hamish Henderson Collects* (2006), features recordings of a mixture of sedentary Scots and Scottish Travellers from Henderson's archives at the School of Scottish Studies.[67]

Finally, the recently-formed online project the Song Collector's Collective contains old and new recordings of English Gypsies, Scottish Travellers and Irish Travellers.[68] Often the recordings contain not only the songs, but also singers' accounts of why they chose to perform certain songs and the meaning behind them. Created by song collectors Sam Lee and James McDonald and Irish Traveller singer Thomas McCarthy, the project aims to bring together singers, storytellers and musicians to conserve the traditional oral culture of Britain, Ireland and other locations. It also works to train amateur song collectors, thereby empowering individuals and communities to record aspects of their own culture. This exciting project has the potential to keep the recordings of Gypsy and Traveller oral culture alive for future generations.

Research into Scottish and Irish Traveller Culture

Academic research into Scottish and Irish Travellers has previously taken the form of either anthropological observation, or investigations into cultural output such as storytelling, song and other aspects of oral culture. Sometimes the line between these two formats blur, creating publications that not only document the stories and songs of Travellers, but include interviews with the individuals behind them, providing a link

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[66] Mike Yates, *Travellers' Tales: Songs, Stories and Ballads from Scottish Travellers*, 2 vols. (Kyloe, 2002)
[67] Mike Yates, *Hamish Henderson Collects: Songs, Ballads and a Story from the Archives of the School of Scottish Studies*, 2 vols. (Kyloe, 2005-2006)
[68] The Song Collectors Collective, "Home", *Song Collectors Collective website*. Accessed November 12, 2013. <http://songcollectorscollective.co.uk/>

between cultural material and wider Traveller identity. *Puck of the Droms: The Lives and Literature of the Irish Tinkers*, by the American folklorist Artelia Court (1985), is one example of this type of publication.[69] Between the years 1965 and 1973 Court, accompanied by her husband Alen MacWeeney, visited Irish Travellers living in various parts of Ireland. Her book begins with a lengthy introduction, containing some general observations of "Tinker values and styles of thought" before moving on to discuss the historic representations of Irish Travellers.[70] Court also provides details about Traveller trades and aspects of everyday life, and addresses the difficulties surrounding Travellers from the 1960s onwards. Although many of the points Court makes are useful, particularly concerning the cultural differences between Gypsies and Irish Travellers, she tends to make generalised observational comments about Travellers, and some of these are very negative. For example, Court portrays Travellers as having a tendency to violence, describing brawling and wife-beating as though they were an inescapable aspect of Traveller identity. In the main section of the book, Court's biographies of Bridget Murphy, Patrick Stokes and Johnny Cassidy are written in the first person, and are interspersed with stories and songs. Some of this additional material comes directly from the Travellers in question, as with Cassidy's folktales. However, most of the songs which appear in the narratives were recorded from different Travellers, and this is documented in the endnotes by Tom Munnelly. Consequently, most of the songs serve to compliment vague themes, rather than to add any deeper meaning to the events described. For example, when Murphy mentions that her father "loved to drink", Court inserts lyrics to the song "Carrickfergus" underneath,

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[69] Artelia Court, *Puck of the Droms: The Lives and Literature of the Irish Tinkers* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1985)
[70] Ibid., xi

presumably chosen for the couplet: "I'm drunk today, but I'm seldom sober/I am a rover, I go from town to town".[71] If the song has any wider meaning for Murphy or her father, this is left unexplained.

Alen MacWeeney also published material from his period of research with Court as *Irish Travellers: Tinkers No More* (2007).[72] The book is mainly composed of striking black-and-white photographs of Travellers living at halting sites in Cherry Orchard and Labre Park, Dublin. MacWeeney opens the book with a brief introductory section on Irish Travellers, which covers similar ground to Court, but he avoids making overall generalisations. MacWeeney then provides an account of some of the memorable events he experienced whilst photographing Travellers, including details about the individuals he spent most time with. Like Court, MacWeeney incorporates stories from Johnny Cassidy and Patrick Stokes, and also music, in a CD of songs recorded from the Travellers he met during his research. Although MacWeeney's publication is very brief compared to Court's, and includes much of the same material, his combination of photographs, character portraits and music creates a more specific impression of Irish Traveller life and culture.

The Summer Walkers: Travelling People and Pearl-Fishers in the Highlands of Scotland (1996) by Timothy Neat is another approach to Travellers which blends together biography and folklore.[73] In his book, Neat transcribes interviews with seven Scottish Travellers, and also includes a chapter written by Hamish Henderson, who recalls his experiences of folk-song collecting among Travellers in the 1950s. In his

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[71] Ibid., 64
[72] Alen MacWeeney, *Irish Travellers: Tinkers No More* (New Hampshire: New England College Press, 2007)
[73] Timothy Neat, *The Summer Walkers: Travelling People and Pearl-Fishers in the Highlands of Scotland* (1996; reprint, Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2002)

introduction, Neat insists that the book "does not deal with music", however, most of the chapters feature the lyrics of songs sung by Scottish Travellers, along with the stories recorded during their interviews.[74] Neat also attempts to link the culture of Scottish Travellers with more mainstream literature, by using two chapters to illustrate examples of where Travellers have inspired authors such as William Shakespeare and Robert Burns. The overall impression Neat gives about Scottish Traveller culture is very nostalgic, and many of the individual Travellers appear to regard their lives as being more enjoyable in the past. These nostalgic views are somewhat offset by the material contained in three appendices, which describe specific aspects of Scottish Traveller culture, including discussion on origins, language and traditional camping areas.

Scottish Traveller Tales: Lives Shaped through Stories (2002) by Donald Braid, is an in-depth study of Scottish Traveller folklore which investigates the relationship of songs and stories to wider Traveller culture.[75] In search of storytelling traditions in Scotland, Braid travelled to the School of Scottish Studies and met Hamish Henderson, who suggested that he visit Scottish Traveller Duncan Williamson. After his initial visit in 1985, Braid returned over a ten year period to record Williamson and other Scottish Travellers. Braid's technique of asking Travellers themselves to describe their lives and culture allowed him to emphasise both the sense of individuality felt among Traveller families and their simultaneous connection to a wider community that is different to sedentary Scottish society. It also provided him with a standpoint from which to critique other research and representations of Travellers, and to reflect on the ways that

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[74] Ibid., ix
[75] Donald Braid, *Scottish Traveller Tales: Lives Shaped Through Stories* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002)

songs and stories reflect aspects of cultural identity. For example, Williamson's song "The Hawker's Lament" addresses the way Travellers are denied culturally-appropriate accommodation. The song represents the views of many Travellers, but was directly inspired by the discrimination experienced by Williamson's uncle. Unusually for these types of publications, Braid also suggests how the traditions of storytelling and singing will survive into the future. Overall, his book provides a much more useful insight into Traveller culture than a simple 'snapshot' from a specific time, although, as with similar studies, his interaction with only a small group of Travellers makes his observations limited in scope.

Some researchers set out to concentrate on the songs and stories performed by Travellers rather than their culture or identity, but inevitably contextualise the material for the reader. This is usually achieved in the form of an introduction, which is often brief and does not connect the material provided by Travellers with any wider cultural significance. For example, *To Shorten the Road* (1978) by George Gmelch and Ben Kroup, is a collection of stories from Irish Travellers Oney Power, John Power and Mickey Greene recorded for the Irish Folklore Commission in the 1930s.[76] Anthropologist George Gmelch provides two essays at the front of the book, describing folklore collection in the 1930s and how Irish Travellers lived during this time. Short biographies on each of the Traveller storytellers also appear in each section of the book, but none of these attempts at contextualisation explain each individual's choice of story, or what aspects of culture the material might reflect.

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[76] George Gmelch and Ben Kroup, *To Shorten the Road: Travellers' Folk Tales from Ireland* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1978)

Jeannie Robertson: Emergent Singer, Transformative Voice (1995), by James Porter and Herschel Gower, is a study which charts the development of Robertson's singing style and repertoire over the course of her life, from her years as an unknown Scottish Traveller to becoming a famous folk-singer.[77] Using recordings made in the 1950s by Hamish Henderson as a starting point, Porter and Gower recorded songs and interviews with Robertson and her family in the late 1960s. In many respects, the book is difficult to classify, as it encompasses biography, folklore, oral history and ethnomusicology. Again, a short introduction is used to outline Scottish Traveller culture and the function of singing in Traveller communities. A third of the book is taken up with excerpts from interviews with Robertson and observations by Porter and Henderson, creating an unusual composite biography. The authors highlight why certain songs were important to Robertson, for example how she often thought of her son who had died in his infancy when she performed "Son Davit." However, the bulk of the text resembles a songbook, creating a complete catalogue of Robertson's songs, arranged thematically with Child ballad references.

Another interdisciplinary study which features Scottish Travellers is John D. Niles' *Homo Narrans*. Niles explores how humans shape their understanding of the world through storytelling. Focussing on the social function of oral narrative, he makes links between how Anglo-Saxon culture was reflected in the literature of the period, and twentieth-century Scottish Traveller singing and storytelling. Niles's study is most important for his influential ideas about "Tradition Bearers", who are individuals within

[77] James Porter and Herschel Gower, *Jeannie Robertson: Emergent Singer, Transformative Voice* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1995)

a community who maintain oral material.[78] They collect new songs, re-invent material deriving from outside the community, and perform it to a high standard. Niles portrays Scottish Traveller Duncan Williamson as an example of a Tradition Bearer.

Anthropological studies of Irish Travellers which employ participant observation techniques provide useful details about aspects of Traveller life, such as work patterns, the importance of family and gender roles. *The Traveller-Gypsies* (1983) by Judith Okely was the first social anthropological study of Gypsies in Britain, and challenged many established stereotypes and assumptions about Gypsies and Gypsy culture.[79] Okely undertook extensive fieldwork to research work patterns, marriage and belief systems of Gypsies, using extensive fieldwork and wider social research. Okely's work also provides an important critique of the presumed mono-Indian origins of Gypsies. Jane Helleiner, in *Irish Travellers: Racism and the Politics of Culture* (2000), uses knowledge gathered from fieldwork among Irish Travellers to critique the governmental policies which have been employed to assimilate them into mainstream culture.[80] These publications also contain excerpts from conversations and experiences between researchers and Travellers. However, they do not attempt to investigate the songs or stories shared by Travellers. Some studies have also represented Traveller history and culture erroneously. For example, George Gmelch's *The Irish Tinkers: The Urbanization of an Itinerant People* (1977) portrays Traveller lifestyle and culture as a development from social and economic problems, not as a culture in its own right.[81]

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[78] Niles, *Homo Narrans*, 25
[79] Judith Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)
[80] Jane Helleiner, *Irish Travellers: Racism and the Politics of Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000)
[81] George Gmelch, *The Irish Tinkers: The Urbanisation of an Itinerant People* (1977; second ed., California: Waveland Press, 1985)

Gmelch's approach supports assumptions by researchers such as Patricia McCarthy (1971) that Irish Travellers are simply settled people who have 'dropped out' of society.[82]

Similar studies of Scottish Travellers, such as the research undertaken by Braid, or Ewan MacColl's *Till Doomsday in the Afternoon*, provide in-depth observations of Scottish Travellers, but are confined to a single family or friendship group. In comparison, Okely lived on-site with various Gypsy families over a period of two years and visited many other individuals on different occasions, interacting with a much wider range of people. However, unlike the Irish Traveller research, studies of Scottish Traveller folklore are full of stories, songs and other examples of oral culture, often making links between this material and their wider significance to Traveller culture.

Other academics interested in Irish Travellers have studied representations of Travellers and their treatment at the hands of government agencies, the law and by the settled population. *Irish Travellers: Culture and Ethnicity* (1999) is a collection of papers delivered at a conference in Dublin arranged by the Anthropological Association of Ireland.[83] In it, various influential papers discuss issues relating to Traveller language, questions about origins and Traveller identity. Possibly the most interesting paper is by Patricia McCarthy, who refutes her previous theories about poverty and Irish Travellers. "The Sub-Culture of Poverty Reconsidered" is an example of how the misguided application of a then-fashionable theoretical framework (the subculture of poverty theory) to a minority group can create problems of misrepresentation for that

[82] Patricia McCarthy, "Itinerancy and Poverty: a Study in the Sub-Culture of Poverty", Unpublished Master of Social Science Thesis (University College Dublin, 1972)
[83] May McCann et al., (eds.) *Irish Travellers: Culture and Ethnicity* (Belfast: The Institute of Irish Studies, 1994)

group. McCarthy recognised that her work was used by others for their own political purposes, "to discredit Travellers and negate their separate cultural identity."[84] Other papers explore topics including the function of Cant or Gammon language and the debate surrounding Traveller origins.

Jim Mac Laughlin's study *Travellers and Ireland: Whose Country, Whose History?* (1995) provides valuable housing and population statistics and a historical background to the study of Irish Travellers in Ireland. Mac Laughlin explores how the position of Travellers in Ireland has been influenced by wider contexts, including European concepts surrounding nomadism, British colonialism, and the formation of the independent Irish State. Amongst other cultural observations, Mac Laughlin exposes the problem of how sedentary populations view Travellers. They may believe in the recognition of Travellers' nomadic culture, and support the idea that local authorities do not do enough to accommodate the needs of Travellers, but they still do not want halting sites built next to their homes.

Micheál Ó hAodha (as Michael Hayes) expands on the work of Mac Laughlin and others in *Irish Travellers: Representations and Realities* (2006).[85] Hayes' research builds on the idea that Travellers have been created as an outsider group by 'Othering' through the work of Gypsiologists, via Irish state policy and by the views of mainstream Irish society. He suggests that Irish people have transmitted colonial images of themselves onto a minority culture, creating Traveller stereotypes.[86] Hayes also addresses the importance of nomadism, and its suppression by the government

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[84] Patricia McCarthy, "The Sub-Culture of Poverty Reconsidered", *Irish Travellers: Culture and Ethnicity*, 128
[85] Michael Hayes, *Irish Travellers: Representations and Realities* (Dublin: The Liffey Press, 2006)
[86] Ibid., 82

through assimilationist agencies, beginning with the Commission on Itinerancy.[87] He argues that the official rhetoric of Ireland, as reflected in State policy in the late twentieth century, appeared to move away from an assimilationist and settlement-focussed view to an approach which acknowledged Traveller identity and culture. However, despite this, Hayes maintains that Irish society still views Travellers as an internal "Other" and has continued to pursue policies that make a nomadic lifestyle highly problematic.[88]

Travellers: Citizens of Ireland (2000) is a publication which includes chapters written by Traveller academics such as Winnie McDonagh and individuals who work for various Traveller organisations.[89] McDonagh's writing in particular highlights concerns held by many Travellers, involving ongoing discrimination, and changes in patterns of education, marriage and faith among the younger generation. The contributions made by McDonagh have added critical value because of her ability to supply personal anecdotes and practical suggestions. The book also includes a chapter on Traveller musicians by Liam Gaul, who describes the influence of Uilleann pipers Johnny and Felix Doran on generations of settled and Traveller pipers.

Published studies specifically addressing Scottish Travellers are less numerous when compared to those about Irish Travellers, although research compiled on behalf of the UK government and organisations such as Friends, Families and Travellers is available. However, even these sources are limited when compared to the questionnaires, surveys and Task Forces undertaken by the Irish government when examining their own nomadic community. This is most likely due to the small

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[87] Ibid., 35
[88] Ibid., 265
[89] Erica Sheehan (ed.) *Travellers: Citizens of Ireland* (Dublin: Parish of the Travelling People, 2000)

population of Gypsies and Travellers in Scotland, estimated at around 2,120 people in 2009.[90] (However, these figures do not count Scottish Gypsy/Travellers who live in houses and do not specify whether individuals are of Gypsy, Scottish Traveller, Irish Traveller or Roma descent.) By way of comparison, around 90,000 to 120,000 Gypsies and Travellers are believed to live in the UK as a whole.[91] The Irish census of 2011 recorded 29,573 Irish Travellers living in Ireland.[92] From 2011, the Scottish Gypsy/Traveller Twice-Yearly Count, which recorded the number of private, council and unofficial pitches used by Travellers each year, was superseded by the UK census. This might change the way the population of Scottish Travellers is reported in future, and help to differentiate more clearly between data collected about Scottish Travellers and Roma Gypsies in Scotland, as respondents are able to state their ethnic origin on the census form.

Using a collection of governmental reports and charity projects which are targeted at particular community concerns, such as health, accommodation and education, a partial picture of the lives of Scottish Travellers can be pieced together. However, some of these studies are based on interviews with Travellers and therefore can supply some wider context to the specific data collected, as in Save the Children's report *Right to Roam: Travellers in Scotland 1995/96* (1996).[93] This publication reports on a survey of Gypsies and Travellers, including young people, interviewed about their

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[90] Scottish Government, *Gypsies/Travellers in Scotland: The Twice Yearly Count - No. 16: July 2009*, Accessed November 16, 2012 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/08/18105029/2>

[91] Pat Niner, *The Provision and Condition of Local Authority Gypsy/Traveller Sites in England*. (London: Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, University of Birmingham and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2002), 24

[92] Pavee Point Travellers Centre, "Traveller Numbers 'up by 32%' in new census", *Pavee Point website*, Accessed March 29, 2012 <http://paveepoint.ie/page/2/>

[93] Save the Children Fund, *The Right to Roam: Travellers in Scotland 1995/96* (Dunfermline: Save the Children Fund, Traveller Section, 1996)

views on health services, education and the provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites in Scotland. A similar study by the Scottish Office, *Moving On: a survey of Travellers' views* (2000), collates interviews with Travellers about a greater range of concerns, such as travelling and employment, prejudice and harassment. [94] According to the concluding remarks of the report, two key issues emerged: the reduction and changing pattern of travelling, and discrimination as an everyday experience for Gypsies and Travellers.

The earliest-known study of Scottish Travellers is *Scottish Gypsies under the Stewarts* by David MacRitchie, founder of the Gypsy Lore Society.[95] Published in 1894, this volume proposes one of the historical origin theories about how Scottish Travellers came to exist. According to MacRitchie, as descendants from families of ancient metal-workers, Scottish Travellers wandered from clan to clan, making and repairing weapons. After the Highland Clearances, when the manufacture of weapons was prohibited, Travellers turned their skills to making tin vessels for sale to the farms scattered across the Highlands. Eighty years after this publication, F. Rehfisch published a chapter entitled "Scottish Travellers or Tinkers" in *Gypsies, Tinkers and other Travellers* (1975).[96] The wide scope of the chapter allowed Rehfisch to introduce aspects of Scottish Traveller culture, choosing to dispense with the 'origins' theory in a single paragraph, declaring their ancestry to be lost in the passage of time. More detailed information was instead provided by Rehfisch on relations between Scottish Travellers and Gypsies, the "world view" of Travellers and their kinship groups and

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[94] Delia Lomax et al., *Moving On: A Survey of Travellers' Views* (Edinburgh: Scottish Executive Central Research Unit, 2000)
[95] David MacRitchie, *Scottish Gypsies under the Stewarts* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1894)
[96] R. Rehfisch (ed.) *Gypsies, Tinkers and other Travellers* (London: Academic Press, 1975)

families. Historian Donald Whyte published *Scottish Gypsies and other Travellers: A Short History* in 2001.[97] This study discusses the arrival of Gypsies in Scotland from a historical perspective, and includes details about legendary figures such as Johnny Faa and the Gypsy families of Kirk Yetholm. Whyte includes a song, "The Gypsy Laddie", and briefly explores the idea that the song is based on real members of the Scottish aristocracy.

More recent research can be found in publications that chiefly explore the culture of Gypsies, including two essays in the collection *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity* (1997).[98] In "Scottish Gypsies/Travellers and the Folklorists", Willie Reid explores the effect of studies undertaken by the School of Scottish Studies researchers on the Scottish Traveller and Roma Gypsy community. [99] He comments that the attention provided by academic researchers served to highlight some of the Travellers' cultural output and gave some individuals respect as singers and storytellers among wider sedentary society. However, he also points out negative aspects to the research, such as Travellers being represented as belonging to a culture of nostalgia, as a primitive tribe belonging to the past. Douglas Braid also discusses the cultural output of Scottish Travellers in the essay "The construction of identity through narrative: folklore and the travelling people of Scotland", and introduces the idea of cultural identities being "narratives" with individual identities inherently linked to entire communities.[100]

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[97] Donald Whyte, *Scottish Gypsies and other Travellers: A Short History* (Blackwell, Alfreton: Robert Dawson, 2001)
[98] Thomas Acton and Gary Mundy eds. *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997)
[99] Willie Reid, "Scottish Gypsies/Travellers and the Folklorists", *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity*, 31-39
[100] Douglas Braid, "The Construction of Identity Through Narrative: Folklore and the Travelling People of Scotland", *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity*, 40-68

Colin Clark has also written widely on Gypsies and Travellers from an ethnographic perspective. *Moving On: The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain* (1999), which Clark produced with Donald Kenrick, outlines the historic relationship Gypsies and Travellers have formed with the settled community in the UK through their work and lifestyle.[101] Although the book is chiefly focussed on the Gypsy community, there are brief passages on other groups such as New Travellers and Scottish Travellers, referred to as 'Nawkens' to distinguish them from Scottish Gypsies. An updated version of this title, *Here to Stay: The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain*, was published by Clark and Margaret Greenfields in 2006, adding recent legal changes to laws affecting Gypsies and Travellers and their effects on nomadic communities. [102] The book also includes chapters based on general themes which affect all Travellers in the UK, such as the reduction of stopping places, the planning system, health, education and media representation. In addition, Clark has published papers on Gypsy and Traveller work patterns and definitions of ethnicity.[103]

Irish and Scottish Traveller Writing

The primary literary sources consulted in this thesis are autobiographies and biographies produced by Irish and Scottish Travellers, in particular those of Traveller musicians. Seminal published accounts, such as Sean Maher's semi-autobiographical

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[101] Donald Kenrick and Colin Clark, *Moving On: The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1999)
[102] Colin Clark and Margaret Greenfields, *Here To Stay: The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2006)
[103] Colin Clark, "'Not Just Lucky White Heather and Clothes Pegs': Putting European Gypsy and Traveller Economic Niches in Context", *Ethnicity and Economy: Race and Class Revisited,* edited by Steve Fenton and Harriet Bradley (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 183-198; Colin Clark, "Defining Ethnicity in a Cultural and Socio-Legal Context : the Case of Scottish Gypsy-Travellers" *Scottish Affairs*, 54 (2006), 39-67

The Road to God Knows Where (1972), Nan Joyce's *Traveller* (1985) produced with Anna Farmar, and *Nan: The Life of an Irish Travelling Woman* (1986) by Sharon Gmelch, have previously been explored academically, but additional Traveller memoirs have been published in recent years, as interest has grown in Gypsy and Traveller lifestyles by the general public and in academia.[104] Many of the publications explored in this thesis have either never been examined as literary works in their own right, or the significance of the music which appears in the texts has not been addressed until now.

Jeremy Sandford's book *Gypsies* (1973) is a series of interviews between the author and a number of English Gypsies and Scottish Travellers.[105] Sandford represents a cross-section of different Gypsy and Traveller communities by talking to individuals who live in trailers, tents and wagons, houses, and canal boats. He also includes a piece of writing by Johnny 'Pops' Connors entitled "Seven Weeks of Childhood – An Autobiography".[106] Connors, an Irish Traveller activist, wrote his memoir while he was imprisoned for clashing with police over Traveller evictions in Birmingham. The memoir describes how he taught himself to read after receiving a short period of tutoring from a nun, and contains several songs composed by Connors about his Traveller culture.

The scholar Micheál Ó hAodha has taken an instrumental role in bringing the life-stories of Irish Travellers to print by transcribing and editing the memoirs of two Irish Travellers, Pecker Dunne and William Cauley. Dunne busked outside various

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[104] Sean Maher, *The Road to God Knows Where: A Memoir of Travelling Boyhood* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1972); Nan Joyce, *Traveller: An Autobiography*, ed. Anna Farmar (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan 1985); Sharon Gmelch, *Nan: The Life of an Irish Travelling Woman* (New York: W.W. Norton Company, Inc., 1986)

[105] Jeremy Sandford, *Gypsies* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1973)

[106] Johnny 'Pops' Connors, "Seven Weeks of Childhood – An Autobiography", *Gypsies*, 135-197

sport fixtures throughout Ireland, in town centres and at various horse fairs during his younger years. Dunne played the banjo and sang his own songs, although he drew from a wide repertoire of popular songs and Irish traditional music tunes. He was also an accomplished fiddle player, being descended from a family of Traveller fiddle players. He has appeared on national radio and television in Ireland, on RTÉ1's *The Late Late Show* (1985) and TG4's *Ceol na baFánaithe* (2006), performing his songs and describing aspects of his life.[107] Aside from recordings of his music being released in several formats over the years, he also appeared in a film, *Trojan Eddie* (1996).[108] At the University of Limerick, he was artist-in-residence for the Nomad Traveller music programme in 2002. Together with Míchéal Ó hAodha, Dunne produced his autobiography *Parley-Poet and Chanter*, which contains the lyrics to many of his songs and also came with a CD of his recordings. In *The Candlelight Painter*, William Cauley describes his childhood memories of visiting houses with his mother and listening to her sing. Cauley is an Irish Traveller artist who paints by candlelight in a caravan parked in front of his house. His memoir contains colour reproductions of some of his paintings, and several pieces of poetry. Cauley also worked with Ó hAodha to produce a book about Traveller language: *Canting with Cauley: A Glossary of Traveller' Cant/Gammon* (2006).[109]

Ó hAodha also produced a book with David Tuohy on the Uilleann piper Johnny Doran, *Postcolonial Artist: Johnny Doran and Irish Traveller Tradition*

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[107] Dunne, Pecker, "Tinker's Lullaby", *The Late Late Show* (RTÉ 1, first Broadcast in 1985); *Ceol na baFánaithe* (Sonas Productions for TG4, first broadcast March 19, 2006)
[108] *Trojan Eddie*, dir. Gillies MacKinnon and screenplay by Billy Roache (Bórd Scannán na hÉireann/Channel Four Films, 1996)
[109] William Cauley, *Canting with Cauley: A Glossary of Travellers' Cant/Gammon*, ed. Micheál Ó hAodha (Dublin: A&A Farmar, 2006)

(2008).[110] This is a partly biographical, partly ethnomusicological study of the Irish Traveller and Uilleann piper Johnny Doran, and reproduces interviews from his extended family and accounts of his life and music by other Irish Traditional musicians, both settled and Traveller. The Dorans have reportedly handed down musical skills in their family for over six generations and Johnny Doran, in particular, is respected among his peers for developing innovations in the Traveller piping style. David Tuohy is an accomplished Uilleann piper and collected the interviews from festivals and meetings of musical societies around Ireland. Further biographical material about the Doran family is included on the DVD *Traveller Piper: A Celebration of the Piping Tradition of Johnny and Felix Doran* (2009), produced by the Na Piobairi Uilleann club of Ireland, along with performances by the Doran and Rooney extended families.[111] Other Traveller musicians also appear on the DVD, such as Finbar Furey and Mickey Dunne, who explain the Dorans' influence on their own playing style. In addition to these publications, Ó hAodha has produced an extensive body of work on Irish Travellers, including other memoir-style accounts, such as *American "Outsider": Stories from the Irish Traveller Diaspora* (2007), with T. Foy Vernon.[112] His most recent Irish Traveller autobiography project is "*The Turn of the Hand": A Memoir from the Irish Margins* (2010) with Mary Warde.

Irish Travellers have also created collective group publications, composed of a number of interviews or short contributions by a number of Travellers, such as

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[110] David Tuohy and Michéal Ó hAodha, *Postcolonial Artist: Johnny Doran and Irish Traveller Tradition* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008)
[111] Na Piobairi Uilleann, *Traveller Piper: A Celebration of the Piping Tradition of Johnny and Felix Doran* (An Artisan Production, 2009)
[112] T. Foy Vernon, *American "Outsider": Stories from the Irish Traveller Diaspora*, edited by Micheál Ó hAodha (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007)

Traveller Ways, Traveller Words (1992).[113] Although it does not mention many details about the importance of music to Traveller culture, this publication by Pavee Point does represent many other aspects of life, including tin-smithing, living in tents, rituals surrounding death and family cures. *Moving Stories: Irish Traveller Women Write* (1992) is a collection of personal accounts written by individuals from the Southwark Traveller Women's Group in London.[114] Contributions by the women range from memories of school, work experience and religious pilgrimage to poetry.

Scottish Travellers have been just as prolific in their autobiographical and biographical output as Irish Travellers, and many of the individual authors are well known amongst the settled population of Scotland for their musical achievements. The first autobiography to be produced by a Scottish Traveller was Betsy White's *The Yellow on the Broom* (1979).[115] A sequel, *Red Rowans and Wild Honey*, appeared posthumously in 2000.[116] Betsy Whyte was a storyteller and ballad singer, and adapted her oral storytelling skills to enable her to write her own memoirs. Whyte reportedly composed each chapter in her head before picking up a pen. Whyte does not include any songs or music in her autobiography, but instead focuses on her family, the experience of living in houses over winter and her time at school. Whyte also appears to have laid the template for subsequent Scottish Traveller memoirs, as she includes a number of family photographs in the middle of the book, and a glossary of Traveller Cant and Scots vocabulary at the end.

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[113] Gearóid Ó Riain (ed), *Traveller Ways, Traveller Words* (Dublin: Pavee Point Publications, 1992)
[114] Southwark Traveller Women's Group, *Moving Stories: Traveller Women Write* (London: Traveller Education Team, 1992)
[115] Betsy Whyte, *The Yellow on the Broom* (1979; new ed., Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001)
[116] Betsy Whyte, *Red Rowans and Wild Honey* (1990; new ed., Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited, 2000)

The Book of Sandy Stewart (1988) transcribed by Roger Leitch, is a blend of biography and anthropological study.[117] Leitch recorded conversations between himself and Stewart from the years 1981 to 1983, when he visited Stewart and his family at their roadside camp. Leitch transcribes Stewart's account of his life in the first person, using phonetic spelling to reflect his use of language. The book resembles a straightforward Scottish Traveller autobiography, as it has photographs and a glossary of Traveller Cant. However, Leitch also includes other material in the book, such as Stewart's family tree, and selections from his fieldwork diary. In addition, each chapter has a copious amount of endnotes written by Leitch, explaining details about culturally-specific items and references. Although Alexander 'Sandy' Stewart did not play any musical instruments and rarely sang, he still details the piping and ballad singing provided by Travellers at the end of a day's berry-picking in Blairgowrie.

Another unusual publication is *Exodus to Alford* (1988) by Stanley Robertson.[118] Robertson is the nephew of renowned singer Jeannie Robertson, and his singing and storytelling was recorded by the School of Scottish Studies. His book mainly consists of a collection of stories, but each chapter has an introduction of Robertson's memories as a six-year-old child. Robertson explains that in 1946 his family was living in a flat in Aberdeen and suffered discrimination from their settled neighbours. Therefore, he was greatly relieved when they left for Alford, to participate in the flax harvest. The book represents Robertson's journey as he left Aberdeen

[117] Alexander Stewart, *The Book of Sandy Stewart*, compiled and edited with introduction and notes by Roger Leitch (Edinburgh: The Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1988)
[118] Stanley Robertson, *Exodus to Alford* (Scotland: Balnain Books, 1988)

behind, and like *The Book of Sandy Stewart*, uses phonetic spelling and Traveller language to immerse the reader in his experiences.

The life of Perthshire Traveller Belle Stewart is recounted in a book written by her daughter Sheila Stewart, in *Queen Amang the Heather: The Life of Belle Stewart* (2006).[119] Belle Stewart and her family became known as the "Stewarts o' Blair" and proved very popular on the revived Scottish folk music scene of the 1960s, after being recorded by Hamish Henderson for the School of Scottish Studies and "discovered" by the singer and songwriter Ewan MacColl. Belle's family have a long pedigree of Highland pipers, singers and storytellers, and this is represented in her biography by the inclusion of sheet music, songs and family tales. Sheila Stewart also wrote about her own experiences of being part of a musical Travelling family in her autobiography *A Traveller's Life* (2011). [120] This book is filled with songs written by Stewart's mother and herself, as well as songs that she recalls hearing in childhood or that she performed with her family. Among other life events, Stewart describes receiving an award for her services to culture from Queen Elizabeth, an MBE, and also an honorary BA from the University of Edinburgh for her contribution to folklore. In addition to her autobiography, Sheila Stewart has also written *Pilgrims of the Mist: The Stories of Scotland's Travelling People* (2008), which is a collection of stories from many different Scottish Travellers.[121]

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[119] Sheila Stewart, *Queen Amang the Heather: The Life of Belle Stewart* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006)
[120] Sheila Stewart, *A Traveller's Life* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2011)
[121] Sheila Stewart, *Pilgrims of the Mist: The Stories of Scotland's Travelling People* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2008)

The life of piper, singer and storyteller Willie MacPhee, a Scottish Traveller from Argyll, is recounted by Sheila Douglas in *Last of the Tinsmiths: The Life of Willie MacPhee* (2006).[122] Amongst many different trades, MacPhee played Highland pipes in full national regalia for tourists visiting the Highland Games in Scotland, sometimes for great gain, although he viewed his playing as being little more than a "hobby."[123] In his later years, he was recorded singing and playing by Henderson and MacColl, after hearing about the collectors through his relations, the Stewarts.

Another Scottish Traveller well-known for singing and storytelling, Duncan Williamson, published his autobiography *The Horsieman: Memoirs of a Traveller 1928-1958* in 2008.[124] The book was transcribed by his second wife, settled academic Linda Headlee, from recordings made on reel-to-reel tape between 1980 and 1981. Each of the chapters ends with a song or poem, either composed by Williamson or chosen from his wide traditional repertoire. Before his memoir, Williamson also produced a number of story collections, including *Fireside Tales of the Traveller Children* (1983) and *A Thorn in the King's Foot: Folktales of the Scottish Travelling People* (1987) with his wife.[125] Storyteller David Campbell has also produced a biography of Duncan Williamson's life, written from recorded conversations between the two men and their families over the period of 1987 to 2007, when Williamson died. The first volume, *A Traveller in Two Worlds: The Early Life of Scotland's Wandering*

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[122] Sheila Douglas, *Last of the Tinsmiths: The Life of Willie MacPhee* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2006)
[123] Ibid., 95
[124] Duncan Williamson, *The Horsieman: Memories of a Traveller 1928-1958* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2008)
[125] Duncan Williamson, *Fireside Tales of the Traveller Children*, edited by Linda Williamson (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1983), Duncan Williamson and Linda Williamson, *A Thorn in the King's Foot: Tales of the Scottish Travelling People* (Middlesex and New York: Penguin, 1987)

Bard (2011), describes Williamson's childhood and first marriage.[126] The second volume, *A Traveller in Two Worlds: The Tinker and the Student* (2012), recounts Williamson's marriage to Linda Headlee and how his life changed as his fame as a storyteller grew. [127] Because both men are deeply involved in composing, performing and reinterpreting Scottish oral culture, both books are filled with songs and traditional stories.

Jess Smith, another Scottish Traveller, produced her memoir in three volumes: *Jessie's Journey: Autobiography of a Traveller Girl* (2002), *Tales from the Tent* (2003) and *Tears for a Tinker* (2005).[128] Each part of the trilogy contains stories, riddles, songs and poems by Smith and her family. The format is similar to other autobiographies of this type, including photographs and a glossary of Cant words at the end of the book. Recently, Smith also produced *Way of the Wanderers: The Story of Scotland's Travelling People* (2012).[129] This publication contains a selection of stories from Smith and other Travellers, and discusses the origins of Scottish Travellers and Border Gypsies. Smith also includes excerpts from historical accounts of Travellers and comments on the modern issues surrounding Traveller accommodation.

A small number of the memoirs of Irish Traveller men are written in a far more sensationalist style and concentrate on their involvement in bare-knuckle boxing almost to the exception of anything else. Examples of this include *King of the Gypsies* (2002)

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[126] David Campbell and Duncan Williamson, *A Traveller in Two Worlds: Volume One: The Early Life of Scotland's Wandering Bard* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2011)
[127] David Campbell, *A Traveller in Two Worlds: Volume Two: The Tinker and the Student* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2012)
[128] Jess Smith, *Jessie's Journey: Autobiography of a Traveller Girl* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 2002); *Tales from the Tent* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 2003); *Tears for a Tinker* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 2005)
[129] Jess Smith, *Way of the Wanderers: The Story of Travellers in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2012)

by Bartley Gorman with Peter Walsh, *Knuckle* (2012) by James Quinn McDonagh, and *Hard Knocks and Soft Spots* (2012) by Paddy Doherty.[130] Bare-knuckle fighting and amateur boxing are very popular among some English Gypsies, Irish Travellers and Scottish Travellers, and certain families have been involved in these traditions for many generations. In his book, Gorman presents his boxing career as an essential part of his Irish Traveller heritage, and he describes the development of the sport and documents the success of his ancestors. However, the book also represents other aspects of Traveller culture, including the importance of music and dancing, and typical Traveller trades. Unlike other Travellers who believe that their families took to the road after Cromwell, Gorman suggests that his family origins date from Celtic times. Interestingly, the book also includes a ballad written about English Gypsy fighter Jem Mace refusing to turn up to a fight. Although it is written in a much higher quality of style than the later publications, *King of the Gypsies* still sensationalizes Gorman's fights and cites articles written about him in tabloid newspapers. In this respect, Gorman's memoir can be linked to a larger sub-genre of underground boxing biographies. These 'hard-man' or 'misery' memoirs typically emphasise the deprived background of their subjects, the violence they take part in and are subjected to, and any involvement in the 'criminal underworld'. A subject's individual culture or ethnicity is largely irrelevant to this genre, but instead functions as a variation in an otherwise formulaic narrative. Comparable titles are *The Guv'nor* by Lenny McLean

[130] Bartley Gorman with Peter Walsh, *King of the Gypsies* (Wrea Green: Milo Books, 2002); James Quinn MacDonagh, *Knuckle* (London: HarperCollins, 2012); Paddy Doherty, *Hard Knocks and Soft Spots* (London: Ebury Press, 2012)

(1998) and *Pretty Boy* by Robert Shaw (2003).[131] Both James Quinn McDonagh and Paddy Doherty's books are typical examples of this genre, with *Knuckle*, for instance, including the tagline "A brutal true story from inside the hidden world of the Irish Travellers" on the front cover. Both books were published following their authors' appearance on reality television programmes, and both appear to have been produced as a quick money-making exercise, although the inclusion of family photographs and details of childhood events resemble other Traveller memoirs.

Research into Irish and Scottish Traveller Writing

A small number of academics have specifically examined Traveller writing. Paul Delaney's "Stories from below: Sean Maher and Nan Joyce" for the journal *Studies*, explores how Maher's *The Road to God Knows Where* and Nan Joyce's *Traveller* undermine established myths and prejudices about Travellers, and describe the challenges they faced by living on the road. [132] Delaney also addresses some of the complications which arise from the transcription and editing of Joyce's book, as she relied on the settled writer Anna Farmar to record and communicate her story. Delaney raises the issues of how the inclusion of songs, stories and Traveller language in both texts might question the authority of literacy above oral culture. Since both books suggest Travellers had important roles in history, Delaney also discusses the tensions created between official Irish history, which often excludes Travellers, and Traveller oral history.

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[131] Lenny McLean and Peter Gerrard, *The Guv'nor* (London: John Blake, 1998); Robert Shaw, *Pretty Boy* (London: John Blake, 2003)

[132] Paul Delaney, "Stories from Below: Sean Maher and Nan Joyce", *Studies* 93. 372 (2004), 461-472

Michael Hayes' *Irish Travellers: Representations and Realities*, contains a chapter on Irish Traveller writing, "The Occluded Voice", which creates an overview of the common themes raised in memoirs and group publications.[133] Hayes examines the same texts as Delaney, but also explores autobiographies by Pecker Dunne and William Cauley, and *Traveller Ways, Traveller Words* by Pavee Point. He raises the topics of storytelling and oral culture as essential means of passing on Traveller history down the generations. Hayes also discusses the use and reproduction of Traveller languages in the different publications, nomadism, and the linked issues of housing and eviction, also themes which often feature in Traveller memoirs.

Christine Walsh also examines Sean Maher's *The Road to God Knows Where* and Nan Joyce's *Traveller* in her study *Postcolonial Borderlands: Orality and Irish Traveller Writing* (2008).[134] In this book, Walsh reviews theories of colonialism and explores the development of the Irish state in order to account for the marginal position of Irish Travellers in Ireland. She argues that orality and storytelling, as promoted by Travellers in their writing, are central to Irish culture, both Traveller and non-Traveller. For Walsh, Traveller narratives help to establish a version of history that is inclusive to Travellers and a legitimate place for their community in Irish society.

José Lanters traces the appearance of 'tinker' characters in Irish literature across a range of genres, from the earliest literary sources, to children's fiction, fantasy and detective novels. In addition, *The 'Tinkers' in Irish Literature: Unsettled Subjects and the Construction of Difference* (2008) devotes an entire chapter to the discussion of

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[133] Michael Hayes, *Representations and Realities*, 243-258
[134] Christine Walsh, *Postcolonial Borderlands: Orality and Irish Traveller Writing* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008)

Traveller writers, both Irish and Scottish.[135] In the chapter "A Different People: Traveller Life Writing", Lanters provides an overview of various Traveller publications. She acknowledges the problematic relationship Travellers have with formal education and also observes that the majority of authors are female, suggesting that this may be due to their involvement in development projects. Lanters also highlights the oral qualities of Traveller writing and comments on the inclusion of stories and songs in life writing texts as instructional devices. Lanters identifies certain qualities common to many of the Traveller memoirs, such as self-consciousness, self-explanation, defensiveness and involvement in activism. She also recognises the vulnerability of a subject that has limited control over the final published version of their lives. Finally, although she views the motivation of Traveller authors to write about their experiences in a positive light, Lanters sees little change in the representations of Travellers by settled writers.

Mary Burke's *'Tinkers': Synge and the Cultural History of the Irish Traveller* (2009) attempts to chart the development and contexts surrounding the 'tinker' or sedentary representations of Irish Travellers in literature.[136] According to Burke, the figure of the "tinker" is a fantasy created by sixteenth-century British and European literature that bears little resemblance to the actual Irish Travelling community. The Irish dramatist John Millington Synge portrayed tinkers and other marginal characters in his plays, and Burke regards him as holding a central role in the development of the

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[135] José Lanters, *The 'Tinkers' in Irish Literature: Unsettled Subjects and the Construction of Difference* (Dublin and Oregon: Irish Academic Press, 2008)

[136] Mary Burke, *'Tinkers': Synge and the Cultural History of the Irish Traveller* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

'tinker' trope, creating "a lodestone of literature on the nomadic theme."[137] Burke also highlights the staging of Synge's play *The Tinker's Wedding* at the Abbey theatre in 1971 as an important cultural marker, as the timing of this performance coincided with Ireland's growing awareness of its Traveller population and their calls for equality. Burke credits Synge, unlike other writers of his time, with being genuinely interested in Travellers and argues that he attempted to portray Traveller characters sympathetically and subtly in his work.

In *'Tinkers'*, Burke explores representations of Travellers in contemporary drama, fiction and on screen, but does not fully engage with Traveller life writing. Excerpts from Sean Maher and Nan Joyce's memoirs are confined to the margins of her study, pushed aside by the sheer volume of material which Burke covers. Other works created by Travellers, such as Rosaleen McDonagh's autobiographical play, *The Baby Doll Project* (2003), along with Juanita Casey's novel *The Horse of Selene* (1971), are examined in more detail, but greater attention is given to films and television shows which fit Burke's 'tinker' trope depictions.[138] This suggests that her choice of material was selected to enhance the main thrust of her argument, rather than to create a fully illustrative cross-section of Irish Traveller representation.

This chapter has outlined the development of songbooks, and discussed the motives behind the search for Gypsy and Traveller song collection by a number of settled song collectors and folklorists. It has highlighted the connection between the 1950s folksong revival and the growing interest in Gypsy and Traveller singers, and especially in songs performed by them in English. Some of the folklorists who sought

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[137] Ibid., 10

[138] Rosaleen McDonagh, *The Baby Doll Project*, (Dublin: Project Arts Theatre, 2003); Juanita Casey, *The Horse of Selene* (Dublin: Dolmen; London: Calder and Boyars, 1971)

out Traveller songs, including Henderson and Neat, have been accused of presenting their material in a nostalgic and primitivist manner, and this issue is addressed more fully in chapter seven of the thesis. This chapter has explored the impact of several ground-breaking anthropological and sociological studies on Irish and Scottish Travellers, and how their findings have represented Travellers and Traveller culture. It has also drawn attention to the range and scope of studies on Irish and Scottish Travellers: these tend to be either large-scale and draw general conclusions on the position of Travellers in mainstream society, or are focussed on specific families and their oral culture. By examining both types of research, this thesis traces the links between Traveller song and interaction between Travellers and settled people in British and Irish society. The increasing number of Traveller memoirs and community publications in recent years has allowed Travellers to represent themselves and their culture in print for the first time, although the quality and different formats of Traveller writing are variable. Academic research on Traveller writing has so far been limited to a small number of memoirs, in particular works by Sean Maher and Nan Joyce. By widening the scope of material, this thesis will extend the research to encompass writing by Scottish Travellers and other related literature which has never been studied in this way before now.

Over the following six chapters, this thesis examines aspects of Irish and Scottish Traveller music, taking the songs included in Traveller memoirs as a starting point. In the past, a number of song collectors have approached Traveller musicians as custodians of material which has originated in settled culture, but has become lost to sedentary communities. In contrast, this thesis asserts that Traveller songs and oral

traditions reflect elements of Traveller culture, including work patterns, family history and nostalgia for the past. The thesis also traces the evolution of a number of songs, and discusses the differences between settled and Traveller versions of the same song, and the variations across different Traveller groups. It employs contributions from Traveller memoirs and collaborative projects, alongside academic observations and studies by folklorists, to explore the significance of music to Traveller culture.

Chapter Two

The World of Work: Music and Earning Money

The Social Context of Travellers and Work

> My father, God be good to him, he med everything. His whole business was makin' wagons... He use' to make everything for a living. He made stuff for the settlers. He repaired stuff. He use' to make stuff for me mother, jewellery for me mother. He use' to make baskets, copper baskets that she could hawk out o'. Almost everything he made. Traded in horses and traps and things.[1]

Traveller autobiographies, memoirs or other forms of writing frequently describe wide-ranging lists of skills and patterns of work. The above remarks from Irish Traveller Chrissie Ward are typical in this respect; and the types of work she describes her father undertaking are common to other Travellers. Sheila Douglas, in her biographical study of Scottish Traveller Willie MacPhee, states that: "The importance of making a living among the travelling [sic] people can not be over-emphasised. It is part of being a man, to be able to go out each day and earn a wage by doing whatever work is available, as well as make tinware, baskets and heather besoms."[2] Even the most celebrated Traveller musicians would have had to take on a number of roles in order to survive. John Doherty, who influenced generations of fiddlers around Donegal, earned most of his living from tin-smithing. Scottish Traveller Belle Stewart and her daughter Sheila

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[1] Chrissie Ward, "Chrissie Ward", *Traveller Ways, Traveller Words*, 52
[2] Douglas, *Last of the Tinsmiths*, 66

Stewart sang for US President Gerald Ford, Pope John Paul II and the British Royal family, yet spent most of their time picking berries, "neep-hawin'" (turnip digging) and potato cropping, amongst other money-spinning activities.

The aim of the first section of this chapter is to review the complex relationship between Irish and Scottish Travellers and their work, forming a contextual background within which to explore their songs. Many songs included in Traveller memoirs focus on work, and in order to explain this, an understanding of the changing modes of work over time is essential. In times past, Travellers and their services were often engaged by the settled population for jobs involving tin-smithing, chimney sweeping, horse-dealing, knife-sharpening and scrap-collecting. On farms, Travellers would provide seasonal labour and camp next to the farms they cropped, travelling along the same circuits of road that their families had trodden for generations, their movements timed to follow the work. Often, Traveller musicians played to rural communities and passed on popular songs and tunes, entertaining people in a time before the widespread use of television. It is even arguable that the 'dance masters' emerged from Travelling stock, and many of the finest musicians are known to have given lessons to other musicians, both settled and Traveller. "They carried the tunes and the tradition", it has been suggested by the Traveller resource centre, Pavee Point: "they were often the makers of the instruments, the teacher of the dances and the link between isolated musicians and also between communities."[3] Some Scottish Travellers had very specialised skills, with families devoting their time to carving spoons from bones and pearl-fishing.[4]

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[3] Pavee Point, *A Heritage Ahead: Cultural Action and Travellers* (Dublin: Pavee Point Publications, 1995), 96

[4] Neat, *The Summer Walkers*, 20

These types of rural, community-based labour have steadily declined in recent decades as modern populations increasingly concentrate around cities. This cultural shift in working patterns has also meant that many of the positive working relationships between Travellers and the wider sedentary population have been lost in the transition to urban living. For settled people and Travellers alike, it is often tempting to perpetuate the idea of a past "Golden Age" of work interaction between both communities which has no present equivalent. Raymond Williams, examining the development of city life, describes how humanity appears to have continuously looked back to the past as a Golden Age to which it longs to return. Each generation has the tendency to view its own present as the decline of the Golden Age and use its own past "as a stick to beat the present."[5] Many Travellers tend to view the past in a largely positive light, focussing on positive relationships with farmers or rural housewives who bought their labour and hawked goods, while others look favourably on present work opportunities and widening occupations and educational success. After presenting her research on changing modes of work to a group of Travellers, Jane Helleiner commented that:

> Some Travellers made reference to a past of Traveller economic utility and positive relations with non-Travellers and contrasted this with the experience of a loss of economic niche and intensified racism of the present. Others, however, reversed this scenario by emphasizing the vitality of the contemporary Traveller

[5] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: The Hogarth Press Limited, 1985), 9-12

economy and improving relations with the 'settled community' which they juxtaposed with the poverty and persecution of the past.[6]

The connections between Travellers and work are complex and are affected as much by governmental decisions and the welfare state as changes in industrial materials and processes. The emergence of cheap plastic and aluminium goods reduced the need for tin goods traditionally made and repaired by Travellers. The development of modern transport networks, making shops easier to access and rural populations less in need of door-to-door selling or 'hawked' goods, has further removed opportunities for Travellers to earn money. Artelia Court mentions that "The Traveler [sic] often found his advantage in the distance between country houses and settlements, the lack of convenient communication and transport."[7] Improved bus services and the affordability of cars removed one major economic niche for Travellers. More recently, pedlar licenses were introduced in Ireland, while some United Kingdom neighbourhood watch schemes have also established "No Cold Calling Zones" which work alongside councils to halt this type of trade.[8] The biggest cause for Travellers leaving behind traditional modes of work, such as working with tin, picking crops and so on, is usually explained by the development of technology such as farm machinery reducing the need for manual labour. These developments undoubtedly contributed to changes in working patterns, for settled people as much as Travellers. What this does not explain is why an entrepreneurial group of people such as Travellers could not have replaced these types of jobs with other forms of work. This chapter will support the idea maintained by

[6] Helleiner, *Racism and the Politics of Culture*, 131
[7] Artelia Court, *Puck of the Droms*, 3
[8] Travellers' Times, "National and Local News", *Travellers Times* 29 (2006), 2

researchers such as Judith Okely and Jane Helleiner, that Travellers have always found a variety of ways to make a living, and that the ability to take up opportunities for making money has persisted to the present day. Whilst some activities regarded as classically 'Traveller' in nature (such as recycling scrap metal) have been maintained, other means of labour have superseded these roles, yet remain less visible for a number of reasons.

Many Travellers, and Traveller men in particular, take care to appear less culturally identifiable in order to 'pass' as sedentary members of society and escape the discrimination that would prevent them from taking on formal work or prejudice certain people from engaging their services. Sheila Stewart also describes concealing her identity to secure work at a hotel, saying that the hotel proprietors "didn't know who I was and believe me, I never told them."[9] The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) 2009 report on *Inequalities Experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities*, based on communities in the UK, indicates that Gypsies and Travellers who live on a site, or who are known to be members of local Gypsy or Traveller families, encounter discrimination when applying for paid work. "Although hard evidence is (unsurprisingly) hard to come by, examples abound of people not being called for interviews or of jobs being mysteriously filled."[10] Travellers are often represented in the media as thieves and fraudsters: not great attributes to have when offering large-scale repairs to houses or driveways or simply trying to gain waged work.

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[9] Sheila Stewart, *A Traveller's Life*, 61

[10] Sarah Cemlyn et al., *Inequalities Experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities: A Review* (Manchester: The Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2009), 40-41

Judith Okely explains one solution to these negative perceptions: "In some occupations the Gypsies have to conceal their ethnic identity and any exotic Gypsy image. For example, as tarmaccers or antique dealers, the Travellers present themselves as respectable business men with a fixed address."[11] In the thirty years since Okely wrote about Gypsies "passing", the situation has not changed. Katherine Quarmby discovered the same phenomenon when she interviewed Irish Travellers and Gypsies in the UK for her publication *No Place to Call Home* (2013). Gypsies Noah and Joe Burton, brothers living on an unofficial site in Meriden, Birmingham, both talked of concealing their identity. Joe Burton worked as a barn painter who "never revealed his ethnicity to the farmers who hired him, because he feared that if he did, he would never find jobs."[12] When Noah Burton's Gypsy identity was revealed via an article in the national press about the Meriden site, his work at restoring antique cars and caravans suffered a huge drop in business. He was "quite simply, no longer trusted" by his settled customers.[13]

Women have also become more involved with formal work, with some taking on community posts, such as Irish Traveller Candy Sheridan, who was a district councillor for Norfolk North and also became the vice-chair of the Gypsy Council.[14] Because of some Travellers' 'undercover' style of employment, it is impossible to trace which jobs are being filled by Travellers, unless the Travellers themselves feel they are in a position to reveal their background. Conversely, it is also worthy of note that some

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[11] Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies*, 50
[12] Katherine Quarmby, *No Place to Call Home: Inside the Real Lives of Gypsies and Travellers* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2013), 210
[13] Ibid, 209
[14] Helen Grady, "Why Should I Live by Gypsies?" *BBC News online*, August 1, 2009 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8171273.stm>

Travellers choose to represent the classic image of poverty often associated with their ethnic identity, in order to gain good deals on scrap, for example. Colin Clark suggests that many Travellers swap seamlessly between these two extremes: "In order to maximise their chances of economic prosperity a series of 'ethnic images' is often deployed, each one being adopted in particular environments and circumstances."[15] Although these economic tactics may well be in use, it is important to point out that it is often impossible to differentiate between Travellers who play the role of being in acute poverty and those who actually are. Care must be taken in these considerations to prevent the reiteration of negative stereotypes of Gypsies and Travellers.

State provision for Travellers has also historically taken the line of helping a community in poverty, neatly fitting government rhetoric which promotes becoming sedentary as the sole way of improving living conditions. As Helleiner explains,

> The overall thrust of the [1963 Report of the Commission on Itinerancy] equated itinerancy with poverty but it did refer to a minority of wealthier families… These families were described as having good living conditions and income (CI 1963: 78-83), but the significance of a well-off strata of Travellers for the overall equation of 'itinerancy' with poverty was not pursued.[16]

There is as wide a range of wealth in Traveller families as there is in any other social group, with many existing on fluctuating patterns of self-employment and contract work. Traveller unemployment percentages are difficult to gather, due to the movement

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[15] Clark, "'Not Just Lucky White Heather and Clothes Pegs'", *Ethnicity and Economy: Race and Class Revisited*, 184

[16] Helleiner, *Racism and the Politics of Culture*, 138-139

of families or the reluctance to be identified as Travellers in waged work or in official counts, such as the census. In the UK, the 2009 report by the EHRC measured Traveller employment in terms of those living on managed sites, thereby discounting Travellers who lived in alterative accommodation. It reported that "on seven out of 10 sites a minority of households work, with over one-third of site managers noting that less than 10 per cent of residents were in employment."[17] In Ireland, Pavee Point estimated that the rate of unemployment for Irish Travellers was "above 75%" in a pre-budget report of 2010.[18] Discrimination by the settled population against Travellers must undoubtedly play a part in explaining these figures, but the accommodation restrictions put on Travellers must also be taken into account. It is extremely difficult to gain work on either a waged or a self-employed basis if authorities are constantly moving Travellers on due to a shortage of official sites. In addition, on many managed sites and in standard housing provision, there is either a lack of space for undertaking work or storage, or legal limitations to prevent this. Consequently, many families have no choice but to survive on welfare payments, whilst others find even this means of income hard to claim without a permanent address. Others choose to supplement 'dole' money with self-employed activities, while a small proportion of families earn an income that would be considered vastly larger than that of most Travellers or even settled people, due to finding a niche industry or opportunity such as the antiques trade, short-term specialist labour or overseas construction. It is interesting that some of the most economically successful families are those which still operate their businesses in a nomadic way, surely exposing the limits of the idea that Traveller adaptation to a

[17] Cemlin et al., *Inequalities Experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities*, 38
[18] Pavee Point Travellers Centre, "Pre-budget submission for budget 2011," October 24, 2010. <http://paveepoint.ie/pdf/FPPFinalPBS240910.pdf>

sedentary existence is the only solution to poverty. A final consideration in Traveller economy is that the work favoured most by Travellers includes activities which have domestic control. Entire families will often work at the same job, or piecework is done within the domestic sphere, effectively creating 'invisible' work or linking it to other forms of domestic labour not generally considered to be 'work'.

Traveller economic self-sufficiency has become obscured, with the result that narratives of poverty and the dying art of tin-smithing are still at the forefront of Traveller identity. It seems that many settled people view Travellers in connection with a rural past, a picture of barrel-top wagons and crop-picking which has now been superseded by less romantic city living and scrap-dealing. For these people, the "real" Travellers belong to the past and those living in contemporary times must assimilate as their usefulness to society has expired. Okely comments that "rural occupations, such as fruit gathering and hop picking, have more recently been exoticised as those of the 'real' Gypsies, now vanished. Urban occupations are belittled or remain unseen."[19] It is also telling that the 1992 film featuring a family of Irish Travellers, *Into the West,* centres around a horse named Tir na nOg, implicitly connecting Travellers to a mythical Irish past.[20] The father of two boys in the film is also encouraged by his Traveller friends and father-in-law to leave their Ballymun tower block behind and take to the road once more.

It is hardly surprising, then, that tensions arise between Travellers and the wider sedentary population when some Travellers appear to have lifestyles that do not fit standard perceptions. Travellers have come to be regarded as a homogenous collection

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[19] Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies*, 52
[20] Jim Sheridan, *Into the West*, directed by Mike Newell (New York: Miramax Family Films, 1992)

of families that are idle and feckless drains on society, to be contrasted negatively against a past culture of skilled or rural labour for the settled population. Sharon Gmelch identified this stereotype in many Irish national newspapers during her research for *Tinkers and Travellers*, commenting that "Travellers are frequently described as 'lazy spongers' who live off the rest of the community while giving nothing in return."[21] Helleiner also points out that in the past, Travellers in Ireland were given welfare payments on the assumption that they would have no other form of "gainful employment" solely due to the fact that they were Travellers. "The fact that it was their Traveller identity, rather than employment status, that ensured eligibility was significant in that it guaranteed their public assertion of this identity."[22] This is no longer the case due to equality laws; however, the assumptions behind this practice appear to have remained. The broadcasting of television shows, such as Channel 4's *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*, showcase glamorous snapshots of Traveller families and their lifestyles, leaving some settled viewers wondering how these families can earn enough money to pay for these ostentatious celebrations.[23] The recent eviction of Dale Farm in Essex also spurred *The Daily Mail* to link luxury houses in Rathkeale, County Limerick, to other Travellers living on the site simply because they shared the same surname.[24] The implication drawn was that any money earned by Travellers must be gathered by illegal or immoral means, and that all Travellers are in fact secretly

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[21] Sharon Gmelch, *Tinkers and Travellers* (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 1975), 100
[22] Helleiner, *Racism and the Politics of Culture* , 142
[23] Helen Carroll "An awful lot of Tarmac! We reveal the £140,000 cost of those Big Fat Gypsy Weddings (just don't ask where the cash comes from)" *The Daily Mail website*, January 29, 2011. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1351622/My-Big-Fat-Gypsy-Wedding-We-reveal-140-000-cost.html.>
[24] Arthur Martin, "Dale Farm travellers fighting eviction own multi-million pound housing estate back home in Ireland." *The Daily Mail website*, September 14, 2011. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2037069/Dale-Farm-travellers-fighting-eviction-multi-million-pound-housing-estate-Ireland.html>

extremely wealthy. In the eyes of many settled people, Scottish and Irish Travellers can do no right: they are either penniless dole scroungers or multi-millionaire criminals and fraudsters. These perceptions are certainly not helped by writers such as Eamon Dillon, who concentrates his efforts on describing the most negative and criminal aspects of some Travellers' lives in his purported study of criminality, *The Outsiders* (2006). Attempting to explain this focus, he states that "a book detailing traveller [sic] success stories, where travellers have shattered perceived stereotypes by becoming lawyers, academics, Olympians, successful entertainers and actors, would have done nothing to address the real experience the vast majority of people have of travellers."[25] By simply regurgitating the contents of numerous tabloid articles written about Travellers over the past ten years, Dillon tips the balance even further towards negative stereotypes through an act of lazy journalism: his underlying message being that "real" Travellers are not able to earn money honestly, and that the majority of Travellers are involved in criminal activities.

Traveller Songs Featuring Work

Where Irish and Scottish Travellers choose to include songs about work in their life writing, they indicate that labour and finding ways of making money are central to Traveller culture. Many Traveller autobiographies mention that their families' patterns of movement were formed in order to follow seasonal or opportunistic patterns of work. As Nellie Joyce explains, "They'd move away and down around the bog. Footin' the turf [stacking cut sods of peat to dry] in the summertime. Then when they'd come back

[25] Eamon Dillon, *The Outsiders: Exposing the Secretive World of Ireland's Travellers* (Dublin: Merlin, 2006), xv-xvi

in the autumn they'd be working at spuds."[26] Surviving outdoors in winter (especially for Scottish or Irish Travellers living in tents in the north of both countries) would be very hard, so crop picking and various types of other work during the rest of the year provided essential means of earning enough money to get through harder times. Willie MacPhee affirms this in his biography *Last of the Tinsmiths* (2006), as he explains "Ye couldnae dae much in the winter. It wis too hard bidin oot in a tent to do ony work."[27]

The huge variety of employment undertaken by Travellers is also expressed in their songs, as are representations of cleverness or outwitting other people who would attempt to trick them. "Success in Travelling trade and life ordained that [they] be relentlessly observant and quick to recognise opportunity and act on it in such a way as to create work and profitability", Artelia Court argues.[28] Furthermore, it seems that whenever a culture of work is based on hard manual labour, songs and story-telling exist to ease the strenuous and often repetitive nature of the work. Irish Traveller Mary Warde describes how her father and uncle worked with tin: "They all loved singing especially while they worked, My father and Pat loved to get a rhythm going as they worked, tapping on the tin and working the anvil. It helped them get through the work more quickly."[29] Nor is this restricted to men's work, as Caroline Hughes, an English Traveller, comments: "My mother sang all the time. When she were making clothes-pegs or making we children's bloomers, shifts and petticoats."[30] Some researchers such as Tom Munnelly, in his reflections on the Irish Traveller singers he recorded for UCD, found that the very act of working was inextricably bound to the song repertoire of

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[26] Nellie Joyce, "Nellie Joyce", *Traveller Ways, Traveller Words,* 197
[27] Douglas, *Last of the Tinsmiths*, 69
[28] Artelia Court, *Puck of the Droms*, 3
[29] Mary Warde, *The Turn of The Hand*, 104
[30] MacColl and Seeger, *Travellers' Songs*, 35

many tinsmiths. Describing Pat Ward of Longford, Munnelly commented that "as with the woman who remembers her songs only while milking or churning, the rhythm of Pat's hammer draws forth his stock of songs day after day. He tells me that he could not refrain from accompanying his hammer even if he tried."[31]

Other examples of the ways that music facilitates work can be found in East Anglian and Scottish fishermen's songs and shanties such as those in MacColl's collection *Singing the Fishing,* as well as the slave songs of African American plantation workers, or American "cowboy" or Country and Western songs.[32] Songs featuring 'cowboy' imagery are often very popular in Irish Traveller circles, perhaps due to familiar references to horses, tents and wagons. Commentators such as José Lanters suggest that Travellers see their own fight for survival reflected in the narratives of such songs and the films they are taken from. Against the narrative constructs of Western films, Travellers "imagine themselves as victors and survivors", and the battles between Cowboys and Indians "provide a conflict model with which Travellers can identify."[33] As the next section of this chapter will illustrate, music goes hand-in-hand with the working lives of many Travelling people, both as a means of making money and as a way to make the work itself more bearable. Because of this, it also provides an important means of preserving culture.

However, it is also important to notice that Traveller songs about work frequently refer to other issues facing changes to their culture and traditional way of life. For example, "Willie MacPhee's Song" not only lists the various trades MacPhee

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[31] Tom Munnelly, "The Singing Tradition of Irish Travellers," *Folk Music Journal*, 14
[32] Ewan MacColl, Charles Parker and Peggy Seeger, *BBC Radio Ballads: Singing the Fishing,* BBC Home Service August 1960, Topic Records, 2008
[33] Lanters, *The 'Tinkers' in Irish Literature*, 201

and his family worked at in order to survive, it also addresses the problems Scottish Travellers face over the provision of appropriate accommodation. There is an undersupply of official Traveller campsites in Scotland, a situation which is reproduced in the rest of the UK, and MacPhee is speaking for many other Travellers by addressing this problem. Irish Traveller 'Rich' Johnny Connors also appears to celebrate the small victory he won over a settled individual who tried to trick him, in his song "Rambling Candy Man". Travellers are often subjected to discrimination by non-Travellers in many different ways, including access to education, employment and healthcare. Traveller culture has arguably prioritised traits including self-reliance and independence to enable families to exist on the boundaries of majority society. This is reflected in Connors' songs about his entrepreneurial rag-collection business and his ability to see through deception. In a similar way, Pecker Dunne's song "Wexford Town" refers to him making money through music, but it is also bound up with important personal values such as pride and self-belief. By promoting the traits and issues attached to Traveller culture, it may be possible to view some Traveller singers and songwriters as "organic" intellectuals.[34]

The Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci, in his *Prison Notebooks* (1971), written between 1929 and 1935, first introduced the idea of the "organic" intellectual. For Gramsci, the notion of a separate, classless section of society known as "intellectuals" is a myth. Everyone has the potential to be an intellectual, in the sense of using their intelligence, but not all people are intellectuals by social function. According to Gramsci, every social group creates "one or more strata of intellectuals

[34] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (1971; reprint, London: ElecBook, 1999), 134

which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields."[35] The "organic" intellectual is skilled in creating a marketable product or service, but this person must also be "an organiser of masses of men".[36] "Organic" intellectuals may hold any job which is characteristic to their class, but they also speak on behalf of the interests of the class to which they belong. Therefore, intellectuals are not only confined to the highly educated, or the upper classes.

Some Irish and Scottish Travellers, due to their highly entrepreneurial lifestyle, could be considered "organic" intellectuals, since they may, for example, repair and sell tin-ware, and also use their songs to highlight issues Travellers face, such as the changes to the Traveller economy that have reduced the need for tinsmiths. However, the idea of "homogeneity" adds a further complication when the theory of the "organic" intellectual is applied to Travellers. Most families operate autonomously in an extended family unit, and although they are often described under the umbrella term of the "Traveller community", Irish and Scottish Travellers live extremely varied lives. Some families have been living in houses for generations, while others travel widely in support of their business. Here, organisations such as the Gypsy Council, Pavee Point or Friends, Families and Travellers may exist as an upper "strata" of "organic" intellectual, since they support the rights of nomadic families in general, and pursue improvements in common issues that concern individual families across the community. This would fit Gramsci's idea of engaging with the "state organism,

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 135

because of the need to create the conditions most favourable to the expansion of their own class".[37]

While "traditional" intellectuals are believed to operate independently for the benefit of all, "organic" intellectuals speak for the interests of a specific community. Overall, Gramsci's organic intellectual is a person who leads a practical life, as "constructor, organiser, 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator", but someone who is actively involved in their own distinct community, instead of an elite figure.[38] As this chapter will show, most Traveller musicians and singers earn their living from the same occupations as the rest of their community. Even the best performers periodically sustain themselves from other modes of work. By creating music that addresses common themes, Traveller songs function to create a sense of shared experience in an often disparate, heterogeneous group.

Master of Many a Trade: Willie MacPhee

Willie MacPhee is a Scottish Traveller who was born in Helensburg, Argyll and who lived from 1910 to 2002. He is remembered most fondly by his biographer, Sheila Douglas, for his storytelling, singing and piping, but he earned money in a variety of ways throughout his lifetime. One song that is included in Douglas' biography *Last of the Tinsmiths: The Life of Willie MacPhee,* represents the various trades that he and his family worked in order to make a living for themselves. "Willie MacPhee's Song" is one example of a recorded song where the transcriber tries to capture Scottish Traveller dialect and pronunciation. (A full version appears in Appendix 1.1.) In the first verse,

[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 142

Willie MacPhee and his parents are listed as farm workers, and are living in a house. MacPhee mentions that his parents "did as they could for tae keep me frae harm" which suggests that they took up residence on the farm to make bringing up a baby as easy as possible. Later in the song life, the MacPhee family resume travelling, and the work becomes more varied:

> On the road a guid livin's no easily made
> So I became maister o mony's a trade:
> Tinsmithin an pipin an fairmwork tae
> And ony ither job that I fund for tae dae.
>
> I'm a dab hand at makkin the baskets an creels
> Or playin pipe mairches an strathspeys an reels
> I can mend an auld engine or cure a lame horse
> And I like best tae camp, amang heather and gorse. [39]

After leaving the farm, MacPhee describes how he became "maister o mony's a trade" by working as a tinsmith, piper, basket maker, amateur mechanic, horse healer and at any other job he could find: "And ony ither job that I fund for tae dae."[40] The reference to camping near heather and gorse also reminds the listener of another traditional way of making money from the land in the form of besom making. The making of brooms and baskets was a very handy skill to have as a Traveller, since the raw materials grew

[39] Douglas, *Last of the Tinsmiths*, 67
[40] Ibid.

wild and were free. In the construction of traditional tents, Travellers also used wattle frames and would therefore be used to cutting wood, and using water or heat treatment in order to work it efficiently. Often the entire family took part in the making of brooms and baskets and afterwards these items would typically be sold door to door. Wooden (and paper) flowers were another product of Travellers' artisanship, and heather was used to fashion lucky charms and was sold in a similar way. After such a varied list of economic skills, the last two verses provide a sad account of camping grounds disappearing and police harassment, filtered through MacPhee's characteristic humour. MacPhee suggests that soon the only place left for Traveller to camp will be on the surface of the moon. Although MacPhee makes light of his situation, the importance of nomadism to Travellers cannot be underestimated, especially in the context of economic self-sufficiency and work. Michael McDonagh explains that "Travellers must travel to earn their living, be it by scrap collection, hawking, or recycling waste."[41] When the means of a nomadic existence are made difficult, many forms of work are cut off and this results in the loss of money and often reliance on welfare payments.

Although MacPhee remarks in his song "And I like best tae camp, amang heather and gorse", he did eventually have to follow a less nomadic lifestyle, by first moving into a quarry and then into a council-run caravan site in his twilight years.[42] He appears to have been luckier than many Scottish Travellers in this regard, although McPhee's frustration is evident when he writes the lines: "O ye cannae camp here and ye cannae camp there/Sune the wan place that's left'll be up in the air".[43] Following the

[41] Michael McDonagh, "Nomadism in Irish Travellers' Identity," *Irish Travellers: Culture and Ethnicity*, 95
[42] Douglas, *Last of the Tinsmiths*, 67
[43] Ibid.

Caravan Site Act of 1968, which imposed a statutory duty upon local authorities to provide adequate accommodation for Travellers, the first council-owned site in Scotland was established in Argyll and Bute in 1978. During the 1980s and early 1990s, local authorities made use of a grant scheme to construct more sites, but since the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 abolished the requirement for local authority provision, some sites have fallen into disrepair and others have closed. From the most recent figures available from the Scottish government, *Gypsy Travellers in Scotland: The Twice-yearly Count* (2010), the number of council-owned pitches for Gypsy Travellers in Scotland declined from 499 in 2008 to 478 in 2009.[44] According to the same report, some of the council pitches are only open in the summer and 72 are "unavailable for letting".[45] In addition to this, current council site provision does not meet the needs of Scottish Travellers. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of council-owned Gypsy Traveller pitches are currently let, yet the number of pitches has been decreasing since 2001.[46]

The *Twice-Yearly Count* does not record Gypsies and Travellers who are residing in standard housing, and the government therefore cannot know how many individuals desire pitches but are unable to access them. Although the Scottish government does not criminalise Travellers who are forced to set up unofficial stopping places, they are often still moved on after complaints by the settled population. If Travellers attempt to establish their own sites, they are often refused planning permission and are unable to live on the land they have purchased. In this context, MacPhee's notion to fly to the moon and "find a guid campsite an never come doun" is

[44] Scottish Government, *Gypsy Travellers in Scotland: The Twice-yearly Count* - No. 16: July 2009
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

only an exaggeration of a very real problem in Traveller culture.[47] In mentioning it, MacPhee is speaking not just for the experiences of his own family, but of other Travellers who find themselves constantly moved on or prevented from living their traditional lifestyle.

Alongside the many trades mentioned above, MacPhee was also a mobile blacksmith, which earned him the nickname of "the Big Smithy", and he persisted in various lines of work for as long as he was able.[48] He continued to make money as a piper until a very grand age, reportedly playing at a pub in Inverary in his eighties.[49] In his later years, MacPhee provided storytelling sessions at schools and festivals, including the schools where he himself had attended. The School of Scottish Studies recorded much of his repertoire, and his songs and stories were also recorded by the singer-songwriter team Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger. He was also a founder member of the Scottish Storytelling Forum based at the Netherbow Arts Centre in Edinburgh. From his humble beginnings on the road, MacPhee appears to have become something of a Scottish cultural treasure. Finally, at the end of his working life, like the rest of Scottish society, he resorted to claiming an old-age pension. Douglas notes that MacPhee "went from hard times, from grafting hard from every penny earned and improvising those things he could not afford to buy, to being helped to subsist by the Welfare State."[50] The range of jobs and sources of income MacPhee relied on throughout his life is representative of the flexible working patterns of other Irish and Scottish Travellers and Gypsies.

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[47] Douglas, *Last of the Tinsmiths*, 67
[48] Ibid., 69
[49] Ibid., 192
[50] Ibid., 20

Tin-smithing: Duncan Williamson

The work of the tinsmith would seem an obvious place to start when examining the songs and music of Travellers, since their skills of working with "white" metals (materials that could be worked at lower temperatures by hand, rather than iron or steel used by the blacksmith) are thought to have given Travellers the name 'Tinker' or 'tinkler', with the earliest citation of the word appearing in the *Oxford English Dictionary* dated to the twelfth century.[51] Although the job of the tinsmith is featured in several Traveller memoirs, the trade did not dominate the entire Traveller economy. It would seem, instead, that the tinsmith has become a symbolic figure for Travellers and the declining tin-ware industry has mirrored a romanticised 'dying off' of Traveller culture. The very title of Willie MacPhee's biography *The Last of the Tinsmiths* appears to bear this idea out.

Williamson, who lived between 1928 and 1997, travelled around the areas of Argyll, Tayside and Loch Fyne, earning money as a tinsmith, basket maker and horse dealer. His stories and songs have been recorded for the School of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh University, and he has also written poems and published several books of stories for children with his second wife, the folklorist Linda Headlee. In the following song or poem, "The Old Soldering Bolt", Williamson describes the skills of the

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[51] The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists the first citation of the word 'tinkler' in "*c*1175 *Carta Willelmi Regis* in *Liber Ecclesie de Scon* (1843) 30 [Terra] que iacet inter terram serlon incisoris et terram Jacobi tinkler." *Oxford English Dictionary,* Second edition, 1989; online version September 2011. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/202270>; accessed December 9, 2011. Earlier version first published in *New English Dictionary*, 1912

tinsmith in a narrative involving a piece of essential tin-smithing equipment.[52] (A full version of "The Old Soldering Bolt" appears in Appendix 1.2.) For tinsmiths, brass or copper rods were useful as they could be heated to a temperature that would melt solder and join two pieces of tin together. In this way useful items could be made. The second verse of "The Old Soldering Bolt" lists some of the products made by a tinsmith and also celebrates his skills at working the tin.

> O he was a fine old tinsmith
> He knew all the tricks of the trade
> He knew how to solder a skillet
> And how a toaster was made.
> O happy were the days I spent
> With my head shiny with tin
> And handsome was the little bag
> He always kept me in.[53]

"Skillets" are a type of heavy pan, and "toasters" usually consist of two mesh pieces of metal fixed together with a bent rod or strip, and are used to hold a slice of bread for toasting against an open fire or range top. Tinsmiths also made many other useful objects, including buckets and milk churns, and could repair tin vessels, making them last for a long time. The personification of the bolt in this song serves as an appeal to the listener to empathise with the changing mode of life for a tinsmith. The arrival of

[52] Williamson, *The Horsieman*, 40
[53] Ibid.

cheap plastic and aluminium eventually removed the necessity of making and mending tin vessels and the trade disappeared almost overnight - perhaps as suddenly as the bolt in the song falling through the tinsmith's bag in verse three:

> I remember the happy days I had
> With a cruisie burning overhead
> While beside me sat the good old wife
> A-baking oatmeal bread.
> Then as we wandered the old cart roads
> After doing a job or two
> From a little hole in his bag
> I tumbled and fell through.[54]

Having a skill such as tin-smithing rendered obsolete, especially one that is arguably so symbolic to Traveller identity, must have been a great blow to these men, and a sense of loss is built into the carefully chosen words and structure of the song. The first three verses abound with positive words such as "happy" and "lovely" and others give the impression of value in "shiny", "handsome" and "fine". The majority of these positive words and expressions appear in the past tense, while the contrasting present tense prompts questions, and a sense of uncertainty. Williamson also uses the past tense in verse three to create a warm domestic scene lit by paraffin lamp. Although the bolt is meant to hold the memory, it expresses the tinsmith's nostalgic feelings towards a life spent on the road. Much less positive phrases appear in the penultimate verse of the

[54] Ibid.

song, connoting materials which are becoming forgotten or neglected: "green with mould", "getting rusty" and "left to rot."

> Now here I lie upon the grass
> I am getting green with mould
> My handle's getting rusty
> I am no more the colour of gold.
> Will ever I see another fire
> Or mend another pot?
> Or must I lie here forever
> Among the grass to rot?[55]

This verse of the song asks the very questions that many tinsmiths must have been wondering themselves as both their job and culture was changing before their eyes: "Will I ever see another fire/or mend another pot?" The statement that "My handle's getting rusty" could refer to a tinsmith forgetting his craft as his skills fall into misuse, and the "gold" of the brass becoming dull might suggest the waning favour of the settled population towards the tinsmith's wares, as they no longer needed tin vessels. The bolt being "left to rot" could either reflect the tinsmith's skills being cast aside as useless, or the tinsmith himself. Tin-smithing is a nostalgic and positive representation of Traveller culture, but it also represents a way of earning money which is effectively obsolete. Many settled people also believe that Travellers and their culture are relics from the past, and have no place in modern society. Against this, the last

[55] Ibid.

verse offers some hope for the tinsmith and his skill to be "found" or valued again, and displayed "in a place of honour". This represents the hope that Travellers and their culture will achieve greater respect in the future among settled people.

Traditional Traveller craft items are still admired by many among the Traveller population, and while they may not be used for practical purposes, these objects are sometimes made for special occasions or as ornaments. At the Traveller Pride Tribute to Pecker Dunne Concert in Dublin 2010, a decorative copper pail was presented to Michael Collins for Dunne in his absence, displaying the craftsmanship and artistic skills of fellow Traveller Davy Collins. Other Travellers have also reportedly been making "castings for ploughs" and cake tins in custom and fancy shapes, "a respected Traveller… now makes cake tins in the shape of numbers for birthday cakes for a local bakery and also copper scoops."[56] These new applications provide a new way of conserving tin-smithing skills and restoring some pride to the community.

Rag Collection: Johnny Connors and the Stewarts

As part of her ground-breaking doctoral research into the lives of Irish Travellers, Sharon Gmelch studied six songs that were sung by Travellers at various fairs and halting sites across the summers of 1973 and 1975. The lyrics and shortened stave were published in the book *Tinkers and Travellers*, along with relevant newspaper clippings, photographs and interviews with Travellers. One of the songs, entitled "Rambling Candy Man", was written and performed by Irish Traveller "Rich" Johnny Connors of

[56] Micheál Ó hAodha ed., *Migrants and Cultural Memory: The Representation of Difference* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 3

County Wexford, and tells us about one of his experiences. It reflects neatly how Travellers value living on their wits. (The song also appears in Appendix 1.3.)

> The day that I left Ireland, sure things were very slack;
> I rambled over to Glasgow and I'm wishing to get back.
> I was gathering old pot metal and more times bones and rags;
> Sure all the little different things I put into different bags.
> To see all the little kiddies with their bones stuck in their hands
> And enquiring for Johnny Connors, he's a rambling candy man.
>
> An old man come to me one day, thought I was rather green,
> Down in the corner of his sack there were bricks you could plainly see.
> Sure I said, "Old man, take up your sack, sure I'm not in the game.
> You can't handle bricks or mortar to any rambling candy man."[57]

The term "candyman" is another word for a rag-and-bone collector, someone who collected waste material door-to-door, usually with a horse and cart. Money could be made from collecting bulk waste, sorting it into bags of scrap metal, woollens or bones, and taking it to a dealer who would price the bags by weight. Alternatively, people would bring ragmen bags of scrap to be bought and then sold for profit. Children were often given sweets or a balloon in return for their scrap (hence the name "candyman") which encouraged them to find useful materials to swap for a toffee. In the song, a man attempts to swindle Connors into paying him for a heavy bag of rags which is actually

[57] Gmelch, *Tinkers and Travellers*, 27

full of worthless builders' rubble. This song represents another traditional way that Travellers earned money and is, additionally, an interesting example of how Travellers, often regarded by the settled population as thieves or 'con-artists', can themselves be targets of fraud. By seeing through the man's deception, Connors also adds to a wider collection of songs where the tinker or Traveller outwits a settled person, or solves a problem where other tradesmen have failed. In Traveller culture, being able to survive on your wits alone is an important skill to have, as it means that you can recognise hidden money-making opportunities.

Connor's song is closely related to "The Travelling Candyman", which is attributed to Pat O'Flanagan in Peter Kennedy's collection *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland* (1975).[58] (A full version of the song is included in Appendix 1.4.) In this version, rag collecting is a means of last resort, as the protagonist "searched for work but no work could I find", before he "came to the conclusion" that he would be a candyman.[59] Kennedy points out that, although rag collecting might be regarded as a low-status occupation by some Travellers, "some of the wealthiest travellers [sic] in Britain" have made their fortune from the trade.[60] Indeed, 'Rich' Johnny Connors might have earned his nickname from his own success in this field. Instead of Connor's incident with a scheming man, O'Flanagan is approached by a woman who accuses him of taking her dress. The candyman and the woman have an argument, which ends with the woman punching him: "she nailed the candyman."[61] Connors adopts the melody

[58] Kennedy, *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland* , 790
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 803
[61] Ibid., 790

and some parts of the O'Flanagan song for his own "Rambling Candyman", but re-writes much of it to describe his own rag-collecting experience.

Collecting scrap on the streets of Glasgow might not seem so different to gathering rags in the villages of Perthshire. However, the following song contrasts sharply in mood and language as it describes the wintry conditions and hardships the Stewart family endured in their endeavors. Sheila Stewart includes her mother's song "Glen Isla" the biography *Queen Amang the Heather.* [62] (A full version of the song is included in Appendix 1.5.) Where Connors's song informs us about an incident in his life as a "candyman" in a matter-of-fact style, Stewart's song paints a picture of a wintry Scottish hillside, with the romantic figures of Travellers tramping their way through the wilderness.

Keen blaws the wind roond the nooks o the shielin,

His auld mallin promise are covered wi sna,

Hoo changed fae the times since we went up Glen Isla,

Lookin for rags or a wee taste o blaw.

We went up by Forter, or maybe the Linns,

Lookin for rags or a wee puckle skins,

Naebody kent on what we had to bear,

[62] Stewart, *Queen Amang the Heather*, 43

The hardships and cauld till we got back to Blair.[63]

The romantic scenes described in the song are intensified by the setting of the narrative in the past, the recollection of a deceased relative, and also the use of Scottish and Cant dialect words, which give the song a more 'exotic' and rural feel. For example, the first verse uses the term "shieling", which is a small hut, "mallin promise", a type of raspberry bush, and "blaw" or oatmeal. Words associated with hardship or suffering, such as a "keen wind" and "cauld", are used throughout the song, and any gains are given in small doses, as a "wee taste" or a "wee puckle". The items collected, rags and (rabbit) skins, represent a traditional Traveller means of buying food, as rags and rabbit skins could be collected for free and sold by weight to a merchant. It would be easy to dismiss such a scene as simply an attempt to create pity for its singer and, perhaps, extract some extra payment for the performance. However, it is important to remember that members of the Stewart family were hugely successful ballad singers among the settled community, and their style was often to sing about lost love and a forgotten past. Douglas remarks on this as the Stewarts' tendency to "paint themselves as tragic romantic 'pilgrims of the mist' with their own 'language' and history of persecution."[64] While there may be some truth in this opinion, the Stewarts were not the only Travellers to experience negative treatment at the hands of the settled population. Also, many Traveller autobiographies discuss female members of their families going door-to-door in settled neighborhoods and asking for rags or selling small items from their baskets, known as "hawking", and sometimes accepting payment in food. Farmers

[63] Ibid.
[64] Douglas, *Last of the Tinsmiths*, 12

themselves could be as poor as Travellers, or sometimes food or tobacco was preferential due to the isolation of the area and the difficulty of finding provisions. "Everything was not paid in money in rural communities, where coins and notes were not as useful as oatmeal or potatoes."[65] Payment in food or money varied from region to region, as Nan Joyce discovered in her first trip around a small village in Connemara. After a woman chose some religious pictures from her basket, Joyce expected to be paid ten shillings, but another person at the house explained "She's not giving you any money. She's giving you the food and turf. All our people down here, the tinkers here, gives us those things for food."[66] Joyce had to take back her pictures and leave.

Although not strictly a song, Belle Stewart's 'calling cards' offer another method of gaining materials that could be sold or recycled into things of value. This 'calling card' was posted through the letter boxes of a street of houses in one area, and then the Stewarts would call back two hours later to collect any items offered to them. (The "calling card" rhyme is also included in Appendix 1.6.)

Dear madam, I'm calling your district today,
When you pick up my card please don't throw it away,
Just you sit down and read it, you never can tell,
You may have some old junk that you want to sell.

Perhaps an old mattress, or maybe some brass,
For old stuff like that is far better in cash,

[65] Ibid., 93
[66] Gmelch, *Nan: The Life of an Irish Travelling Woman*, 125

You may have some jewellery that you no longer like,
Or a second-hand car, or your husband's old bike.

Your old rags and woollens are of no further use,
I am sure they are far better oot o' the hoose,
And your old cast-off clothing, your ain or your man's,
Your old iron pots, or your brass jelly pans.

They are the things that I'm after, tae mention a few,
So get up and get busy, gie the hoose a guid do,
And you'll no be sorry when I call to collect,
I'm the first honest dealer that you've ever met.[67]

The metre and rhyme of the lines is obviously influenced by Belle's background of performance and writing songs, although she may also have known the tradition of "street cries and hawkers' jingles".[68] These were rhymes shouted to gain the attention of potential customers, and described the goods being sold or specific items that could be repaired. Many kinds of street traders used street cries, such as fruit sellers, chair menders, and other examples recorded by Folk Song Society researcher Frank Kidson.[69] Some cries were especially associated with Gypsies and Travellers, including the two lavender cries collected by Mike Yates and included in his songbook

[67] Stewart, *A Traveller's Life*, 45
[68] Kennedy, *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, 749
[69] Frank Kidson, "Notes on Musical Street Cries", *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* 6. 22 (1919), 48-50

Traveller's Joy (2006).[70] These cries were usually quite short in length and specific to one item, but Peter Kennedy gives an example from Kent Gypsy Solomon Smith which runs to forty-six lines of rhyming couplets and lists a huge variety of goods. Only Traveller traders appeared to use this cry, and Kennedy was astonished that "a class of mainly illiterate people should be able to memorise and select from it at will."[71] The idea behind the rhyme, according to Smith, was not to recite the entire list of goods, but to "start the rhyme anywhere you please and you cast out things you can't sell."[72] Smith also recalls that he knew one Gypsy who had the whole rhyme printed as a calling card, just as Stewart had done. Dominic Reeve's *Smoke in the Lanes* (1958), his semi-autobiographical novel of Gypsy life, also contains the same rhyme made into a calling card by a fellow Gypsy. Stewart's rhyme, although containing a similar list of goods, is very different to the Gypsy street cry, suggesting that either it is entirely original or else specifically used by Scottish Travellers.

Sheila Stewart describes the calling card gimmick as an "instant success" and that the family made so much money from it that "My father got a better lorry with the money he saved up."[73] In fact, the cards proved such an efficient way of collecting items that other Travellers would take the cards and materials meant for the Stewarts, which caused some disputes when they were caught in the act. The actual items listed in the card rhyme consist of metals (brass, iron, jewellery, cars, bicycles) and rags in various forms, along with mattresses. These bulky goods would require a large vehicle to collect them, showing the development of Traveller transportation from initial

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[70] Yates, *Traveller's Joy*, 18-19
[71] Kennedy, *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, 750
[72] Ibid.
[73] Stewart, *A Traveller's Life*, 46

carriage by families using prams, to horses and carts, to motorised vans and large lorries. Items such as mattresses and even linoleum floor coverings might seem odd things for Travellers to trade, but where the general population would have trouble transporting such goods, a mobile merchant could easily supply them. Patrick Stokes also mentions Travellers selling mattresses out of lorries or buying them to sell the feathers during wartime shortages. Although it is surely a flight of fancy, Stokes even mentions another Traveller finding thousands of pounds of money in an old mattress bought from Americans.[74] Apart from listing the various goods useful to Travellers, Stewart's calling cards also show that she was able to read and write, a skill not readily required in more traditional forms of work. In contemporary times, many Travellers have increasingly sought to improve their literacy, and change skills with which to make money.

Berry Picking: the Stewarts of Blair

When berry time comes roond each year,
Blair's population swelling,
There's every kind o picker there
And every kind o dwellin.
There's tents and huts and caravans,
There's bothies and their bivvies

[74] Court, *Puck of the Droms*,110

And shelters made wi tattie-bags

And dug-outs made wi divvies.[75]

"The Berry Fields o Blair", which appears in *Queen Amang the Heather* and is dated to 1947, gives the listener an insight into the circumstances where Travellers would work alongside settled people. (A full version of the song appears in Appendix 1.7.) Many farmers grew strawberries and raspberries in Blairgowrie, Scotland, and each berry required picking by hand. The first verse of the song lists a diverse mix of accommodation, including caravans, tents and workers' huts, also known as "bothies". Some of the shelters were very basic, as they were made from "tattie-bags" or potato sacks, or simply dug into the ground and covered with "divvies", or sods of earth. The range of lodgings described in the song reflects the diversity of the berry-pickers, as labourers from all over Scotland would travel to Blair each year. The second verse of the song lists miners, mill workers and fishermen among the workers at the berry fields. The third verse also demonstrations how many Travellers were involved in the berry-picking, by listing families from the western islands of Arran, Mull and Skye, and the towns of Wick and Aberdeen, among other places.

Although the work was long and back-breaking, Sheila Stewart describes the berry-picking as a great social event, "the highlight of each year", when Travellers from throughout Scotland would meet up and work in the fields and spend time together afterwards, holding a concert every Saturday night. [76] "There were some great singers and musicians from the Travelling community who came and performed. It was like

[75] Stewart, *Queen Amang the Heather*, 40
[76] Ibid.

one big traveller's ceilidh."[77] Traveller families would usually stick to a circuit of one particular area and not meet many other Travellers on their routes, since many methods of earning money depended on leaving enough time between visits to create the need for new tin vessels or a build-up of unwanted items. An occasion to meet with other Travellers, therefore, without having to compete for work would provide an opportunity to mix socially, to catch up with extended family and friends, to swap stories or even to meet future wives or husbands. Verses four and five of the song also illustrate the mixed attitudes and fortunes of Traveller families and how some of them worked hard whilst others struggled to pick anything: "There's some wid pick fae morn till nicht/ And some wid raither sleep." The Traveller method of an entire family working together is also represented in the line: "There's families pickin for one purse." Michael McDonagh also emphasises the importance of nomadism in keeping the family together and fitting work around the domestic group. The essential qualities are "being free to fit your work into the often unpredictable demands of the extended family. What you actually work at is of very little importance; you look for opportunities and make the best of them."[78] It could also be said that the mixture of work and play is often less differentiated in Traveller lives, and the line "I've mixed wi them in field and pub" in the final verse of "The Berryfields o Blair", is indicative of this. In addition, Douglas comments that MacPhee's accomplished piping may have made him money, but he never regarded it as a serious job: "It wis more or less a hobby tae me. I didnae mean

[77] Ibid.
[78] McDonagh, "Nomadism in Irish Travellers' Identity," *Irish Travellers: Culture and Ethnicity*, 95

tae play it for a livin, mair a hobby to pass the time. I'd naethin else tae tak up ma time."[79]

Busking and Wage Work: Pecker Dunne

Pecker Dunne is one Traveller musician who is well-known to the settled population of Ireland from his street performances and busking outside GAA games and racing meetings. He plays several instruments, sings popular ballads and also writes his own songs. In his autobiography, *Parley Poet and Chanter*, Dunne explains why music has been central to his identity and life. The third verse of one of Dunne's songs, "Wexford Town" reveals his feelings about his relationship with his father and the importance of music. (The full lyrics to the song appear in Appendix 1.8.)

> He taught me pride and how to live
> Though the road is hard and long
> And how a man will never starve
> With a banjo, fiddle or song,
> And how to fight for what I own,
> And what I feel is right
> And how to camp beside a ditch,
> On a stormy winter's night.[80]

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[79] Douglas, *Last of the Tinsmiths*, 95
[80] Dunne, *Parley Poet and Chanter*, 34

The verse clearly states one of the many reasons why music holds value to Travellers: it is a means of earning money. If you were moving about the country with just a horse and a bell tent, as Travellers often did until comparatively recently, then portability was an essential factor in any form of work. It would indeed have been feasible, as Dunne says, "never to starve" if you were able to create live music for people, especially in the years where recorded music and television were not readily accessible to the majority of the population. Dunne recalls his father telling him about the importance of learning to make music. "He told me that there was only one way that I was going to get a living and that was with my fiddle and my music."[81] Making money is not the overriding factor for Dunne in this song, however, as it is bound up with important personal values, such as pride and self-belief. These aspects of "Wexford Town" are explored in the next chapter.

In another song, "The Last of the Travelling People", Pecker also refers to his days of busking in towns and outside football matches across Ireland. (A full version of the song appears in Appendix 1.9.)

> From Belfast to Wexford, from Clare to Tralee,
> A town with a pub is a living for me.
> I haven't a home, but by God I am free
> I'm the last of the Travelling people.[82]

[81] Ibid., 8
[82] Ibid., 117

The recurrent theme of nomadism is reflected in Dunne's list of Irish towns, which represent travel as wide as Belfast, Wexford, County Clare and Tralee. Unlike many Traveller families, who kept to one circuit of travel, Dunne moved throughout Ireland and also abroad, spending time in the UK, America and Australia. In his autobiography, Dunne describes the time he lost all his money at Ballinasloe fair and had to get a job in the UK to claw back some savings and self-respect. "I decided to work hard and save so that I could get myself up and running again. So I put myself in a kind of prison for three years, working every hour that God sent and saving to come home again."[83] Dunne lists working in a gasworks, a rubber factory and at Birmingham New Street train station among his many jobs. The association with settled working patterns and "prison" is not unique to Dunne or other Travellers, as Clarke maintains: "wage-labour is still beyond the pale for most Gypsies and *gaujos'* inherent stupidity and servitude are displayed for all to see by accepting wage-labour and the restrictions this brings with it; it is seen as the 'tie that binds'"[84] The restrictive working patterns demanded by waged work can often deter Travellers from taking up jobs within the settled population because they would not be flexible enough to fit around their family life. By comparison, self-employment allows family responsibilities to dictate the hours and places of work, and is a much more attractive prospect to Travellers. Traditionally, Travellers also encourage their children to accompany them in work in order to pass down various skills, a practice not usually possible in waged work. Clarke's comments also infer that some Travellers may feel inferior to their peers if they are seen to be

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[83] Ibid., 83
[84] Clark, "'Not Just Lucky White Heather and Clothes Pegs'", *Ethnicity and Economy: Race and Class Revisited*, 187

reliant on the employment of a settled person, as this would go against their ideals of cultural independence and self-sufficiency.

Dunne's ease of gaining mainstream employment by 'passing' as a non-Traveller would also have been aided by the rising UK immigrant workforce at the time, as he mentions that "Birmingham and the English Midlands were full of Irish people then, both Travellers and settled people."[85] By blending into a wider pool of Irish immigrant workers, Dunne would have found it possible to escape the prejudice of employers who might not otherwise have taken on a Traveller, although he could still have experienced rejection and prejudice for being Irish. By his own admission, Dunne fitted into waged work successfully and recalls fond memories of his shift work at a rubber factory in Bury, Lancashire, saying that it was "a great job and I enjoyed it a lot".[86] However, he eventually felt the need to resign and return back to Ireland, explaining that he felt a "hungry feeling" descending upon him and calling him back to the road: "I couldn't forget the road! It was in my blood"[87] Although his expression of it may be romanticised, Dunne is describing a strong need to return to his nomadic way of life. Perhaps tiring of 'passing' in society as a settled person, he wanted to be able to express himself as a Traveller. Alternatively, he simply may have needed to escape the mindless monotony of factory work. By telling the foreman of the factory that he had a job in Ireland, Dunne revealed that he regarded being a musician as his true 'job' in life, superseding any promotion or career prospects that that factory could offer.

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[85] Dunne, *Parley-Poet and Chanter*, 83
[86] Ibid., 23
[87] Ibid., 24

This chapter has shown that work is of central importance to the lives of Irish and Scottish Travellers. This is expressed in the widely-varied, descriptive accounts of work which are included in Traveller memoirs, and the large number of songs featuring work that have been written by Travellers. The shifting working patterns of Travellers reveal that adaptability of skills and resourcefulness is a requirement in maintaining family life, as travelling shapes a lifestyle that is vastly different to wage-based, highly-specialised, settled work. Travellers hold great pride in their independence and self-reliance, yet are able to adapt to waged work when required, as shown by Dunne. However, due to the prejudice held by many people in settled society, the uptake of waged employment is still not a common occurrence among those individuals who openly identify themselves as Travellers. Instead, new patterns of self-employment have replaced traditional Traveller roles, Janet Keet-Black provides a representative list of these businesses in *Gypsies of Britain* (2013):

> The sons and daughters of the travelling hawkers have become market stallholders, horse traders have become car mechanics, and the rag and bone men have moved into recycling, with some owning large paper mills. Others are demolition or building contractors. Hedging and ditching have been replaced by landscape gardening.[88]

Candy Sheridan, in an interview for a *Spectator* article, also describes the existence of a 'parallel economy', where Gypsies and Travellers trade inside their communities, with

[88] Janet Keet-Black, *Gypsies of Britain* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2013), 48

no need to obscure their ethnicity.[89] As musicians, some Travellers are able to express their ethnic identity openly through the arts, and celebrate their family traditions by showcasing their skills in musical instruments, song, dance, poetry and art. However, this does not mean that Travellers are as easily accepted as settled people in other work environments. This leads to the work of Travellers remaining largely invisible to the majority of settled people, helping to fuel the stereotype of all Travellers being idle welfare recipients or criminals who contribute little to wider society. Simultaneously, a hidden population of Traveller academics, barristers, nurses and many other professions quietly support their families by working within the settled community. Some Gypsies and Travellers grow very rich. Billy Welsh, the organiser of the annual gathering at Appleby fair, states that some of the biggest businesses in the country are owned by Gypsies, including shipyards, car dealerships, scrapyards, caravan suppliers, carpet shops and exporters. He describes Gypsies and Travellers as "true business people. We don't just tarmac, or sell beds and windows. We do big business. We just keep quiet about it".[90]

Even Travellers who allude to a past Golden Age where they were able to take on seasonal work and enjoy some acceptance among settled society understand that acceptance is usually only temporary. In a public lecture, David Joyce, a founding member of the Irish Traveller Movement, discussed how Travellers were often initially welcomed in settled rural communities when people required tinsmith skills for example, but soon their "tolerance wore off" and Travellers would eventually be forced

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[89] Katherine Quarmby, "Meet the Gypsy entrepreneurs" *The Spectator online*, 24th August 2013 <http://www.spectator.co.uk/features/9000111/meet-the-gypsy-entrepreneurs/>
[90] Ibid.

back onto the road again.[91] In a similar way, families such as the Stewarts would not be able to remain camped on a farmer's land once the harvest had finished. Travellers were only welcomed in an area for the period of their usefulness. By focussing on their identity as workers, Traveller songs about work function to remind the wider society about the essential goods and services they once provided. These songs also document the changing face of employment and interaction between Travellers and the settled community, as traditional Traveller roles have disappeared, creating a situation where both settled people and Travellers compete for the same work.

Dunne suggests that competitive working practises may have prompted divisions between the Traveller and settled communities in the first place. He explains that, since Travellers were so adaptable, settled tradesmen viewed them as unwelcome competition and would circulate rumours about their work being substandard. Dunne asserts that the blacksmith "had the advantage when it came to spreading stories because his forge was a place where people would meet in the evening to chat and tell stories", therefore establishing him as an influential member of the community.[92] In this context, the blacksmith's comments that Travellers were "not to be trusted" would be seen as credible by members of his community. It would be impossible to find out if Dunne's notion is accurate, but the use of negative anecdotes and rumours about Travellers are certainly a familiar method of creating and maintaining stereotypes about them to this day.

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[91] David Joyce, "Tell Me About: 'Tinkers and Postdragon vans - challenging myths and perceptions of the Irish Traveller community'" (paper presented at The School of Nursing and Midwifery public lecture series, Trinity College Dublin, March 28, 2013)

[92] Dunne, *Parley-Poet and Chanter*, 32

One possible answer to increasing the visibility of Traveller identity in work lies in the re-emergence of traditional skills among young Traveller men, via community development groups. Crossbar, a Dublin bicycle workshop, is one of the projects overseen by Clondalkin Travellers' Development Group. Young Travellers repair bicycles for local people and also build and sell bicycles from parts donated to the workshop; in the process, they gain mechanical skills and the experience to set up their own business. David Joyce explains that "While there's always been an aspect of discrimination in employment from the mainstream we'd hope there is potential here for self-employment. It's a low investment start-up. You can setup from home."[93] Travellers have always adapted their skills to exploit niches in the changing economic environment and the next generation will doubtlessly carry on this tradition. If this can be achieved without discrimination, then Travellers will have the chance to again become a visible and recognisably important part of the workforce in partnership with mainstream society.

[93] Paul Reynolds and Freda Mullin Hughes, "Minceirs Whiden", *Rabble*, 10th January 2014. <http://rabble.ie/2014/01/10/minceirs-whiden>

Chapter Three

Family Songs

Irish Traveller Pipers

My name is "Cash the Piper"
And I 'm seen at race and fair
I'm known to all the jolly souls
From Wicklow to Kildare,
We have played at dance and wedding
From Bray to Clonegal,
But the cream of entertainment
Was at "Mick the Dalty's" ball.[1]

When asked about Traveller traditions, and if they have made any contribution to mainstream Irish culture, many Irish Travellers will mention Uilleann pipers, and in particular Johnny Doran. Perhaps the greatest evidence of the influence of Traveller pipers are the songs written about them. The most well-known song of this type was published by Captain Francis O'Neill, in his historical account of Irish music, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians* (1913). O'Neill, Chicago's Chief of Police, was originally from Cork, and became an avid collector of Irish music and song from the many Irish immigrants who arrived in Chicago. He also sought out knowledge about individual

[1] Capt. Francis O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*: W*ith Numerous Dissertations on Related Subjects* (1913; reprint, Chicago, Regan Printing House: Folcroft Library Editions, 1975), 257

musicians and the historic development of Irish musical instruments. In a chapter describing famous Uilleann pipers, O'Neill includes a song written about John Cash, "Cash the Piper."[2] (A full version of the song appears in Appendix 2.1.) Little is known about the song, except that it was popular in Wexford and Wicklow. Additionally, although it is entitled "Cash the Piper", the song itself gives scant detail about the man, apart from mentioning his name in the opening line. O'Neill was provided with the song, and a description of John Cash and his son, James Cash, in a letter from William Rowsome, a member of another prominent Uilleann piper family. Cash is depicted as an influential musician whose talent increased the popularity of Irish traditional music.

> Although Cash's visits were only of periodical recurrence, and of brief duration, yet they did much to influence the popular musical taste along traditional lines, and to still direct it in the channel through which it flowed for centuries. The same may be said of him wherever he went. He had a long and honorable career as an Irish piper.[3]

John Cash was born in County Wexford in 1832, and learned to play the Uilleann pipes from his uncle, James Hanrahan. Cash played his pipes as he travelled between Connemara and Wicklow, buying and selling horses at fairs. As suggested in the song, Cash also played at other social occasions, including weddings and races. Aside from horse trading and piping, Cash was also a tinsmith, and this combination of skills gave him a comfortable life when compared with many other Travellers. According to

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[2] Ibid., 257-258
[3] Ibid., 257

O'Neill, aside from his considerable musical ability, Cash was an imposing figure, standing at over six feet tall with a weakness for "fancy, flashy shirts" and a "broadcloth coat and a shining silk beaver hat".[4] This combination of talent and striking physicality reputedly made Cash easily recognisable at the events where he played.

Cash has been credited with developing an influential, 'Traveller' style of playing, but also sustaining Uilleann piping in a climate of great hostility to Irish culture. In *Free Spirits: Irish Travellers and Irish Traditional Music*, Tommy Fegan and Oliver O'Connell begin their chapter on John Cash with a description of how many aspects of Irish culture, including Irish music, were suppressed under the British-imposed penal laws. A series of famines, including the Great Irish famine of 1845 to 1852, also reduced the number of Irish pipers, as many died or migrated to escape starvation. By describing then fourteen-year-old Cash playing at an 1846 graveside vigil, Fegan and O'Connell create a link between Cash and the tragedy of the Great Famine: "His pipes echoed the heartbreak of the women keening at the grave, and filled the air with a sorrow that could not be described in human terms."[5] Set against an environment in which "the chance of survival was practically nil. This was Ireland in 1846 – a dying race", Cash is depicted as a heroic figure.[6]

However, even though Fegan and O'Connor link Cash's piping in a melodramatic way, they do highlight a legitimate point: that famine did lead to a sharp decline in Uilleann pipe players. In his historic discussion of piped instruments, *Story of the Bagpipe* (1911), William Henry Grattan Flood states that, after the famine,

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[4] Ibid., 256
[5] Fegan and O'Connell, *Free Spirits*, 16
[6] Ibid., 17

"gaiety seemed to have disappeared from the 'masses', and what between the depression of the times and the exodus to America, the decline of the Uilleann pipes set in."[7] According to Flood, in 1894, "scarce a dozen good pipers could be found."[8] Among these handful of players, Flood mentions the name of John Cash. In a climate where so few Uilleann pipers remained, Cash's movements across Ireland would have brought the sound of the pipes to towns and villages where few musicians remained. Fegan and O'Connell suggest that Cash might have survived when other pipers perished, due to his Travelling lifestyle: "He learned his survival skills from a tough apprenticeship on the road with his father."[9]

Liam Gaul, in an essay for *Travellers: Citizens of Ireland* (2000), describes Traveller pipers such as the Cashes and Dorans as being the saviours of Uilleann pipe music due to their considerable musical skill: "The credit for the survival of this much maligned folk instrument has to rest with the 'Master' performers and exponents from the Irish Travellers."[10] Certainly, even if it cannot be proven that Traveller pipers ensured the survival of Uilleann piping, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that they were respected as great players. Aside from being immortalised in song, O'Neill reports that over time, a piece of music called "The Londonderry Clog" was played so often by Cash that it became known as "Cash's Hornpipe" in County Wexford. Cash also influenced many subsequent generations of talented pipers. Born in 1853, John Cash's son, James Cash, was also a gifted Uilleann piper from an early age. He had a short yet

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[7] William Henry Grattan Flood, *Story of the Bagpipe* (London: The Walter Scott Publishing Co, 1911), 197
[8] Ibid.
[9] Fegan and O'Connell, *Free Spirits*, 17
[10] Liam Gaul, "Traditional music and the 'Master' performers form the Traveller community", *Travellers: Citizens of Ireland*, 65

successful career playing in music halls and at the Metropolitan Theatre, before dying of alcohol consumption at the age of thirty-eight. Unlike his father, James Cash did not deal in horses or take up tin-smithing, and was able to support himself purely from the money he made playing music. He was thought to be even more talented than John Cash, and O'Neill quotes William Rowsome's description of him as the "star piper of the whole globe".[11]

Further praise has been written about the piping of John Cash's great-grandsons, Johnny and Felix Doran. Johnny Doran was born in County Wicklow in 1906, and spent his life travelling through Ireland, earning a living mainly through playing the Uilleann pipes. He was a talented musician from a young age, and could make and repair a set of pipes, using unusual materials such as old spoons to fashion regulator keys. In 1948, Donegal fiddler John Kelly arranged for Johnny Doran to record twelve pieces of music for the Irish Folklore Commission. Later that year, he was gravely injured in an accident in Dublin. He had parked his caravan next to a wall, and a strong wind caused the wall to collapse on top of the caravan with Doran inside. He died two years later, in 1950. His brother, Felix Doran, was born in 1916 and learned to play the pipes from his older brother. He later moved to Manchester and combined his piping with other businesses, including scrap metal and commercial haulage. He died in 1972. Four years later, a recording of his Uilleann piping was released as *The Last of the Travelling Pipers* (1976) on Topic Records.[12]

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[11] O'Neill, *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*, 260
[12] Felix Doran, *The Last of the Travelling Pipers* (Topic Records, 1976)

Liam Gaul describes Johnny Doran as "the greatest piper Ireland ever produced" and an "excellent music reader", meaning that he could learn by ear and also from musical notation.[13] He credits Johnny Doran with introducing Willie Clancy to the Uilleann pipes, which enabled him to become famous in the world of piping and traditional Irish music. David Tuohy, in *Postcolonial Artist: Johnny Doran and Irish Traveller Tradition* (2008), explains that, "as a virtuoso performer, the sole recording of Johnny Doran's pipe-playing has assumed the status of a 'canonical' work within the genre that is Irish music".[14] Therefore, Doran's piping is greatly respected by other Irish musicians. Doran's playing is also regarded as the exemplar of a particularly flowing and expressive style, known as the "travelling style".[15] However, Tuohy also adds that Doran's innovative playing style was "almost entirely his own."[16] This suggests that, even among the best pipers, Johnny Doran's playing was regarded as unique. The reason for this may be purely due to individual talent, but some researchers suggest that Doran's nomadic lifestyle might have inspired him further. Fegan and O'Connell again use emotive language to create a link between their romantic idea of nomadism and Doran's musical ability:

> The most defining feature of Johnny Doran's playing was the way in which his music embodied the wildness, the freedom of the open countryside, the flowing rivers, nature, the sounds of birds and other expressions associated with life on

[13] Gaul, Traditional music and the 'Master' performers form the Traveller community", *Travellers: Citizens of Ireland*, 67
[14] Tuohy and Ó hAodha , *Postcolonial Artist*, 20
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.

> the road for a Traveller piper. It was raw, pure music from the depths of the soul of a man imbued with a rare talent.[17]

Tuohy, on the other hand, cautions against over-emphasising any parallels between Doran's music and his Traveller background. However, he admits that the "freedom" displayed in Doran's playing style was "almost certainly perceived" by those who heard him as a reflection of his lifestyle.[18] Tuohy comments that "it is as if the 'freedom' that was a tenet of his 'nomadic' way of life was being sonically articulated in the free-flowing experimentation and variation of the music which Doran played."[19] But rather than representing an idealistic freedom of the 'open road', Tuohy suggests that the "freedom" expressed in Doran's piping relies on technical proficiency and virtuosity. In an interview with Tuohy, Mickey Dunne, also a Traveller piper, likens Doran's Uilleann piping with being a native Irish speaker.[20] Therefore, Doran was able to express his music in an easy "flow", and he had a natural or "unconscious" musical fluency.[21] In a different interview, Pat Mitchell, a Uilleann piper and an authority on pipers' musical styles, expresses Doran's stylistic "freedom" in terms of absolute mental concentration and indifference to criticism. Describing a sulky (horse-drawn cart) race he had once witnessed at Ballinasloe fair, Galway, Mitchell compares the focus he saw in the faces of the racing Travellers to Johnny Doran's playing style:

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[17] Fegan and O'Connell, *Free Spirits*, 26
[18] Tuohy and Ó hAodha , *Postcolonial Artist*, 24
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 80
[21] Ibid.

for him, both represented the freedom of a particular attitude, a "don't care, no worrying about who's listening" viewpoint.[22]

Alternatively, Traveller culture may have influenced the Cash and Doran piping style in a more intimate way. Since Travellers tend to marry other Travellers, and musical skills are often passed down the generations, playing styles can be developed in families as a type of 'private' knowledge. Tuohy argues that musical style may be reproduced within the extended family "for cultural, commercial or identity-related reasons."[23] As illustrated by their family tree in *Free Spirits*, the Cash and Doran lineage can be traced back for six generations, with each generation transmitting Uilleann piping to the next.[24] Therefore, piping is an important part of family culture, and fits easily into a nomadic lifestyle, as music can be performed at fairs, races, and at many other public places. Traveller piper families, including the Dorans, Dunnes and Keenans, supported themselves mainly through musical performance, and it would also have made economic sense to keep certain aspects of musical skill within a select group. In addition to this, some researchers have suggested that "musicianers", or Traveller families known for their musical ability, enjoyed a higher status among fellow Travellers and, in some cases, settled people. Therefore, maintaining a high status in the family via musical transmission would be advantageous to Travellers, to protect them from discrimination by settled people.

In *Irish Travellers: Tinkers No More* (2007), Alen MacWeeney recalls meeting Johnny Keenan in 1967, as his family was moving onto a pitch at a halting site in

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[22] Ibid., 72
[23] Ibid., 15
[24] Fegan and O'Connell, *Free Spirits*, 21-22

Dublin. Keenan told MacWeeney that "We have nothing to do with them people", meaning the other Travellers already living there. He clarified this by insisting that his family were "not Travellers" but "musicianers".[25] This would appear to suggest that Keenan regarded Traveller musicians to be a class apart from other Travellers. An example of Traveller musicians receiving preferential treatment appears on the Navan Travellers Workshop *Traveller Heritage* website. In an interview with the academic Sinéad Ní Shúinéar, Irish Travellers Willie and Elizabeth 'Ghillie' O'Connor explain that there were "musicianers" in the O'Connor family. This meant that they were invited into settled peoples' houses. Willie O'Connor states that a Traveller would be welcome in the "big houses, in the gentry houses" if they were "a good musicianer".[26] A special occasion, such as a wedding, would make a musicianer "very well appreciated". He also suggests that Traveller musicians were more highly respected than manual workers, as he mentions that "they weren't looked at like the labouring man. If you like, they were a little step above him." Fegan and O'Connell, in *Free Spirits*, also mention that Johnny and Felix Doran received unusually generous hospitality from settled people.

> There was definitely something different about the Dorans that set them apart from other Traveller families. They were always welcomed wherever they went

[25] Alen MacWeeney, *Irish Travellers: Tinkers No More*, 6
[26] Navan Travellers Heritage Group, "Willie Elizabeth Ghillie Connors O Connor", *Traveller Heritage website*. Accessed March 19, 2013.
<http://www.travellerheritage.ie/willie_elizabeth_ghillie_connors_o_connor.asp>

> in Ireland or England, they were taken into people's homes and people in a depressed Ireland gave them money willingly just to hear them play music.[27]

Many Uilleann pipers were influenced by Johnny and Felix Doran; either by watching them perform in person, or via their musical recordings. The Doran Tionól Committee, an organisation composed of pipers Mickey Dunne, Leo Rickard and Oliver O'Connell, works to keep the memory and music of the Dorans alive for future generations. Each year, they arrange a weekend of music, lessons and instrument workshops, often inviting descendants of the Doran brothers to perform. A DVD recording of the 2008 Doran Centenary Tionól in Galway gives the viewer an impression of just how many musicians were influenced by the Dorans, as it contains numerous interviews with pipers, both Traveller and non-Traveller, and other individuals who remember them. Some of the Tionól interviews are reproduced in the publication *Free Spirits*, along with two compositions in memory of Johnny and Felix Doran. Unlike "Cash the Piper", these songs contains many details about the Dorans and appear in Appendix 2.2 and 2.3 of this thesis. Finbar Furey's untitled poem, which is solely dedicated to Johnny Doran, refers to his piping in the lines "purest tones supreme", and "his legacy of music living on".[28] Furey also mentions aspects of their shared Traveller culture in his composition, such as "green tented wattles" and "piping the fairs of rural towns."[29] Oliver O'Connell's composition, "The Doran Song", includes both brothers' favourite pieces of music, including "Rakish Paddy" and "The

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[27] Fegan and O'Connell, *Free Spirits*, 47
[28] Ibid., 37
[29] Ibid.

Bucks of Oranmore". [30] The song creates a sense of how the Dorans influenced other Uilleann pipers, particularly in the music of other Traveller piping families:

> The Doran sound is all around, just listen to the roar
> When Paddy Keenan takes the stage, and he plays the "Ballintore"
> Or Finbar's "Lonesome Boatman", or the way he sings a song
> The Keenans, Fureys and the Dunnes, the legacy lives on.[31]

As influential musicians who could openly display their Traveller identity, the Dorans represent an important source of pride for many Travellers. Consequently, they are afforded the highest respect among Travellers and settled musicians alike.

Family Songs as Cultural Archives

Songs can be considered "family songs" for many different reasons. As illustrated above, certain songs may celebrate the lives and achievements of particular families. Or, the performance of certain songs can evoke the memory of departed family members or a particular period in time. Decisions about who should sing certain songs, from whom a person learns a song, or what a song might signify to a singer or listener, may also be influenced by family members. Perhaps most importantly, in communities which are largely non-literate or have limited representation in written history, certain songs provide an oral chronicle of the past. This may be one of the central reasons why

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[30] Ibid., 48
[31] Ibid.

many songs which could be described as "family songs" are included in the memoirs of Travellers, regardless as to whether the individuals are musicians or singers, or not. Additionally, the act of sharing ballads or stories is a method of reinforcing a sense of culture and identity. As this chapter will illustrate, "family songs" provide an insight not only into the functions of Traveller family life, but also suggest how and why aspects of cultural identity might be passed down through successive generations.

Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger published a songbook, *Travellers' Songs from England and Scotland* in 1977, which was compiled from the songs they had recorded from several Traveller camps based around Britain. During their research, the authors interviewed more than a hundred Scottish and English Travellers and found a recurrent phenomenon: Travellers were creating a communal memory bank in the form of songs and stories. MacColl described this as "the existence of a body of traditional songs and stories known to the entire group and used to maintain and reinforce the Traveller's identity."[32] Although not every member of a Traveller family might sing, the same collection of songs and stories would be known by most individuals. It did not appear to matter who wrote the songs, whether they came originally from Traveller or non-Traveller culture, or if the stories were based on actual family members. Instead, the strength of group identity was distilled in the communal knowledge of a body of shared material.

However, the fact that certain songs are included in the group repertoire, and others are left out, suggest that content is also important. Some Travellers write their own songs and are able to add very personal material to their family's collection of

[32] MacColl and Seeger, *Travellers' Songs,* 15

songs, but the majority of 'family songs' are taken from either traditional folk ballads or other popular musical material. Social commentators such as Antonio Gramsci have identified that the majority of songs known within a community are often written "neither by nor for the people", but are instead selected according to certain essential criteria which means that the song fits into the norms and values of a community, their "way of thinking and feeling" or in other words, their culture.[33] Gramsci, in *Selections from Cultural Writings* (1985), states that all popular songs are not chosen because of their artistry or historical origin, but the way in which they conceive of the world "in contrast with official society".[34] Therefore, Travellers might be said to adopt songs written by settled individuals because they reflect aspects of their culture. According to Gramsci, it follows that song choice reflects the position that "the people themselves are not a homogenous cultural collectivity but present numerous and variously combined cultural stratifications".[35] Just because Travellers sing the same songs as non-Traveller folk singers, it does not mean that they share the same cultural norms and values, or perform the songs in the same way.

When interviewing Caroline Hughes, an English Traveller, MacColl observed that several family members would surround her. While she sang, the others did not simply form an audience. They were active in supplying forgotten lines of songs, the order of verses, or they recited the lyrics along with her as she sang. In singing together, the group of Travellers created a space in which to reinforce their shared knowledge, values and way of life. MacColl emphasised in his study the communal,

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[33] Gramsci, *Cultural Writings*, 195
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

habitual nature of the singing experience, as he wrote, perhaps naively, "we – the collectors – were entirely incidental to the proceedings, mere observers of a community rite."[36] Although MacColl was presumably attempting to downplay any influence he might have brought upon the events he experienced, it is hard to believe that the presence of an outsider, who was an educated song collector (and a very well-known folk singer at the time) did nothing to change the circumstances of the "community rite". However, the sheer number of family members who could recite the same songs (even young children), as observed by MacColl, surely points to the fact that instances of communal singing of "family songs" must have happened frequently and created a bank of shared cultural knowledge.

Although academics and song collectors appreciate the historic and cultural value of Traveller's songs, Travellers themselves are also aware of their importance. MacColl identified several of the long ballads he recorded Travellers singing as "Child ballads", which were several hundred years old. The majority of Child ballads can be traced to the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, although some were taken from much earlier manuscripts. Songs which are classified under Child's system affords them a semblance of legitimate history or 'authenticity', as it is possible to trace their origins and developments over time. Although Caroline Hughes was not aware of the work of Child, she did identify some of the ballads she knew as "relegends". Hughes explained that "relegends is our history, like. Take 'em away and what we got? We got nothing."[37] Seemingly a contraction of the words "real" and "legend", these songs were

[36] MacColl and Seeger, *Travellers' Songs* , 12
[37] MacColl and Seeger, *Travellers' Songs*, 15

recognised to be articles of oral history and valuable cultural artifacts by the Travellers who sang them.

MacColl reported that the songs deemed to be the most valuable were those regarded as "true" and "old".[38] This may be why Scottish Traveller Jeannie Robertson insisted that she could trace "The Gypsy Laddie" right back to the origins of its composition, claiming that she had personally spoken to people who knew the original "Gypsy Laddie" and the subject of the narrative.[39] The researcher Hershel Gower, recalling his time spent singing with Robertson and other Travellers, noted that her songs had a type of authenticity that was related to the people and places involved in the narratives, as opposed to bald facts about the events. The extent to which a song could be regarded as 'true' was therefore related more closely to its emotional qualities than its historical accuracy.

Even though Irish Traveller Sean Maher wrote his semi-autobiographical *The Road to God Knows Where* himself, he nevertheless emphasised that oral culture still retained a special meaning for him. "You must remember that storytelling is our only means of communication with the past. We on the road can't write our deeds, but we do remember them and pass them down faithfully by word of mouth."[40] For Travellers, the idea of history being preserved in the shape of stories and songs assigns them great cultural value and importance. Although not all songs known by Travellers can be classified under systems such as Child's, or even exist on the written page, they are nonetheless valued as equally historic and authentic. For Travellers, a shared

[38] Ibid., 14
[39] Porter and Gower, *Jeannie Robertson*, 59
[40] Maher, *The Road to God Knows Where*, 68

knowledge of songs provides a picture of the past left otherwise ignored and unrecorded by settled society, which can be preserved and reinforced by families through communal singing.

Although some very old ballads have been identified by researchers of Traveller singers, it would be unwise to attempt to trace the origins of Traveller families from their oral culture alone. Sheila Stewart recounts in *A Traveller's Life* that when Hamish Henderson recorded her singing "The Twa Brothers", he told her that the version she was performing "was the earliest version [of the song] he had ever collected, and that it dated back to the twelfth century."[41] Despite the impressive age of the ballad, however, the existence of the song in the Stewart family repertoire cannot be regarded as evidence by which to date their origins as Travellers. Songs alone cannot authenticate or date the community in which they are sung, as they might have entered the group repertoire at any point in the near or distant past. In fact, many of the same narrative songs sung by Travellers are known and performed amongst settled communities of singers. Mike Yates, in his songbook, *Traveller's Joy*, states that although some songs featuring Anglo-Romany or Cant words are normally only sung in Traveller circles, "the Gypsy/Traveller repertoire of folk songs is generally little different from that one finds (or used to find) being sung by the non-Gypsy folk-singing communities in England and Scotland."[42] Yates accounts for the popularity of some ballads as due to the fact that they "tell stories" or have a strong narrative. Others have romantic elements, which can become entwined with the narrative-led songs and thereby hold further interest for the listener.

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[41] Stewart, *A Traveller's Life* , 76
[42] Yates, *Traveller's Joy*, *25*

However, Travellers may also incorporate songs and stories written by settled people for reasons of cultural reinterpretation. For example, Donald Braid, in *Traveller Tales: Lives Shaped through Stories*, compared Duncan Williamson's version of "Cinderella" to the classic tale by Charles Perrault. Both versions of the same story contain broadly the same elements, but there are important cultural differences. In Williamson's version, Cinderella is re-named "Mary", and her family are Scottish Travellers. Mary is not abused by her stepmother, but because she is the youngest of many siblings, she is raised by her grandmother in close proximity to her parents. Instead of a godmother, Mary's grandmother is the source of magic, since, according to Braid, she "embodies nurturing, wisdom and possibility" as the family matriarch.[43] Finally, when Mary reveals that she is to marry her prince, her grandmother proclaims that the family will be "well off forever" because they will always have a place to camp.[44] In this context, the story of "Cinderella" is reinterpreted from a rags-to-riches story to one of Traveller freedom. Mary's parents have the option to maintain their nomadic life, but also have the opportunity to stay in contact with their married daughter and camp beside her. Songs which promote values and characteristics which are regarded positively by Travellers, or represent aspects of their culture, can be used in the same way by parents to instill certain morals and traditions into their children. (This idea is discussed further in Chapter Four.)

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[43] Braid, *Traveller Tales*, 195
[44] Ibid., 196

Singers, Tradition Bearers and Transformative Voices

If songs that are shared by a community can be considered a form of oral history, the individuals who perform these songs therefore become bearers of cultural representation. Inevitably, as with all artistic skills, some people will enjoy greater prominence as singers than others. During his research into Traveller singers, MacColl noticed that some singers were in fact "Singers", and used a capitalization of the letter "S" to highlight the authority accorded to these people by the rest of their community. Caroline Hughes was the oldest person in her family group, which already gave her a position of enhanced respect, but she was also their Singer. She was their cultural representative and historical repository, as she knew more songs than anyone else and often held the last word in disputes on the 'correct' versions of material.[45] Many of the Travellers who provided songs for McColl's study, even those who sang several ballads, did not regard themselves as Singers and only provided the requested songs because they knew them and had been asked to sing them. Had a Singer been present, MacColl would have been directed to this person, with other individuals remaining quiet, choosing to "not have sung at all."[46] The role of the Traveller Singer, then, is a huge cultural responsibility, as Singers represent a family's collective cultural experiences. In the words of MacColl, a Singer could "recreate for the community its own past and present history. In other words, many of the Travellers are singers – and almost every Travelling community has its Singer."[47] In a community where literacy is limited, these songs and stories take the place of official records, diaries, even newspaper reports, in recreating a shared cultural past.

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[45] MacColl and Seeger, *Travellers' Songs* , 12
[46] Ibid., 20
[47] Ibid.

In a family of Traveller singers, or Singers, responsibility for the communal body of songs may be shared out amongst certain members. Each individual singer might have 'their' songs. During his time with Scottish Travellers the Stewarts, MacColl observed that the family's selection of songs appeared to have been shared out among the individual singers. Acting as the family matriarch and custodian of songs, Belle Stewart chose songs for her children which best fit them in terms of interest, preference and personality. Sheila Stewart explains in *Queen Amang the Heather* that this form of song 'ownership' became even more important when the family performed together. "We all had our own songs and we weren't allowed to dip into each other's. That's the way it was; my mother was the boss of what we could sing on stage."[48] Performances by the Stewarts for the settled public occurred in a very different environment to their informal open-house ceilidhs (where everyone would be expected to contribute) or family celebrations. Perhaps the stage performances prompted Belle Stewart to regulate her family's songs more strictly, since the songs and their singers would represent the Stewarts' culture and that of other Scottish Travellers.

Belle Stewart and her daughters, Sheila and Cathie, each had distinct repertoires, with Belle singing the most widely known, longest and oldest ballads, many of them Child ballads. According to McCall, she also sang "the bothy ballads, the cant pieces, certain love songs, lowlife songs and fragments."[49] Belle Stewart was the family's historical singer, reveling in strong narratives and songs about the past. Bothy ballads are usually recognised as songs composed by farm workers, describing scenes of rural life. Cant pieces are songs performed in one of the Scottish Traveller

[48] Stewart, *Queen Amang the Heather*, 108
[49] MacColl and Seeger, *Till Doomsday in the Afternoon*, 163

languages. The songs which MacColl described as "lowlife songs" are possibly the bawdy and drinking-themed songs sung by Belle Stewart, while the "fragments" are single verses or choruses recalled from longer pieces, with the extra material somehow lost in the passage of time. According to MacColl, Belle Stewart's daughter Cathie sang a small selection of love songs which complimented her mother's selection, featuring sentimental and nostalgia-filled lyrics. This was in contrast to Sheila, whose real interest lay in nineteenth-century Irish songs, due to her appreciation of the melodies: or, as she stated, because "I love the tunes."[50]

Between these three women, the Stewarts maintained a huge repertoire and variety of songs, reflecting their culture, history and individual interpretations. But this was not the limit of their cultural engagement. The family also took on the roles of musical mentors to settled enthusiasts and became cultural ambassadors for Scottish Travellers and Scotland itself. Belle and Sheila were also invited to America to teach ballads and give lectures on Scottish Travelling culture in Elkins, West Virginia.[51] It is also significant that, after the death of piper Alex Stewart, who was husband to Belle and father of Sheila and Cathie, the women chose to carry on their musical performances without him. Belle expressed the wish to "carry on the Stewarts of Blair tradition and keep[ing] singing," illustrating that she was fully aware of the cultural importance of her family's music.[52] For the Stewarts, the songs had grown bigger in influence and cultural importance than the individuals who performed them, even if they were family members.

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[50] Ibid., 164
[51] Stewart, *A Traveller's Life*, 166
[52] Stewart, *Queen Amang the Heather*, 121

John D. Niles discusses the concept of "tradition bearers" in his study of traditional singers and storytellers, *Homo Narrans*. Like MacColl's "Singers", Niles found that certain individuals stood apart from the rest of their community and became recognised as "specialists in a valued art, known and honored by name in their communities."[53] Where MacColl appears to emphasise the idea of Travellers being custodians of folk songs long forgotten by settled singers, Niles goes further and suggests that the "tradition bearer" must also be a collector and actively expand and reinvent their repertoire, according to their individuality: "They are the makers of the tradition, not its slaves, and their creativity is sometimes evident in a personal style."[54] Looking at Traveller singers such as the Stewarts in this way, a sense of cultural vitality is created through performance, rather than simple repetition of well-known lyrics. "Singers" or "tradition bearers" not only celebrate and recreate family history when they sing, but they also bring appropriate new material into the cultural memory bank, gleaned from other cultures and experiences, and re-interpreted in their individual style.

Niles' "traditional bearers", like MacColl's "Singers", are not isolated individuals, but are part of a community where other people are involved in singing songs, telling stories or playing musical instruments. Over a period of time, certain individuals are able to grow into their role as tradition bearers, demonstrating five major tendencies. Niles lists these as: "(1) *engagement*, (2) *retentiveness*, (3) *acquisitiveness*, (4) a high degree of *critical consciousness*, and (5) at least a shake or two of *showmanship*."[55] Strong tradition bearers are passionate about their material and

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[53] Niles, *Homo Narrans*, 128
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 180 (original emphasis)

have the ability to recall often lengthy songs or stories from memory, perhaps after hearing them only a handful of times. The tradition bearer will actively seek out, listen attentively to and adapt material from other individuals. They will pick out, to their own personal preferences, the 'best' material and aim to perform it well, often taking great pleasure and personal flair in the act of singing and storytelling. Niles uses the example of Duncan Williamson, a Scottish Traveller from Argyll, as a "tradition bearer" who embodied all of these traits.

It is not difficult to see why Niles calls Williamson a "tradition bearer", as he easily embodies all five characteristics identified in *Homo Narrans*. The "single most essential trait" Niles highlights among traditional bearers is their "active engagement" with the stories and songs of their culture.[56] Immersed in Traveller culture from birth, Williamson told stories and ballads from a young age, seeking out audiences within his community before engaging with academics and settled enthusiasts in later years. He also spent time in schools sharing songs and stories with local children, such was his passion for storytelling. In an interview for *Homo Narrans*, Williamson describes himself at one point as being "obsessed" with finding new material, stories in particular, in order to widen his repertoire.[57] This natural acquisitiveness strengthens his classification as a tradition bearer.

David Campbell also witnessed Williamson's incredible feats of memory, Niles' retentiveness, in his publication of taped interviews with the Scottish Traveller, *A Traveller in Two Worlds*. Although a storyteller in his own right, Campbell felt that his memory was still inferior to Williamson's, dismissing himself as "not having an ear

[56] Ibid., 184
[57] Ibid., 185

as quick or adept as Duncan's", simultaneously praising Williamson's repetition of the songs for the benefit of his learning many more times than he would have required himself: "About this he is endlessly patient."[58] As for Williamson's critical consciousness, although retaining a public face of utter respect for other singers and storytellers, he was known to privately hold very high standards, and Niles notes that he could be "abruptly dismissive" of other performers where they did not meet his mark.[59] Finally, Niles describes Williamson's skills at showmanship as "superb an actor as any member of a theater [sic] company", with the storyteller taking on voices and roles of characters and using his entire body to transform any story into a riveting performance.[60]

One Irish Traveller who could be considered a "tradition bearer", within the terms designated by Niles, is the fiddle player and storyteller John Doherty. Born in Finntown, County Donegal in 1895, Doherty is descended from a long line of singers, storytellers, and musicians. A family tree of the Doherty family, with illustrations to indicate the musical talents of each individual, is reproduced in *The Northern Fiddler: Musicians of Donegal and Tyrone* (1979) by Allen Feldman and Eamonn O'Doherty.[61] In addition to transcribing many pieces of music, the authors conducted taped interviews with both Doherty and his nephew Mickey Doherty, alongside other non-Traveller musicians. Like Duncan Williamson, Doherty was actively engaged in music and storytelling from a young age, as his father was a highland piper and fiddle player and his two younger brothers also played the fiddle. Often cousins and older relatives

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[58] Campbell and Williamson, *A Traveller in Two Worlds: Volume One*, 46
[59] Niles, *Homo Narrans*, 189
[60] Ibid.
[61] Allen Feldman and Eamonn O'Doherty, *The Northern Fiddler: Musicians of Donegal and Tyrone* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1979), 36-37

would visit, creating what Doherty describes as "a great time of music."[62] As proof of his acquisitiveness, Doherty would seek out other fiddlers, often at the expense of completing his work: "If I were to hear a lot of street musicians coming into town here, I would leave whatever I could be at and I wouldn't care, I'd come the whole way to hear what they were able to play."[63]

Doherty and his extended family exhibited both Niles' "tradition bearer" standards of retentiveness and critical consciousness, as according to Feldman and O'Doherty, they formed "a highly skilled musical subculture which had an incalculable influence on the musical life of rural Donegal". [64] The family would travel across parishes, and be invited into private homes, dances and country fairs. They not only supplied new music to the rural community, but their choices reinvigorated the repertoires of local players. Most rural musicians were farmers who could only play part of the year, due to the restrictions caused by harvests, planting and tilling the land. In comparison, the Traveller players were professional musicians and supplemented their earnings with non-seasonal craftwork such as tin-smithing. They were continually in contact with other players, constantly updating their repertoire and techniques, and sought out the best music. It has also been suggested that Travelling musicians introduced tin fiddles as an affordable alternative to the wooden instruments, which often had to be imported from Europe or the UK. As for the required showmanship element of Niles' "tradition bearer", Feldman and O'Doherty simply state that when Doherty plays, "the effect is magical".[65]

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[62] Ibid., 33
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., 34
[65] Ibid., 38

The idea of a person using their performance skills in a "transformative" way appears in a third study, which focuses on Scottish Traveller Jeannie Robertson. Born in Aberdeen in 1908, Robertson typically lived in a house with her family for six months of the year, before taking to the road and travelling throughout Argyll and Perthshire in search of seasonal work. Although chiefly known for singing traditional Scottish Traveller songs, she had the confidence to sing a wide variety of styles. Her most famous songs were known as her 'big ballads'. These were songs from her childhood, long historical ballads and her mother's own compositions. Robertson was 45 years old when she was 'discovered' by Hamish Henderson, a researcher for the School of Scottish Studies, and over a period of time she became known not just as a peerless Traveller singer but as an outstanding folksinger in her own right.

In *Jeannie Robertson: Emergent Singer, Transformative Voice*, James Porter and Herschel Gower depict Robertson as a transformative figure in a number of ways. Firstly, her discovery and growing popularity led to radio and television appearances, and later concert halls throughout the UK. Her singing took a step away from the context of Traveller audiences and instead became a performance for a largely settled audience. As other folk singers such as Ewan MacColl began to take notice and reference her songs, Robertson was transformed into a hugely influential performer. In addition, she transformed the material she worked with, taking traditional songs such as "Son Davit" and "Lord Lovel", and adapted them to fit her own persona, drawing on her previous life experiences. In the hands of Robertson, "Son Davit" is transformed from a tale of historical fratricide to a yearning mother's wish to see her errant son again, sung through a voice inflected with the emotional experience of losing her own

son, Jeemsie, in his infancy. Perhaps the most important transformative feature of Robertson's performances for Porter and Gower was the effect of her delivery on other people. By embodying the narratives and emotions within her songs, Robertson became a focus for transformation, allowing her audience to change the way they perceived and understood aspects of her Traveller identity. In this way, one figure from a minority can represent an entire group and help reshape other people's views about their community. As Porter and Gower explain, by "transcending contextual shifts through adaptive strategies of self transformation, in creating new attitudes toward meaning and value, the individual 'becomes' collective, the modern traditional, the literary oral." [66] In this way, Robertson represents her oral tradition, her Traveller community and indeed Scotland's cultural output, but she also creates sufficient empathy in her audience to educate them about her individual identity and its Traveller origins.

Family Songs Featuring Family Members

Many of the Travellers discussed in this thesis composed their own songs, and a number of songs included in Traveller memoirs describe family members. Perhaps the most significant example of this is Sheila Stewart's biography of her mother Belle, which records several songs that Belle Stewart composed herself during her life as a ballad singer. One of her tunes, "Song for Donald and Andy", commemorates the death of her two brothers, who passed away within a week of each other over the festive period of 1964.[67] (A full version of the song is included in Appendix 2.4.)

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[66] Porter and Gower, *Jeannie Robertson*, xvii
[67] Stewart, *Queen Amang the Heather*, 83-84

'Twas on a cold December nicht when fruits and flooers were gone,
My brother Andy left me tae be with his brother Dan,
The sorrow they have left behind is more than tongue can tell,
I was their only sister and I dearly loved them well.[68]

The simple words used in the first verse of the song describe a sister's grief and the feelings of sadness shared by her immediate family. Stewart provides a seasonal frame to the events, and recreates a barren winter scene with the absence of warmth, flowers and fruit. Later in the song, Stewart addresses the brothers themselves and mentions the happy times they shared as siblings. A moment of guilt emerges in the third verse as Belle accepts that she misses the argumentative Andy more or "most of aa", even though she was closer to Donald. The penultimate verse depicts the grieving widows of the two men and their children, although Stewart appears to hint that her heart is heaviest, since she states that her life "is empty" without her brothers. In the final lines of the song, Stewart addresses all of her relatives at once. She seems to create a close bond that reaches beyond death, reuniting all the family again in heaven "on our good Lord's judgement day."[69]

In *Queen Amang the Heather*, Sheila Stewart does not describe how or when her mother's "Song for Donald and Andy" was performed, or if it was ever sung in public. The personal nature of the lyrics would suggest that it was composed with only the immediate family in mind, if any potential audience was considered at all. This is borne out in *Till Doomsday in the Afternoon*, when MacColl explains that "one gets the

[68] Ibid., 83
[69] Ibid., 84

impression that the act of writing such a piece was an end in itself, a therapeutic exercise to assuage private grief" and therefore not for public, or even family consumption.[70] When asked about the verses which described the death of her brothers, Belle Stewart explained to MacColl that "It still hurts me to read them, never mind to sing them."[71] MacColl also said that the song was "not really designed for singing", although a melody was chosen to fit the words, which themselves contain a suitable rhyme and meter for performance.[72] Since Belle Stewart, like many traditional folk singers, chose traditional and well-known melodies when writing her own lyrics, it is possible that selecting a tune for "Donald and Andy" simply assisted her with the composition of the words for the song rather than setting them up for performance.

Other, more light-hearted, narrative songs appear in *Queen Amang the Heather,* including "The Stewart Family", a playful retelling of the visit by MacColl and his wife in the 1970s to the Stewart home, in order to record and document their singing.[73] MacColl refers to this song and other like it as a trifle, a "throwaway" song that Stewart would write and send to friends as a note of thanks. More musical connections to family emerge throughout Belle Stewart's biography, where the inclusion of a piping tune called "The Belles of Loch Lochy" creates wider familial links, as it is attributed in *Queen Amang the Heather* to both Alex Stewart, Belle Stewart's husband and Willie MacPhee, a full cousin of Alex Stewart. Furthermore, Belle Stewart's son Ian later

[70] MacColl and Seeger, *Till Doomsday in the Afternoon*, 282
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 91

composed words to the first section of the tune, making a new song entitled "Fine Standing Man."[74]

An Irish Traveller known for writing his own songs is Pecker Dunne. One of his best-known compositions "Wexford Town" describes Dunne's family life, his musical background and the respect he felt for his father.[75] The lyrics were published in his autobiography *Parley-Poet and Chanter*, and first three verses of "Wexford Town" are included below. (A full version of the song is included in Appendix 2.5).

> My family lived in Wexford town,
> Stopped travelling and settled down.
> Though my father kept a horse and car,
> We lived within the town.
> The people there misunderstood,
> Oh, they did not know our ways,
> So with horse and car back on the road,
> I began my travelling days.[76]

The first verse of this autobiographical song informs the listener about how Dunne's family tried to fit into a non-Traveller lifestyle in Wexford, where he was raised after his birth in Castlebar, County Mayo. Dunne's father still kept a horse and car (meaning wagon or cart) even though the family had a house in the town. Dunne's father may

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[74] MacColl and Seeger, *Till Doomsday in the Afternoon*, 116
[75] Dunne, *Parley-Poet and Chanter*, 34-35
[76] Ibid., 34

have been reluctant to give up the Traveller lifestyle completely, and still wished to travel in summer to the fairs around Ireland, as many other Travellers still do. Or, he may have previously experienced the negative reaction of townsfolk, and kept the horse and wagon for the inevitable day that the family had to leave. The rest of the verse leans towards the second of these interpretations, since Dunne sang that some people in Wexford "misunderstood" his people, and the family set off "back on the road" to travel once again. In his memoir, Dunne recalls being told as a child that "the Tinker isn't wanted here, go away" and he would have been aware from a small age that some people did not want to share their town with Travellers.[77] The second verse of "Wexford Town" is devoted entirely to Dunne's father and the complex relationship that the two men shared.

> My father was called the Fiddler Dunne,
> And I'm a fiddler too,
> Although I often felt his fist,
> Oh, he taught me all he knew.
> I know I'll never be as good,
> And yet I feel no shame.
> For the other things my father taught,
> I am proud to bear his name.[78]

[77] Ibid., 36
[78] Ibid., 35

Dunne was proud to be a musician and was taught by his father and uncle to play the fiddle. There are several generations of musicians in the Dunne family, which is highlighted in the line "my father was called the Fiddler Dunne". Dunne's father was widely known for fiddle playing amongst other Travellers and settled people. Dunne moved onto playing the banjo when he became older and eventually preferred playing it to the fiddle. It is clear that this choice of instrument caused a rift between Dunne and his father, as he remarked in his memoir "it nearly broke my father's heart when I took up the banjo."[79] In choosing to play another instrument, Dunne was stepping away from past generations of Dunnes as fiddle players, and this could be regarded as a renunciation of his cultural legacy. Dunne could not play the fiddle for twelve or fifteen years after his father's death, as the memory of the pain caused by his decision was too much to bear. Perhaps the line "I know I'll never be as good" reflects Dunne's feelings about not having followed in his father's footsteps. Despite this, he felt "no shame", as Dunne continued to write and perform music in his own style.

In the penultimate verse of "Wexford Town", Dunne lists the lessons his father taught him, including pride in his identity:

He taught me pride and how to live
Though the road is hard and long
And how a man will never starve
With a banjo, fiddle or song,
And how to fight for what I own,

[79] Ibid., 59

And what I know is right,

And how to camp beside a ditch

On a stormy winter's night.[80]

Dunne never denied that he was a Traveller, and used "tinker" when other Travellers disowned the word, which is now mainly used in Irish and UK society as a pejorative term. In *Parley-Poet and Chanter*, Dunne recounts how he described himself to the camera in a BBC documentary about his life: "I'm Pecker Dunne and I'm a tinker and me mother was a tinker and me father was a tinker and I'm a tinker too and I'll die a tinker!"[81] In his memoir, Dunne reclaims the word "tinker" for Travellers by using it interchangeably with the more neutral "Traveller." By doing this, he is embodying his father's idea of "how to live" as a Traveller by celebrating his identity and culture. Dunne's father is also credited in the song as teaching him how to survive on the road, "to camp beside a ditch/on a stormy winter's night", or rather to make careful choices about where to stop. This line could also possibly represent the metaphor "to lie low" and keep out of trouble if it was brewing, whether the trouble was violent weather or prejudiced people. The simple wisdom of standing up for yourself and your beliefs is also expressed as a lesson from Dunne's father in the lines "to fight for what I own/and what I feel is right". Clearly, Dunne credited his father for his outlook and self-belief, and for providing him with the means by which to earn a living.

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[80] Ibid., 35
[81] Ibid., 115

Family Songs Taught by Family Members

Compositions about family members are perhaps the most common variety of "family songs" to be included in Traveller writing, but more complex relationships between songs and families also exist. For many Traveller singers, the learning or performance of a song is inextricably bound up with the person who taught them to sing it. In *A Traveller's Life*, Scottish Traveller Sheila Stewart describes the process of learning "If I Was a Blackbird" from her uncle Donald at the age of five. Sat upon her uncle's knee, Sheila recalls that the song took about a week to learn, "getting it by heart the oral way", using close listening and repetition to instill the words and melody in her memory.[82] Making use of this method also appears to generate a memory of the learning process itself, which becomes attached to the song. Stewart explains how the childhood scene of herself, sitting and singing on her uncle's knee, is recreated inside her head when she performs the song: "Even now, when I sing it, I hear his voice in mine, it is there even in the pronunciation of the words."[83] Other Traveller singers have also reported experiencing a memory of the individual that they learned a particular song or story from. A vast majority of the time, the person is an older relative, such as a grandparent, who would have collected a large number of songs during their lifetime. As a young child, Duncan Williamson recalls experiencing his grandmother singing a version of "The Corncrake" whilst walking up and down the streets of Tarbert, Scotland:

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[82] Stewart, *A Traveller's Life*, 7
[83] Ibid.

> And I remember big Bett MacColl, granny, standing in the street singing away. I'd be singing, standing a wee away from her with my bare feet listening to the song, taking in every word, liking it as much as the people standing around the circle listening.[84]

Here, the recollection of learning a song is bound up with a family member and their performance of the songs to an audience. Williamson is not only learning the words and melody of a song, he is subconsciously picking up performance techniques, such as using volume and intonation to emphasise words, or hand gestures to capture and sustain the attention of an audience. It describes another method, similar to Stewart's rote-learning, of orally picking up the melody and words to a song. Listening closely each time a particular piece was performed in full, around a campfire for example, eventually allowed the entire song to become established in a singer's memory. Jeannie Robertson's recollection of learning songs also fits this model. During her childhood, Robertson's brothers and father were in the Scottish Guards and were sent away to fight in the First World War. Unable to sleep with worry, her mother and uncle would sit up until late into each night singing songs to comfort one another. Jeannie was fascinated by their singing, saying that "I used to listen, an' I got interested in the ballads and the folksongs."[85] Listening to her mother and uncle inspired Robertson to begin learning many of the songs for herself.

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[84] Campbell and Williamson, *A Traveller in Two Worlds: Volume One*, 43
[85] Porter and Gower, *Jeannie Robertson*, 14

In his radio history of storytelling, *Something Understood: a Chain of Voices*, broadcast on BBC Radio 4 in 2005, Hugh Lupton recalled a memory of a conversation he had once had with Duncan Williamson:

> It was Duncan who told me that when you tell a story, or sing a song, the person you heard it from is standing behind you. When that person spoke, he, in turn, had a teller behind him, and so on, back and back and back. I love this idea, the story has to speak to its own time, but the teller has also to be true to the chain of voices that inform him or her.[86]

In the next few moments, Lupton proceeded to play a recording of Williamson singing "Thomas the Rhymer", a ballad the Traveller recalled hearing from his grandmother in the 1930s. Lupton added in his commentary of the song that "the sense of her presence is almost tangible", leading the audience to presume that he could pick out the influence of "big Bett MacColl" in Williamson's performance. Whether it is actually possible for a listener to identify the "chain of voices" behind a singer is open to interpretation. However, for Williamson, the performance of a particular narrative is indelibly tied to the recollection of its learning and the person who taught it. Because of this, the entire process also carries with it the cumulative weight of history, culture and tradition.

Irish Traveller singers have also described learning songs in their autobiographies, and have attached memories of the learning process to a particular family member. In his memoir, *The Candlelight Painter,* William Cauley also

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[86] Hugh Lupton *Something Understood: A Chain of Voices*, An online transcription of the BBC Radio 4 programme broadcast in 2005. Accessed June 23 2011. <http://www.angelfire.com/folk/hughlupton/interview.htm.>

recollects singing songs and performing music on the mouth organ to earn money, particularly in his youth. He attributes his knowledge of music to his mother and her side of the family, as he comments that his songs "had come with the mother's milk as they say!"[87] Cauley also recollects visiting houses with his mother, learning the songs as people paid to hear her sing them:

> I learnt a lot of the old songs from her and it was when we called to the farmers' houses that I learnt them … All the ballads were in her head since time immemorial. She had heard different versions of them for years, listening to her relations sitting around the fire.[88]

Cauley is describing a "chain of voices", similar to Duncan Williamson's, which stretches back into the family past, simultaneously linking together his mother's relatives, his mother's repertoire and his own song acquisition. The use of the phrase "since time immemorial" also suggests that Cauley is reaching back even further into his past, using songs to represent the ancient origins of his family.

Family Songs as Memorials

Porter and Gower explain that Traveller singers "find an old song meaningful because it is bound up with the person who sang it… The meaning of ballads, then, is perceived and discussed not in an abstract way but as bound up with identified relatives, with

[87] Cauley, *The Candlelight Painter* , 58
[88] Ibid., 16

performance and situation."[89] For some Travellers, singing songs becomes a way of re-imagining family members who have passed away, and feeling closer to them in an abstract way during the songs' performance. This could be viewed in terms of a spiritual connection, prompted by the ritual of keeping family members in mind whilst singing 'their' songs. Williamson states that he felt compelled to share these moments with others, especially "old songs from Aunt Rachel, from my mother. I was keeping them alive."[90] By singing his relatives' songs, Williamson could not only ensure that their culture remained alive after their death, but he could also feel connected to his relatives in a spiritual way.

Lizzie Higgins, the daughter of Jeannie Robertson, is another Traveller who felt that she could summon her father's presence whilst singing. Niles spent time in 1986 with Robertson, recording her singing and interviewing her about her life and music, publishing his findings in *Homo Narrans*. As a child, Higgins greatly admired her father Donald Higgins' highland piping and wished to play the pipes herself. She approached him, stating her interest, saying "my soul is in the pipes."[91] Her father thought that the idea of training a female piper was absurd and dismissed the notion out of hand. Instead of learning how to play the pipes, Lizzie Higgins learned how to make her singing style reflect the pitch and range of the instrument, adding ornamental flourishes inspired by Scottish piping tunes. She believed that a strong spiritual connection existed between her father and his piping music, that her father's soul "became the pipes" when he played.[92] Therefore, by developing her singing style to

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[89] Porter and Gower, *Jeannie Robertson*, 301
[90] Campbell and Williamson, *A Traveller in Two Worlds: Volume One*, 236
[91] Niles, *Homo Narrans*, 50
[92] Ibid., 51

match her father's pipe playing, Higgins could connect to her father's soul when she sang. However, an even deeper connection existed between father and daughter. When Higgins sang in public, she would gaze into her father's eyes to block out the audience and any nerves she might have been suffering. Even after his death, Higgins felt that the same process was happening when she sang.

> Often fan [when] I'm singing, ye'll see my eyes looking ava [away]. I'm looking at him. That's the magic. I see him all the time. When I'm singing, he comes. When you came tae my house, though I had no fire on in the kitchen, ye cuid feel warmth and kindness from this man.[93]

For Lizzie Higgins, when she sang, her father reappeared before her. Not just a memory, but an actual, almost physical, projection of him. To reinforce this idea, Higgins explained that once her father found out that he was dying from cancer, he actively undertook a year of intense training with her. He wanted to teach her all he knew so that she could make his music live on. He said to her that "ye must give my enlightenment, my knowledge, my beautiful ballads an the magic of pipe music tae the people o the world".[94] Later on, Higgins' father told her that she would be "my voice from the grave, my teachings and my sayings. You are me in a younger form."[95] Higgins agreed to become a vessel through which to disseminate her father's culture, music and life experience. Hers is perhaps the most intense example of how "family

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[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.

songs" can be used to pass down customs, traditions, and even a form of spirituality, within a community.

Many of the Traveller families discussed so far have found recognition through their interaction with song collectors and academics. Successive generations of Stewarts, Robertsons and Williamsons have also been recognised as important singers and have been recorded for posterity. However, it is impossible to know how many other Traveller singers were never discovered, and their songs may have been lost forever. Thomas McCarthy is an Irish Traveller living in London, and a descendant of a Traveller family from Birr, County Offaly. In the notes accompanying his album *Round Top Wagon* (2010), McCarthy reflects that "singing was rife" among his older relatives, but unfortunately he seems to be "the only one of my generation who sings the old songs all the time."[96] Although McCarthy has researched, collected and learned a large number of songs throughout his life, he did so chiefly for his own interest and to preserve them as family artefacts. Ron Kavana, an Irish singer and musician who assisted McCarthy in recording his music, notes that McCarthy "had little or no idea that there might be much interest in his singing style and repertoire."[97] After singing a song at his cousin's wedding, McCarthy was persuaded to visit a weekly singing session at Cecil Sharp House, home of the EFDSS and their vast library of folk music. The response to his singing was immediate. Kavana was impressed by McCarthy's singing style, but was "equally excited" by his repertoire of songs, many of which were

[96] Tommy McCarthy, *Round Top Wagon* (ITCD, 2010), inlay notes, 3
[97] Ibid.

preserved or written by members of his extended family.[98] Most of these songs were totally unknown, not just to Kavana, but also to many renowned and respected singers. By finding a new audience, McCarthy had 'discovered' himself.

Many of McCarthy's songs were learned from his grandfather, Johnny McCarthy, a renowned singer, songwriter, and *seanachaí* or storyteller. In an interview with Tim Cumming for the *Guardian* newspaper, McCarthy describes his grandfather's influence on himself and the surrounding community of Birr:

> Lots of songs passed through his house. I've heard thousands of songs. It was a stop-off for many people, not just travelling people, but tradespeople, and my grandfather used to travel and picked up a mountain of songs. He wrote songs about the travelling way of life and he'd tell stories. He was a great storyteller, what you call a *seanachaí*. Like a genealogist, telling you your background, and great stories that go on for days. Literally days. Like he'd come home and eat at five and start a story at six and wouldn't finish until two. And he'd say: "Come back the next day and listen to the rest of the story." That's the way it was. They were known in that town. Famous storytellers and singers. Years ago. I'm the only one now in my generation keeping the songs going.[99]

Other family members, such as McCarthy's uncle John, his mother, and her cousin, also provided songs for him to learn, and the notes accompanying his album are full of references to them. The nostalgic song "Down that Road", from McCarthy's album

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[98] Ibid.
[99] Tim Cumming, "Music that moves: Thomas McCarthy's Irish Traveller songs", *The Guardian*, 10th March 2011. <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/mar/10/thomas-mccarthy-irish-traveller-songs>

Round Top Wagon, is especially poignant for McCarthy because it was his mother's favourite and "it means so much to me and my brothers and sisters."[100] (A full version of the song appears in Appendix 2.6.) It was written by his grandfather Johnny McCarthy, to reflect on the time when his young family had grown up and left Ireland to work in England. The lines "Oh the young ones are all gone/Across the ocean wide/But my homeland I cannot leave", directly address the separation between a father and his children.[101] However, he hopes that one day they will visit him, and believes that "I will see them once again/Oh before my days are o'er".[102] Because Johnny McCarthy had taken the decision to live in a house, the song also displays nostalgia for the travelling lifestyle he left behind. This can be observed in the lines: "Every valley every glen/Every dell I knows well/For the highway it is my home".[103]

In the notes to his album, McCarthy encourages other descendants of Traveller families to "start singing their old family songs again" otherwise "many old songs known only inside their families could be lost forever".[104] Songs can exist as personal memorials to family tradition, akin to the 'private' knowledge shared between Traveller piper families. However, if subsequent generations do not practise this knowledge, it can be forgotten. To return to the subject of Traveller pipers, Thomas McCarthy and Ron Kavana created a song together on *Round Top Wagon* to celebrate the talent of Johnny and Felix Doran. McCarthy had begun to write a song in tribute to Johnny Doran, and discovered that Kavana knew Felix Doran while he was alive. Kavana felt

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[100] McCarthy, *Round Top Wagon*, inlay notes, 5
[101] McCarthy, "Down That Road", *Thomas McCarthy website*, Accessed January 5, 2013. <http://www.thomasmccarthyfolk.com/lyrics-down-that-road/>
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] McCarthy, *Round Top Wagon*, inlay notes, 7

that Felix was just as good a piper as his elder brother, but was "often unfairly mentioned only in passing or as an afterthought", so the song is equally dedicated to both brothers.[105] (A full version of this song, "Felix and Johnny Doran", appears in Appendix 2.7.) Although the song mentions many details about the Doran brothers' piping, including where they played, and their ability to "mesmerise" a crowd, the fourth verse lists several other Traveller 'musicianer' families. These lines appear to encourage Traveller families to keep singing their songs, and remind the listener of famous Traveller musicians who have died, such as John Cash the piper and John Doherty:

> Us Travellers are proud of our musical songs
> The Rooneys, the Fureys, the Keenans and Dunnes,
> The Cashes and Dohertys too though they're gone,
> Like Felix and Johnny Doran,
> Like Felix and Johnny Doran.[106]

This chapter has explored the reasons why family songs are composed: either to represent one family's influence on other musicians, like the Cashes and the Dorans; or to give tribute to those who have passed away, as with Belle Stewart's brothers. Family songs may be a collection of diverse material, which is chosen for the way each song reflects an aspect of Traveller culture, and are shared to reinforce the links between each family, or section of community. As oral records, songs can document unofficial

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[105] Ibid., 5
[106] McCarthy, "Felix and Johnny Doran", *Round Top Wagon,* transcription by author

history, particularly in cultures where there has been limited access to literacy, or a strong tradition of orality, as with Irish and Scottish Travellers. Researchers have identified certain Travellers as "Singers" or "Tradition Bearers", and individuals like Duncan Williamson and John Doherty represent the highest standards of musicianship in their families. Their skills are usually derived from a long line of musicians and storytellers, and the "tradition bearers" have benefited from the inspiration and opportunity afforded by their family to cultivate their talents and repertoire. Some Traveller singers, such as Lizzie Higgins, keep the memories of their relatives alive by performing songs which they have learned from their ancestors, while others, like Thomas McCarthy, represent a family tradition of singing by choosing to share their songs with a wider non-Traveller audience.

Unfortunately, some family songs function as an epitaph to a lost line of musicians. While the Dorans have inspired at least three different compositions which celebrate their Uilleann piping, and the longevity of their influence is reflected in the musicality of their descendants and other players, other Traveller musicians have not produced the same reaction. In contrast, Paddy and Stephen Rainey, who are the descendants of piper Tony Rainey, are believed to be the last of their line. Only one recording exists of their music, recorded at a pub in Letterfrack in1956 by Tony Knowland, and released on CD in 2006 as *The Raineys* by Pavee Point Travellers' Centre. The Rainey brothers were fiddle players of an unusual style, utilising drone strings, which differed considerably from the highly-ornamented playing technique popular at the time and in use today. In 2001, Connemara Community Radio broadcast a documentary, *Raineys of the Road*, which featured clips of the Raineys' music and

interviews with the people who remembered them. Selected transcriptions of the documentary are published in the publication *Free Spirits*. In the documentary, John Faulkner commented that the Rainey's fiddling style "may have reflected the style of music played in Ireland prior to the period of mass exodus in the 19th century".[107] Therefore, the Raineys may have exhibited a historical playing technique which has been lost to native Irish fiddlers. Both Paddy and Stephen Rainey, together with Paddy's wife Bridget, who sang songs on the recording, eventually moved to Manchester and into standard housing. They reportedly played inside their house, but did not join in with the burgeoning Manchester Irish traditional music scene. None of their descendants have continued to perform music.

Fergus Russell, a Dublin folksinger, was so inspired upon hearing the Raineys' music at the launch of their CD in 2007, that he composed a song. According to Russell, the music and lyrics to "The Pat Rainey Song" had completely formed in his mind overnight after the launch, and he woke up the next day with the song already composed. (A full version of the song is included in Appendix 2.8.) The song is jaunty and fun, reflecting the energy of the Raineys' fiddling style. It also mentions the Raineys' piping background in the lines: "I gathers me pipes, I heads for the town/I finds a good pitch and I sets myself down/I squeeze on the bellows; the throng gather round". Russell also employs references to the Raineys' Traveller culture, including the lines "I'll mend your auld pots, I'll make you a can", which represents their abilities at tin-smithing. Although the Raineys and their fiddling style are no more, Russell still performs his song at various folk singing sessions around Dublin, keeping their memory alive.

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[107] Fegan and O'Connell, *Free Spirits*, 90

Chapter Four

Orality within the Text

Traveller Education, Memoir Writing and Oral Culture

> One of the most powerful forces the modern nation-state has had in its battle against Travellers is the power of definition, the power of the written word in particular. [...] Because Traveller culture has primarily been non-literate, how their culture is defined is frequently beyond the control of Travellers themselves.[1]

Michael Hayes, in *Irish Travellers: Representations and Realities*, draws attention to the imbalance of power that is created when minority groups have significantly lower levels of literacy compared to the rest of society. Although oral culture may be greatly revered for its folk traditions of storytelling and ballad singing, literacy skills are essential to access all of the formal processes of society. A reliance on orality has helped Travellers preserve important social aspects of their culture, but it has also limited their engagement with settled society. Paul Delaney, in "A Discourse on Nomadism: Travellers and Irish Writing" (2008), also suggests that one of the reasons for Travellers' isolated position in society is their reliance on oral history and cultural transmission, as "the marginalization of Travellers in Irish life has been exacerbated by

[1] Michael Hayes, *Representations and Realities*, 10

the prevalence of non-literacy in Traveller culture." [2] The stories and songs that Travellers share with their families constitute personal history, traditions, moral codes and practical knowledge for living a nomadic lifestyle. Where mainstream cultural accounts have ignored the contribution of Irish and Scottish Travellers to the rest of society, the role of Travellers in potato cropping, tin-smithing and basket-weaving has been preserved in their orality. For Travellers, sharing aspects of their oral culture through singing and storytelling creates a means of connecting with the past and also a way to instruct future generations. Some Traveller authors, such as Duncan Williamson, have translated their oral storytelling skills successfully into the written word and published several books. However, in doing so, they risk separation from their traditional culture by moving into the world of settled academia. The question of whether oral culture can be accurately represented in the written format of a memoir, or examined adequately from a literary perspective, is a concern central to this thesis. Beginning with a discussion of Travellers' experiences in education, this chapter will address the importance of orality in Traveller culture, before exploring how Traveller authors have engaged with the tensions arising from orality, Traveller culture and its representation on the written page.

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[2] Paul Delaney, "A Discourse on Nomadism: Travellers and Irish Writing," *Facing the Other: Interdisciplinary Studies on Race, Gender and Social Justice in Ireland*, eds. Borbála Faragó and Moynagh Sullivan (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 232

Travellers and Mainstream Education

Traveller culture has traditionally developed through oral culture and has "primarily been non-literate", as Hayes explains.[3] Travellers' focus on orality means that they are often marginalised by mainstream education, which focuses on teaching through literacy. A lack of Traveller peers in school and having parents who may themselves struggle with literacy, makes engagement with education problematic for many Traveller children. Travellers are also at an educational disadvantage to the settled population due to their traditional commitment to a nomadic lifestyle or family engagements, which take precedence over school attendance. Often, families travel together in the search for work or for attendance at fairs, weddings or funerals. A lack of appropriate Traveller-focussed accommodation also leads to unofficial roadside camping and forced eviction, making the journey to school for some children impractically long, or necessitating frequent changes of school. Inside school, Traveller children often face learning from a curriculum that neither recognises nor celebrates their culture. Research into attitudes held by Gypsy and Traveller parents reveal that, even when some families have demonstrated an increased desire for formal education, "it still seems that culturally insensitive education undermines potential opportunities".[4] Individual schools and teachers, such as Christine O'Hanlon, have attempted to rectify this situation by tailoring teaching and learning styles towards the needs of their students.[5] In addition to this, the Traveller Education Service (TES) in the UK and

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[3] Hayes, *Representations and Realities*, 10

[4] Martin Myers, Derek McGhee and Kalwant Bhopal, "At the Crossroads: Gypsy and Traveller Parents' Perceptions of Education, Protection and Social Change." *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 13:4 (2010), 545

[5] Christine O'Hanlon and Pat Holmes, *The Education of Gypsy and Traveller Children: Towards Inclusion and Educational Achievement* (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham, 2004), 170

Resource Teachers for Travellers (RTT) in Ireland offer advice and support to schools. The Visiting Teacher Service for Traveller Education (VTST) in Ireland also assists Traveller parents in accessing education for their children if they encounter barriers to learning. However, despite their attempts to make education more accessible to Traveller children in terms of lesson content, the educational authorities in Ireland and the UK still have a long way to go in terms of awareness about the wider issues faced by Traveller children.

Cathy Kiddle has a unique perspective on Traveller education, being a non-Traveller teacher with experience of bringing up her own children in a nomadic situation and she summarises her knowledge and experience of over twenty years of involvement with UK Traveller education in *Traveller Children: A Voice for Themselves* (1999).[6] In 1974, Kiddle and her husband formed a touring theatre company, and they both became involved with Traveller education issues during the process of researching what educational options and resources were available for their children. Kiddle approached several Gypsy and Traveller Education organisations and was surprised to learn of the lack of choice available to nomadic families.[7] Kiddle observed that Travellers faced the proposition of gaining a school education at the expense of their own culture, as "there seemed to be little access to school without assimilation."[8] For Travellers this issue of cultural assimilation is still a concern, and some parents fear that school attendance could dilute their children's culture, via immersion in the norms, values and morals of non-Traveller society.

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[6] Cathy Kiddle, *Traveller Children: A Voice for Themselves* (London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1999)
[7] Ibid., 26
[8] Ibid.

To avoid what they view as cultural dilution through exposure to mainstream schooling, Traveller parents frequently remove their children from school after the primary stage, allowing them to achieve the basics of education or "literacy without *frills*" before taking up their traditional roles in the family setting.[9] Certainly, figures available at the time of writing appear to support this. OFSTED, the inspectorate for schools in the UK, reported in 2003 that there were an estimated 10,000 to 12,000 Traveller pupils not registered at any secondary school, and that there was a "growing trend" for pupils at the secondary level in particular to be educated at home.[10] The average participation rate for Traveller children at primary level was 82%, gradually dropping to 47% upon reaching the age of 16.[11] In Ireland, the Survey of Traveller Education Provision (STEP) report of 2004 found similar rates, with 66% of Traveller children participating in primary education, dropping to 56% at the senior level.[12]

Educational cuts in Ireland and the UK have also affected Traveller children, alongside their settled peers. A report by Pavee Point, *Travelling with Austerity*, records that funding by the Irish government allocated for Traveller Education in 2013 had been significantly reduced: "Traveller education is down from €76.5m to €10.2m, the precise proportion being -86.6%." [13] The most recent cuts have included the withdrawal of all VTSTs and the majority of posts in the RTT scheme (710 reduced to 141).[14] The loss of the visiting and resource teacher service means not only the loss of dedicated

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[9] Martin P. Levinson, "Literacy in Gypsy Communities: A Cultural Capital Manifested as Negative Assets." *American Educational Research Journal*, 44. 1 (2007), 33
[10] OFSTED, "Provision and support for Traveller pupils", HMI 455, Crown Copyright: 2003, 5
[11] Ibid., 10
[12] Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science, *Survey of Traveller Education Provision (STEP)*, Department of Education and Science, Government Publications: 2004, 12
[13] Pavee Point, *Travelling with Austerity: Impacts of Cuts on Travellers, Traveller Projects and Services* (Dublin: Pavee Point Publications, 2013), 37
[14] Ibid., 35

services, but the absence of any system to alert schools to young Travellers in need of education. There is also no system in place to provide specific support for Travellers who face difficulties in school, such as suspensions, restricted days or limited subject choice. The report indicated that, where Traveller pupils stayed in school, there was "a growing practice of Traveller children being sent home and put on a part-time week, with no reason given, but with a warning that the alternative is an expulsion. Traveller children are often encouraged to stay at home during transition year."[15] Removing Travellers from lessons is hardly the answer to making them feel more positive about school, especially in the transition year where students encounter an unfamiliar school system. The report concludes that, "One can think of no other section of the community which has suffered such a high level of disinvestment, compounded by the failure of the state to spend even the limited resources that are available."[16] For, even though funding is being reduced for Traveller services, a proportion of the money allocated to benefit the community is often left unspent by local councils.

In the UK, the Traveller Movement has focused on the government's wish to repeal educational laws that allow Traveller children extra time away from school, if families are required to travel for economic reasons. This change would allow Traveller parents to be fined or imprisoned if their children are seen to be under-attending the required 200 'sessions' (100 days) per year, while ignoring other issues related to non-attendance, such as bullying or exclusion by schools. The Institute of Race Relations is concerned that a change such as this would lead to indirect racism. In an interview with Nicky Road, Brian Foster, the chair of ACERT (Advisory Council

[15] Ibid., 37
[16] Ibid., 39

for the Education of Romany and other Travellers), states that Traveller education is being used as a political tool, saying, "I predict this repeal will be introduced, as a race card, in the run-up to the next election, to reassure core voters the Coalition is tough on Travellers. It will do nothing to improve their educational outcomes."[17] Despite on-going challenges to Traveller education, Travellers are becoming more educated and literate than previous generations. However, they still suffer disproportionate amounts of discrimination, barriers to learning and inadequate educational support. This often results in Traveller students gaining less of an education than their settled peers.

Experiences of School in Traveller Memoirs

The enrolment of Traveller children in settled education is a subject that often appears in Scottish and Irish Traveller memoirs, expressing varying attitudes towards school. Many examples of Traveller school memories are negative, with children experiencing bullying by their peers, or prejudicial treatment by school staff. Sheila Stewart suffered bullying during her time at both primary and secondary school in Scotland, even though she enjoyed taking part in lessons. In *A Traveller's Life*, Stewart describes how a bully named Morag used to beat her up every evening at primary school, and passed abusive notes to her in class. One taunt took the form of a rhyme: "Tinky, tinky, torin bags/Awa tae the well and wash yer rags", followed by a slap across the face.[18] The rhyme implied that Stewart was dirty, as she had "torin bags" or dirty, scruffy clothes, because

[17] Nicky Road, "Consultation on the education of Traveller children raises concerns" *Institute of Race Relations Website*, News section, February 7, 2013. <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/consultation-on-the-education-of-traveller-children-raises-concerns/>
[18] Stewart, *A Traveller's Life*, 10

she was a Traveller. Scottish Traveller Willie Reid spoke at an educational conference about his dislike of school and how he felt "trapped in a hostile, threatening and unwelcome environment."[19] Unlike many Travellers, Reid received a full secondary school education, but only because of the dire consequences for not doing so, as "the Authorities gave my mother a simple ultimatum: Put them to school or we'll put them in a home."[20] In *Moving Stories*, Irish Traveller Bridget Gaffey states that, unlike the classrooms provided for settled children, the classrooms allocated to the Traveller children at her Dublin school were not age-separated and had showers.[21] Travellers at her school were therefore treated as though they were dirty, required segregation from the other children, and did not necessitate the same quality of teaching as their settled peers. After moving to a school in Dundalk, Gaffey recalls colouring pictures in class while her settled peers were "learning Maths, English, Irish and History".[22]

For those educated in Ireland during the 1990s, Travellers were still treated differently in some schools, as Johnny McDonnell describes in the booklet *Inspiring Traveller Men*, produced for Traveller Pride Week in 2014. McDonnell was made to sit at the back of a class with a colouring book during Irish lessons. He says that "I decided from an early age that I was not going to be anything when I grew up only a Traveller, so I did not need an education. Thinking back this was instilled in me from my so-called 'teachers' who were supposed to support and help me."[23] Although McDonnell expresses disaffection with his education, it is hardly a surprising response, as he felt

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[19] Willie Reid, "Travellers' Perspectives", *Towards an Opening Doors Policy,* Conference Report, ed. B. Jordan (Edinburgh: Moray House Institute of Education, 1993): 21-22, 21
[20] Ibid.
[21] Southwark Traveller Women's Group, *Moving Stories*, 91
[22] Ibid., 92
[23] Irish Traveller Movement. Inspiring Traveller Men. June 20, 2014. <http://itmtrav.ie/uploads/publication/Inspiring_Traveller_Men_Booklet.pdf.>, 5

that he hadn't been encouraged by his teachers. After eventually returning to education, McDonnell now works to support Travellers with mental health issues.

Some Travellers, such as Nan Joyce, appear to have regarded at least some of their education in a positive light, although Joyce was not able to produce her memoir unaided, relying on Anna Farmar to record, transcribe and edit her autobiography, which suggests the education she did receive was inadequate. Sean Maher was even more positive, stating in *The Road to God Knows Where* that "School, for me, was a godsend. I enjoyed every day I spent there, mostly for the learning. Reading books was my earthly heaven."[24] Maher may simply have held a passion for learning, but his memoir suggests that he was able to relate aspects of his Travelling identity to scholarship, stating that he believed Shakespeare and Chaucer harvested "legends" from travellers they met and this inspired their writing, and that Bunyan was the son of a tinsmith.[25] These claims may appear fanciful, but Maher's beliefs functioned to remove any mental barrier he might have held between his own Traveller culture and the world of literature. Describing the moment his class began to read a book of Irish mythology, Maher proclaims "here at last was my world".[26] He was able to use his established knowledge of Traveller "stories", and view these "stories" in class as a continuum of learning.

An alternative avenue of education for Travellers is the preparation given by ecclesiastical staff for their Catholic Confirmation and Communion ceremony. Bridget Gaffey views her education as being mainly provided in this way. "My reading and

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[24] Maher, *The Road to God Knows Where*, 133
[25] Ibid., 100
[26] Ibid., 125

writing were picked up, not in schools, but off a nun. I used to go for two hours every morning, myself and one more boy were all she was teaching because we were getting taught confirmation."[27] Through this process, Gaffey was able to pick up the literacy skills she had not been able to access at school. In an autobiography published in Jeremy Sandford's *Gypsies*, Irish Traveller Johnny 'Pops' Connors blames his poor attendance at Irish schools on the "wobs and nese stach mon'ya feins" (police and no good council men) who constantly evicted his family from their camping grounds.[28] His education was also provided by a nun who taught him over a period of seven weeks after he visited her convent by chance, leading to Connors taking his First Communion. Connors also took charge of his own learning, reading everything he could get his hands on, including "tea bags, sugar bags and butter wrappers", making a shopping trip for his parents last for hours as he read all the labels in the shop.[29] He would purchase unusual brands of tea and tobacco so that he could practise his literacy skills and "read the strange words on the packet".[30] Connors is very positive about his education, although it was limited to "seven weeks and eight hours at schooling in my whole lifetime."[31] However, at the same time, he appears to acknowledge some educational limitations, stating that "one can teach oneself how to read but one cannot teach oneself how to write properly."[32]

It is pertinent to note that Connors' autobiography was written during a term served in prison, which is another place Travellers have the opportunity to improve

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[27] Southwark Traveller Women's Group, *Moving Stories*, 93
[28] Sandford, *Gypsies*, 161, Cant translation provided by author
[29] Ibid., 166
[30] Ibid., 167
[31] Ibid., 165
[32] Ibid., 165

their literacy skills. For Travellers who find themselves in the prison system, a lack of literacy can also serve to repeat the patterns of discrimination and disadvantage they felt at school. Time spent in the prison system itself highlights the importance of literacy to some Travellers, as most aspects of the prison system, from complaint forms to communication with prisoners' families, takes place through a paper-based system. In *Voices Unheard: A Study of Irish Travellers in Prison* (2011), a report by Conn Mac Gabhann for the Irish Chaplaincy in Britain, survey responses from the 117 prisons in England and Wales identified 59.3% of Travellers in the prison population as being in need of basic educational intervention.[33] One Traveller prisoner commented in the report that not having literacy skills made him an easy target for discrimination, so he decided to use literacy as a way of empowering himself.[34] However, even when literacy classes are offered to Travellers, the classes are often aimed at an unobtainable level for Travellers who have missed significant years of schooling. Another Traveller interviewed in the report explained that his reluctance to enrol in a prison literacy course was based on the fear that he would be "the stupidest in the class".[35] One example of good practice was the Toe-by-Toe mentoring scheme, which employed a Traveller as a prisoner mentor to other Travellers. Other Gypsies and Travellers commented that they "felt more comfortable" taking part in this scheme, as a fellow Traveller was teaching them to read.[36]

Despite the difficulties experienced by many Travellers during their time in formal education, the above examples show that some individuals are able to take

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[33] Ibid., 30
[34] Conn Mac Gabhann, *Voices Unheard: A Study of Irish Travellers in Prison* (London: Irish Chaplaincy in Britain, 2011), 21
[35] Ibid., 33
[36] Ibid., 83

advantage of alternative opportunities to improve their literacy. As the nest section illustrates, it is also important to recognise the role of oral culture in the transmission of culture and knowledge from Traveller parents to their children.

Traveller Oral Culture as Education

John D Niles, in his study of the social function of narrative poems, stories and song, *Homo Narrans*, commented that oral culture is an essential tool for all humanity and "it is hard to imagine what human life would be like without oral narrative, for it is chiefly through storytelling that people possess a past."[37] Since Travellers have been essentially written out of history, the stories and songs that Travellers share with their families constitute a crucial body of personal family records and oral history. They also function to pass on traditions, moral codes and practical knowledge to the next generation, as Duncan Williamson explains, in *Scottish Traveller Tales*:

> Between the ages of three and five, a Traveller child hears stories about animals, such as the fox, the rabbit and the birds – stories in which animals can speak. From the very beginning a child is taught to be gentle and kind to animals, to love and respect creation. For everything a Traveller needs to know can be learned from nature: in their own environment in their own way, animals can take care of themselves. [38]

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[37] Niles, *Homo Narrans*, 2
[38] Donald Braid, *Scottish Traveller Tales*, 95

For older children and adults alike, "Jack" tales are told, the most well-known being "Jack and the Beanstalk", but there are numerous other tales featuring the adventures of a young boy named Jack in Scottish folktales. Sheila Stewart referred to these stories as "ancient stories that Travellers kept alive", and felt that it was important to include her father's favourite "Jeck" story in her autobiography, because "no one else tells it now."[39] Stanley Robertson published a selection of "Jack" stories in his anthology *Exodus to Alford* (1988), and described them as "tales of encouragement."[40]

> These are tales to lift all the Travelling Folk (most especially the children), from the despair that is felt within the city and the prejudices of many of its people. For Jack is a marvellous and exemplary character – who always manages to get over the evil's [sic] of life, by finding worth within himself and from this, gaining faith with his fellow being – because Jack is not alone along the paths of truth – he is guided and assisted by helpers, who are very important to him.[41]

The Jack stories are a means of instilling values and a feeling of security in Traveller children by their parents: no matter what the obstacle, if it is approached in the proper way it can be overcome. There are also stories with female protagonists, such as "Mary Rashiecoats and the Wee Black Bull", which encourage girls to grow up to be like their heroines.[42] The main lesson to be learned from these types of stories is one of independence from mainstream settled culture, and a reliance on family bonds and self-

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[39] Stewart, *A Traveller's Life*, 100
[40] Robertson, *Exodus to Alford*, 119
[41] Ibid.
[42] Duncan and Linda Williamson, *A Thorn in the King's Foot*, 62-77

sufficiency. Since many Traveller children can expect to be raised within a society that views their culture and nomadic traditions with distaste, it is useful to be able to rely on one's own resources from the outset. Often this means the extended family is the main support system in terms of money, childcare, or sources of work.

Songs can also be used as a way of instilling essential character traits in Traveller children. Song collector and folk singer Sam Richards (1987) noticed that the West Country Gypsies he recorded singing would often begin with a popular ballad known among song collectors as "The Highwayman Outwitted", but often called "The Farmer in Cheshire" by Gypsies because of the first line of verse.[43] This song does not feature any Gypsy or Traveller characters but instead narrates how a clever young girl, held at gunpoint and forced to strip naked by a highwayman, tricks him and steals his horse and ill-gotten gains.[44] Richards believed that the song was popular among the singers he recorded as it carried extra social meaning for Gypsies, providing "a typical ideal relationship with gaujos, and a self-image for Travellers in the quick-witted heroine."[45] One version of "The Highwayman Outwitted" is included in Appendix 3.1 of this thesis, and in this account, the heroine is twice described as acting "like a man" to emphasise her boldness and strength of character.[46] The triumphant underdog or unlikely hero is a recurring and attractive narrative trope for many Travellers, who spend their lives striving against cultural assimilation and domination by the norms of settled society. An equivalent Irish Traveller song to "The Highwayman Outwitted" is

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[43] Sam Richards, "Westcountry Gipsies: Key Songs and Community Identity", Michael Pickering and Tony Green, *Everyday Culture: Popular Song and the Vernacular Milieu* (London: Open University Press, 1987), 127
[44] Ibid., 136
[45] Richards, "Westcountry Gipsies", *Everyday Culture*, 128
[46] Stanley, *The Romano Drom Songbook* , 25

"The Outlandish Knight", also known by the alternative titles of "The North Strand" and "Pretty Polly". (A full version of the song is included in Appendix 3.2) The song narrates how a girl is tempted away from her family by the promise of marriage to a knight. The knight plans to steal her family's gold and horses, before killing her in the same manner as six previous women. The girl outwits the knight, and overpowers him, leaving him to drown. The song can be interpreted as promoting self-reliance and quick thinking, and also as a warning to Traveller women not to be tempted away from their families by empty promises of marriage.

A popular Scottish Traveller song which appears to discourage individuals from stealing and breaking the law is "Big Jimmy Drummond". The song describes how a Traveller thief once enjoyed great success at stealing chickens, but was betrayed by his partner in crime and served a long sentence in prison. In the version of the song collected from Jeannie Robertson, the main narrative is sung in English, with a final verse in Cant. When the Cant verse is translated, it is clear that the protagonist has no intention of changing his habits, but will steal on his own to avoid further betrayal. Tim Coughlan, in *Now Shoon the Romano Gillie*, comments that the song seems to echo "those macaronic sets from the Irish tradition in which the conciliatory tone of the English words is turned on its head in the intervening Gaelic lines."[47] Although the English verses of "Big Jimmy Drummond" promote a message that is appropriate to both settled and Traveller audiences, the Cant lines constitute a private communication for Travellers only: there is always a way to avoid the constraints of settled society. In a different version of the song, Elizabeth Stewart sings in Cant throughout all the verses,

[47] Coughlan, *Now Shoon the Romano Gillie,* 296

and makes it plain that the police informant in the narrative was a "scaldie gadgie" or "settled man".[48] (A full version of the song is included in Appendix 4.3)

> Till a scaldie gadgie did shop me
> Pretended tae be my friend
> It wis him that telt the hornies aboot me
> And from then on my freedom did end.[49]

In this context, the song is a warning to Travellers that they should be wary of trusting settled people, in case of treachery. In her autobiography, *Up Yon Wide and Lonely Glen* (2012), Stewart explains that she enjoys singing "Big Jimmy Drummond" and other Cant songs, because the language is very important to her: "Tae me, it's a warnin language that keeps my family safe, an lets me communicate only wi my family an my kin."[50] Stewart describes how she can easily pass messages to her family in the company of settled people, by speaking or singing in Cant. As an example, Stewart sings four lines of Cant to the tune "Love it is Teasin":

> Whit did she bring ye? A lousy curdie
> The shaun aul manishy should have bung ye twa
> Oh stall yere mangin here fakes a feekie

[48] Elizabeth Stewart, *Up Yon Wide and Lonely Glen: Travellers' Songs, Stories and Tunes of the Fetterangus Stewarts*, ed. Alison McMorland (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 255
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 253

Bing the lowdee and fake avree.[51]

By singing these lines, Stewart can advise her relatives that they have lost money in a deal with a settled woman, but that a policeman is coming and they should leave quietly. In her autobiography, Stewart states that Travellers should not teach settled people Cant, because it is "oor language", an important aspect of group identity.[52] Knowledge of Cant by settled people would also remove the language barrier between the two groups, and eliminate some of the advantages of using it, for example for safety or business purposes.

Stewart's views on teaching Cant to settled people are not shared by all Travellers, and her inclusion of a glossary of Scottish Traveller Cant words in her autobiography is somewhat contradictory. Stewart defends her decision by reasoning that she has "only said a few words here in my book" and does not translate all the Cant words she uses.[53] By contrast, Sean Maher used Cant much less secretively in *The Road to God Knows Where*, where he included a song in Irish Traveller Cant, based on "The Little Beggarman":

I don't give a damn, for gaiging is the best,
For when a feen is corrped, sure he has a little rest.
Sure he's got a little molly and he's got a little beor,
And it's off on the tober with his molly and his beor.[54]

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[51] Ibid., 253
[52] Ibid., 256
[53] Ibid.
[54] Maher, *The Road to God Knows Where*, 123

Although Maher uses the same tune as the traditional Irish song, his words tell a story which is different to the usual narrative. Instead of describing his encounters with "the woman of the house" and a "flaxen-haired girl", Maher sings about his wife, campfire and finding a field to graze his horse.[55] Where Stewart used a song in Cant to pass messages of warning to her relatives, Maher used his song to celebrate aspects of his life and culture. In *The Road to God Knows Where*, Maher provided both Cant and English versions of the same verses of his song. In addition, he placed a glossary and a guide to several Cant phrases at the back of his book.[56] (The full lyrics to "The Little Beggarman" are included in Appendix 3.4.)

Nonetheless, the desire to limit knowledge of Cant outside Traveller circles may provide one of the reasons why only a small number of Cant songs have been recorded by song collectors, when compared to those recorded from Travellers in English. Tom Munnelly, in his exploration of Irish Traveller Songs in the *Folk Music Journal*, stated that, apart from songs which used a handful of Cant or Gammon words, "songs which contain sufficient gammon, to the extent that even the most informed outsider would not be able to understand the song's content, just do not seem to exist."[57] However, in the month following this statement, Munnelly recorded a Cant song from Bernie Reilly of County Meath.[58] Three of the songs discussed in this thesis (Appendix 3.3, 3.4 and 4.5), were also composed in Cant or Gammon.

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[55] Kennedy, *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, 772-773
[56] Ibid., 123-124
[57] Munnelly, "The Singing Tradition of Irish Travellers", *Folk Music Journal*, 10
[58] Bernie Reilly, "Bernie Reilly's Cant Song", *Songs of the Irish Travellers*, ed. Tom Munnelly (Pavee Point Travellers Centre, 2007)

The exact origins and development of Irish and Scottish Traveller Cant are not yet fully understood, and have attracted much linguistic speculation. Many of the studies on Cant undertaken so far have also concentrated on semantic and structural issues, or possibilities of origin, rather than the use of Cant in songs or stories. Therefore, the issue of why only a small number of Irish and Scottish Traveller Cant songs have yet been recorded has not been addressed. The individual dynamics involved in each recording session may also have influenced which songs were collected, together with each Traveller singer's personal views on the uses of Cant. Sometimes singers choose not to perform certain songs for non-linguistic reasons: for example, Niles explains in *Homo Narrans*, that Duncan Williamson knew the song "Big Jimmie Drummond" but refused to sing it, as he had spent time in prison and thought that performing it would bring him bad luck.[59]

The use of Cant songs by Irish and Scottish Travellers, whether they choose to explain the vocabulary with settled editors and readers or not, is another method of maintaining and celebrating their oral culture. The words themselves also vary between different Traveller communities, regions and families, as described by the Stewart family in *Till Doomsday in the Afternoon*.[60] Therefore, when Travellers speak or sing Cant, they represent the heterogeneity of Traveller culture and tradition. Alongside songs and stories, Cant provides an important means of cultural expression which Travellers use to instruct the next generation. It also creates a powerful statement of cultural independence and evinces a body of knowledge which is both inaccessible to those outside of Traveller communities, and unrepresented in mainstream education.

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[59] Niles, *Homo Narrans*, 192
[60] MacColl and Seeger, *Till Doomsday in the Afternoon*, 38

Orality and Literacy: Addressing the Division

Although Gypsies and Travellers may value basic literacy skills, and some individuals achieve a high proficiency, they also recognise that achieving those skills may come at a cultural price. In his study of the use of literacy in English Gypsy communities, Martin Levinson (2007) reported a general "rejection of any literacy uses beyond the remit of everyday need".[61] Literacy was viewed as "a potentially destabilizing influence on family and communal relationships, and a threat to traditional culture and values, with no obvious pay-off."[62] Individuals who chose to engage with literacy sometimes risked social ostracism, as they gained skills which distanced them from their family and wider community. One Gypsy student interviewed by Levinson recalled an occasion where she had read stories to her younger cousins, and deliberately "got some of the words wrong" in order to show that she was not "like some of the *gadje* kids" at school.[63] Levinson also found that a minority of Gypsies he interviewed appeared proud of their rejection of mainstream education, using illiteracy as proof of their non-assimilation, signifying a refusal to compromise their culture in any way.[64] Levinson found that that illiteracy could also function as "a barrier enabling the avoidance of socialization, identification with 'alien culture heroes,' as well as preserving Romani languages and discouraging mixed marriage."[65] In this context, illiteracy becomes an "ethnic identifier, a badge of honour, and far from a deficiency, it is almost an

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[61] Levinson, "Literacy in English Gypsy Communities", *American Educational Research Journal*, 28
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 29
[64] Ibid., 33
[65] Ibid.

accomplishment."[66] Against the pressures of mainstream non-Gypsy culture, illiteracy can be symbol of independence and cultural resistance through non-participation.

An example of educational success and how it can alter the behaviour of groups is provided by Irish Traveller activist and scholar Rosaleen McDonagh. McDonagh describes the situation where a young Irish Traveller had successfully completed a science degree "despite the pressure from her family and the wider Traveller community," some of whom were against her finishing her education.[67] Five years previously, Traveller activists and organisations had lobbied for an affirmative action package to be set up at the university where the student studied. Since she had benefited from the programme, she was asked to help publicise it. She refused, and her decision was met with anger. "The community believed Winnie had become arrogant, had a bad memory, was in denial. Traveller activists believed she was 'passing', not only as a 'settled Traveller', but as a settled person. It was said that she was forgetting her culture and heritage in an effort for personal freedom."[68] In this situation, the Traveller student was exposed to a range of different cultural pressures: her family and their cultural expectations that she would leave school; the "casual racism" and pressures of the mainstream education system; pressures from community activists for her to be a role model and publicise her success; and finally, the pressure to 'prove' her identity when accused of "passing" as a non-Traveller.

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Rosaleen McDonagh, "Measuring mainstream - Traveller education", *Politico*, August 27, 2012. <http://www.dlrintegration.ie/index.php/component/content/article/78-news/latest-news/484-measuring-mainstream-traveller-education-politico-27-08-12-measuring-mainstream-traveller-education-politico-27-08-12>
[68] Ibid.

The idea that literacy can remove Travellers from their culture is also mentioned in the memoir of Johnny 'Pops' Connors, as he recalls a conversation with a "well-known man" in his youth. Connors was told that, with only a few years of schooling, "there would be no man to touch you, you are a genius of your people," to which Connors replied, "if I had to go to school, I would like it very much, but if I did, I would not know my people."[69] Cathy Kiddle also spoke to one Traveller student who feared that acquiring literacy would actually negatively alter his brain function. "When you learn to read and write you lose your memory."[70] When these viewpoints are taken into account, it is not surprising that Travellers may cast doubt on the value of literacy and its possible consequences for their oral traditions.

Yet, the division between literacy and orality cannot be clearly defined. Ballad singers, even when they learn songs from another person orally, may still be learning lyrics from written sources. In their study of Scottish Traveller singer Jeannie Robertson, James Porter and Herschel Gower found that Robertson's repertoire was made up of songs learned from oral tradition and also "broadsides and chapbooks".[71] William Cauley also proudly describes his mother reading newspapers and selling ballad sheets as she visited houses around Ireland in *The Candlelight Painter*. Although chiefly discussing his painting and poems, Cauley also recollects singing songs and performing music on the mouth organ to earn money and survive, particularly in his youth. He attributes his knowledge of music to his mother and her side of the family, and Cauley also recalls visiting houses and selling ballad sheets with his mother,

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[69] Sandford, *Gypsies*, 160
[70] Kiddle, *Traveller Children*, 65
[71] Porter and Gower, *Jeannie Robertson*, xxxv

learning the songs as she performed them. Interestingly, Cauley highlights his pride in his mother's literacy when he describes her ability to read the ballad sheets, a skill not common to Irish Travellers at the time. However, he simultaneously defends the oral tradition represented in her singing, drawing attention to how she learned the songs without the need of printed lyrics or music. He states that "she could read the ballad sheets but she didn't have to. All the ballads were in her head since time immemorial."[72] The emphasis Cauley places on the oral sources of his mother's singing would appear to override her literacy skills in terms of cultural importance. Cauley clearly regards the method of memorising ballads by listening to other singers as the best way to learn them. Other Traveller singers have also discussed learning ballads in this way. Learning the songs "by heart the oral way", as described by Sheila Stewart, is seen as a process that is especially significant in preserving Traveller culture.[73]

The notion that oral culture is both valuable and in decline is not restricted to Travellers. In his acclaimed essay "The Storyteller", Walter Benjamin presents modern society as being increasingly removed from cultural traditions and ever more distant from the kind of communication represented by the storyteller.

> Experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth is the source from which all storytellers have drawn. And among those who have written down the tales,

[72] Cauley, *The Candlelight Painter*, 16-17
[73] Stewart, *A Traveller's Life*, 7

> it is the great ones whose written version differs least from the speech of the many nameless storytellers.[74]

For Benjamin, the loss of oral culture means the loss of wisdom passed down over centuries, leaving us cut off from our living traditions. Benjamin's storytellers were sailors, master craftsmen and artisans, people that worked in traditionally manual roles, like Travellers. By focussing on the development of literacy skills, Travellers may also feel that they are less engaged in orality and risk losing aspects of their traditional culture. The very act of converting Traveller oral culture into written literature in some ways legitimises the inferior status of the oral form. Before it can be studied, oral culture must first be re-made by the dominant culture into a more acceptable format.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967; 1986) Frantz Fanon acknowledges the importance of language in the interplay of power between colonising nations and colonized people. He says that "A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language."[75] By transforming oral texts into the printed form, Traveller culture is arguably made to fit the requirements of the dominant culture that has oppressed and marginalised it. Delaney, in "Stories from Below: Sean Maher and Nan Joyce", makes the point that the publishing of both Travellers' memoirs can be seen as "as an epitaph to non-literacy."[76] Since both Maher and Joyce chose to represent their lives in print, their decision "merely hastens the demise of oral traditions

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[74] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov", *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt and translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 84

[75] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (1967; reprint, London: Pluto Press, 1986), 18

[76] Paul Delaney, "Stories from Below", *Studies*, 469

and reaffirms the supremacy of print culture."[77] Both Joyce and Maher are proud of their oral culture and seek to record it for posterity, but in order to do so, must commit it to print. However, as Delaney contends, representing orality within a text can also place pressure on the textual form, forcing it to express the rhythms and language of a minority culture and thereby subverting the dominance of the medium itself.

Folklorist and song collector Alan Lomax thought that oral culture could reinvigorate the written word. His biography of Jazz musician Jelly Roll Morton, *Mister Jelly Roll* (1950), was the first to use a series of taped interviews to create a memoir, and the publication made him a pioneer of oral history.[78] In the preface to the 1993 edition of the book, Lomax stated that his intention behind the project was "that the great talkers of America could, if lovingly transcribed, contribute enormous riches of prose style and varied points of views to literature."[79] It was of great importance to Lomax that "the reader could feel the presence of the speakers while turning the pages."[80] In order to achieve this, he spent four years editing the words of Morton and other New Orleans Jazz musicians. Lomax spent many years collecting songs from a range of musicians, and found that the accounts of their lives complimented the songs they had written, and deserved to be treated with the same respect.

> Earlier, in my field work, as I had taken down the repertoires of Leadbelly, Molly Jackson, Woody Guthrie and others, asking them to fill in the background for the songs with stories of their lives, I had come to realize that

[77] Ibid., 470
[78] Alan Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and "Inventor of Jazz"* (1950; new edition, Berkeley and Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2001)
[79] Ibid., xiv
[80] Ibid.

> what these people had to say and their way of saying it was a good as their songs.[81]

In *Mister Jelly Roll*, music and songs, and the personal experiences behind them, work together to create a detailed account of Morton's life, and of the wider New Orleans Jazz scene. Lomax's influence can be felt in many of the "oral history" and other ethnographic studies which have been published since. As discussed in the next section of this chapter, Micheál Ó hAodha, who transcribed and edited autobiographies of Irish Travellers Pecker Dunne and William Cauley, was able to create a similar balance between song, life experience and the written word.

Scottish Traveller Betsy Whyte, an accomplished singer and storyteller, appears to have used writing in a similar manner to Lomax, and compelled the written word to fully articulate her orality. Pete Cooke, describing Whyte's drafting technique in an introduction to a second edition of her memoir *The Yellow on the Broom* (1979), emphasises the oral character of her writing:

> It is clear, when one looks over her manuscript that this was still an oral rather than a literary activity for Betsy; that she must have carefully composed and polished her narrative in her mind and committed it to paper only when satisfied that it flowed as naturally as the spoken word.[82]

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[81] Ibid., xv
[82] Whyte, *The Yellow on the Broom*, vii-viii

Although writing was a "totally new endeavour" to Whyte, her drafts required little editing, arriving at the publishers as fully-formed "effortless dialogue".[83] This was due to her technique of only beginning to write after she had composed the entire narrative in her head first. Whyte said, on writing a subsequent sequel memoir, *Red Rowans and Wild Honey* (1990): "It is all in my mind. I will only have to set it down.'"[84]

However, the subjects of memoirs may have other reasons for preparing their story in advance. In *Mister Jelly Roll*, Lomax described how Morton (xvi) came "barrelling into the Music Division of the Library of Congress to set the record straight about the origin of jazz and his part in it."[85] In an afterword to the book, Lawrence Gushee commented that Morton "was obsessed with establishing himself as the originator" of Jazz, and was convinced that "many Johnny-come-latelies had plagiarized him."[86] In order to do this, Morton supplied an erroneous date of birth to Lomax. According to Gushee, this placed Morton "in Storyville earlier than most other jazzmen and gave him plenty of historical elbow room."[87] Although Whyte made no claim to musical superiority, she may have viewed her memoirs as an opportunity for cultural preservation. When Whyte was approached by Cook, he felt that "it was as if she had been waiting for someone to come along to 'turn on the tap', so readily, if shyly, did she respond to these strangers who had called so unexpectedly on her."[88] It may well have been the case that the researchers called on Whyte less "unexpectedly" than they realised, as the Stewart family had mentioned Whyte's name to the School of

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[83] Ibid.
[84] Betsy Whyte, *Red Rowans and Wild Honey*, vi
[85] Lomax, *Mister Jelly Roll*, xvi
[86] Ibid., 321
[87] Ibid., 324
[88] Whyte, *The Yellow on the Broom*, 2001, vii-viii

Scottish Studies in the process of their song recordings. It is not clear how much information was passed between Whyte and her Scottish Traveller friends and relations, who were also working with the ethnographers from Edinburgh University.

Traveller Memoir Writing: Orality within the text?

In *Orality and Literacy*, Walter Ong states that there can be no plot in people's lives unless there is "ruthless elimination of all but a few carefully highlighted incidents."[89] Therefore, even where Travellers have written their own autobiographies, with minimal editorial input, they still have to adhere to the rules of the memoir format. They are also able to choose which material is included, which provides them with the potential to edit out incidents in their lives they would rather not share with their readers. Perhaps even more significantly, the very structure of the memoir or autobiography, whilst appearing to be the most basic form of narrative, is a modern construct and not a development of oral narrative. Ong explains that oral narrative is episodic, rather than strictly chronological, to allow for the absentmindedness of storytellers and also to make it easy for storytellers to select the most entertaining tales for their current audience. In order to aid memory, oral narratives are repetitive and tend to start *in media res*, by jumping straight into a situation before explaining the events leading up to it. The linear, climactic plot we have come to expect from a narrative has not directly developed from oral storytelling. Due to their strophic structure, ballads can be represented in text form, albeit without music, as a kind of narrative poem.

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[89] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy,* 140

Williamson makes the case that "ballads are simply stories told in song" and would sometimes change between the two modes during a single performance, in order to add more detail to the song or to educate audiences who were unfamiliar with its context.[90] This flexibility and dynamism is harder to represent when a song is published in a textual format. Traveller singers such as Jeannie Robertson are adept at stitching together verses from different songs to fill in forgotten plot points, to fit the same words to a new melody, or to amuse a particular audience. When a single version of a song is printed on a page, such deviations are often omitted. This is true of all oral cultures, as Viv Edwards and Thomas J. Sienkewicz have noted: "In order to study oral events and pass them onto other literate people the speech event must be written down. In the process what is essentially dynamic becomes static. In spoken form words are repeated and transformed everywhere they are used."[91] Therefore, in the attempt to create a textual record of oral culture, its essential spirit of experimentation and improvisation is lost.

Some songbooks containing Traveller songs are able to reflect their dynamism by providing references to recordings by different performers, or alternative versions which appear in different song collections. For example, in *Travellers' Songs from England and Scotland*, Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger included details about the first recorded printed version of each song, and referred to other versions of the song published by different collectors, including Child, Sharp and Greig-Duncan. MacColl and Seeger also printed musical notation with the lyrics of each song, to encourage

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[90] Braid, *Scottish Traveller Tales*, 7

[91] Viv Edwards and Thomas J. Sienkewicz, *Oral Cultures Past and Present: Rappin' and Homer* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) 1-3

performance by the reader. In addition to this, some song collectors, including Mike Yates in *Traveller's Joy*, listed a number of audio recordings alongside each song, and published their book with an accompanying CD. In an effort to represent the dynamic qualities of the songs discussed in this thesis, alternative versions of the same song are included in the appendices, and a variety of recorded performances have been suggested.

When it comes to Traveller memoir writing, some editors have attempted to represent the oral culture of Travellers in a range of different ways. David Campbell, in his biography of Duncan Williamson, *A Traveller in Two Worlds*, includes direct quotations of stories and transcriptions of interviews between the two men in order to maintain some editorial distance. Other editors, including Roger Leith in *The Little Book of Sandy Stewart*, have attempted to transcribe their subject's spoken words phonetically on the page, preserving their dialect and pronunciation as closely as possible. A number of academics and Traveller authors have included examples of Cant language, with a glossary at the back of the book, and individual Travellers have discussed their family's usage of Cant or Gammon. William Cauley, as part of the NOMAD project based in the Irish World Music Centre at the University of Limerick, also produced a "glossary" of Traveller Gammon or Cant, *Canting with Cauley*. Although this book is a fascinating resource, displaying equivalent words in English and Irish, it does not piece together common phrases, making it only really useful for quick reference purposes. Michael Hayes (as Michéal Ó hAohda) has produced a variety of Irish Traveller studies and memoirs that incorporate aspects of orality, and included a newly-recorded CD of Pecker Dunne's songs inside the cover of the

musician's autobiography. This volume proved so popular that it was reprinted in 2012, but unfortunately without the accompanying CD. However, despite the efforts of editors and academics to capture aspects of Traveller orality in the written word, including this thesis, the culture of a minority is still being converted into forms that are more easily accepted by majority society. Transcription, phonetic representation and glossaries are created for settled readers and researchers to better interpret Traveller culture within the bounds of their own cultural knowledge.

However, some commentators have raised the possibility of Traveller memoirs placing the settled reader in a position of cultural and linguistic unfamiliarity. In *The Road to God Knows Where*, Sean Maher includes Cant words and phrases which are unexplained in the text and require the reader to translate their meaning from an appendix at the back of the book. Delaney interprets the use of Cant words as "cultural carriers" or "markers of something that cannot be accommodated and that remains fundamentally different."[92] A settled reader may be able to look up the meaning of a Cant word, but they cannot fully engage with the concepts, traditions and peculiarities of Traveller culture reflected in it. Where this technique is used at length, it is known as "cultural syncretism" because it "fuses different linguistic codes in an inventive way, and results in the non-Traveller reader being made to feel a stranger in a familiar language."[93] Settled readers can learn about a culture that is different to their own, but must do so at a distance, mindful that they must immerse themselves in that culture before they can fully understand it, instead of reshaping it to resemble their own.

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[92] Delaney, "Stories from Below", *Studies*, 466-467
[93] Ibid., 467

If it is so difficult for Irish and Scottish Travellers to accurately represent their culture in the form of memoir writing, the question must be asked: why have so many felt compelled to do so? One answer may be that Travellers recognise the need for literacy in terms of self-sufficiency. In an economy where jobs involving manual labour are in decline, the vast majority of Traveller parents want their children to attain good levels of literacy. In the process of education, Traveller culture must contend with mainstream cultural influences. Technology has also increased the number of distractions away from traditional oral culture, including film, television, computer games and mainstream music. Whilst some young Travellers engage in traditional Traveller songs and storytelling, many also prefer non-traditional forms of music to ballads. In the effort to conserve their ephemeral culture, Travellers may attempt to record aspects of it in the written form. The resultant tension is addressed by Ong, who provides one view of the interplay between orality and literacy in oral cultures.

> Orality is not an ideal, and never was. To approach it positively is not to advocate it as a permanent state for any culture. Oral cultures today value their oral traditions and agonize over the loss of these traditions, but I have never heard of an oral culture that does not want to achieve literacy as soon as possible.[94]

[94] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 171

Many Travellers value their oral traditions and may "agonize" over their loss, but the empowerment that can be attained by literacy is impossible to ignore. It is often the key for minority groups to engage with essential services including healthcare, social welfare, and the justice system. However, Ong's argument is reductive, as he does not address the reasons why certain individuals or cultures may resist becoming literate, for example to avoid acculturation or assimilation. He also appears to suggest that all oral cultures have the same level of illiteracy, and an equal desire to become literate. Yet, Ong allows that orality is not only valuable, it is inextricably connected to literacy and is therefore inescapable because "reading a text oralizes it."[95] Ong implies that both forms are important, since "orality and the growth of literacy out of orality are necessary for the evolution of consciousness."[96] But again, Ong presents literacy as being superior to orality, as a technology which has enabled human beings to develop their social consciousness and self-awareness. In his view, although orality allows us to articulate our thoughts and "ties human beings to one another in society", literacy provides us with the opportunity for more abstract modes of thinking and expression.[97] Ong suggests that "writing introduces division and alienation, but a higher unity as well. It intensifies the sense of self and fosters more conscious interaction between persons. Writing is consciousness-raising."[98]

According to Ong, the very act of writing expands the mind and changes the way we understand the world around us. However, it is doubtful whether literacy can actually restructure human consciousness. To test this hypothesis, psychologists Sylvia

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[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., 175
[98] Ibid.

Scribner and Michael Cole, in *The Psychology of Literacy* (1981), wished to explore if literacy shaped both culture and thought, and if it separated "primitive" from "civilized" societies.[99] The West African Vai people provided a unique opportunity for study, as they had developed their own writing system which was taught from person to person. The written form of the Vai language was only used to keep commercial records or for personal letters, and there was no written body of literature to draw upon. About half of the population were receiving formal schooling in English, with others learning Arabic as part of their religious observance. By comparing literate Vai individuals with those who were literate and also formally educated, Scribner and Cole found that literacy alone did not "produce generalised cognitive effects".[100]

In *Orality and Literacy*, Ong can be criticised for characterising the features of orality and literacy as binaries, classifying "primary oral culture" as "additive rather than subordinate", "aggregative rather than analytic", and "redundant or 'copious'".[101] Although oral culture may preserve knowledge accrued over a long period of time, Ong claims that literacy opens up knowledge to further investigation and development. However, the interaction between oral and written uses of language are varied and complex, and vary across different communities. In the conclusion to her study of language practices in white and African-American communities, Shirley Brice Heath makes the observation that "the traditional oral-literate dichotomy does not capture the way other cultural patterns in each community affect the uses of oral and written

[99] Scribner and Cole, *The Psychology of Literacy*, 4-5
[100] Ibid., 132
[101] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 37- 39

language."[102] By his presentation of orality and literacy as binary oppositions, Ong also implies that people existing in oral cultures are intellectually inferior to those in literate populations. Instead, the notion that self-awareness and autonomy is the preserve of literate societies has developed from dominant Western ideology, which seeks to position the West as a 'civilising' force against the 'primitive', oral Other. More contemporary studies of the development of literacy have moved away from the binary opposition of orality and literacy, and have instead advanced the concept of 'multiliteracies', where factors including social class, gender, age and ethnicity influence the acquisition and uses of literacy.[103]

Memoir writing can force Travellers into a compromise situation when they seek to preserve aspects of their oral culture in the written word. Fanon argues that "every colonized people - in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country."[104] In an attempt to overcome feelings of inferiority and attain access to the dominant culture, minority cultures may try to reproduce the cultural forms of mainstream culture. For some individuals, this has proved to be a great personal success. Scottish Travellers Sheila Stewart and Betsy White have written several volumes of popular memoirs and there are also now a number of Irish Traveller journalists and playwrights, such as Rosaleen McDonagh and Michael Collins. However, this cultural compromise is not always a comfortable one. Sheila Stewart,

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[102] Heath, *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*, 344
[103] New London Group, "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures", *Harvard Educational Review* 66.1(1996), 60-92
[104] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 18

when preparing to write her mother's biography *Queen Amang the Heather*, said that she met some settled academics who wanted to write the book for her and implied she was not an intellectual equal. She was told by one individual that she was not educated enough to be an author, and another could not understand why Stewart and other Travellers wanted to write. "You Travellers should keep your place in society" Stewart was told, and remarks in her memoir that "academics don't want us to succeed in any educational arena where they think they should be in charge."[105] Duncan Williamson, who has published many books featuring Scottish Traveller stories for children, sometimes regretted his ingress into the world of literacy and academia. Scottish storyteller Ben Heggarty describes an occasion where Williamson once threw one of his own books onto the fire and shouted "I wish I'd never made any of these books, it's changed my life forever."[106] For Williamson, his involvement with the settled academics who had sought him out during his lifetime had also altered his interaction with other Travellers. His son Jimmy characterised him as being "between two worlds" and that by spending so much of his time with academics he "just fell out of the Traveller world completely". Fanon describes how colonised individuals are forced to distance themselves from their native culture and adopt the culture and language of the coloniser, and Williamson too became estranged from his Traveller roots, yet was still ostracised by the settled community. In addition, although Williamson enjoyed visiting local schools and sharing his stories orally with children, he was wont to "burst into an angry lament for how the Travellers' way of life had been broken by prejudice, law and

[105] Stewart, *A Traveller's Life*, 200
[106] Campbell and Williamson, *A Traveller in Two Worlds: Volume One*, 23.

'school education'."[107] It would seem that some Travellers, such as Williamson, actually blame the dominance of literacy for the changes in their culture.

Traveller memoir writing may also have as much to do with cultural authentication as personal representation. For decades, Traveller origins have been discussed and contested, ranging from theories of Travellers being descendants of non-nomadic families that took to the road to escape the Famine or the Highland clearances, to Travellers first existing as a race of pre-Celtic precious metal workers. The various theories have been collected by Sinéad Ní Shúinéar and she argues that the sheer number of 'origin' theories has arguably contributed to the idea that the authenticity of Traveller culture is open to debate, or "up for definition and approval by the majority population."[108] Paul Delaney suggests that some Traveller authors are using literary formats for political purposes, by responding to their detractors and therefore supplying "renewed authority to an historically misrepresented non-literate people".[109]

Micheál Ó hAodha, in his introduction to *Canting with Cauley*, hoped that the book, by situating Traveller words with English and Irish on the same page, would also "situate Cant/Gammon on an equal footing with those other two languages that have traditionally been dominant in Irish life".[110] By representing their lives in print, Travellers are able to reproduce their culture in a way that is easily accessible to dominant society, allowing comparisons between the two. However, by adhering to the standards of settled society, and by translating oral culture into a written text, Traveller

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[107] Ibid.
[108] Sinéad Ní Shúinéar, "Irish Travellers, Ethnicity and the Origins Question", *Irish Travellers, Culture and Ethnicity*, 73
[109] Delaney, "Stories from Below", *Studies*, 469-470
[110] Cauley, *Canting with Cauley*, xiv

memoirs can be seen as surrendering an essential part of their identity and culture. By producing memoirs, Traveller authors have to accept the fact that, in order to engage with a settled audience, they need to use literacy in preference to orality; this can create some cultural distance between themselves and many members of their community. However, Traveller authors are still able to recognise the usefulness of literacy, applying it on their own terms. The sheer number of books produced by Travellers or with the assistance of researchers must show that many Traveller individuals respect the importance of literacy and print culture.

The importance of oral culture also appears to be gaining recognition amongst academics and cultural enthusiasts. In *Homo Narrans*, Niles contrasts Anglo-Saxon poetry and other ancient oral forms with modern storytelling and singing by Scottish Travellers including Lizzie Higgins and Duncan Williamson.[111] Niles also notes Williamson's preference for orality, even though he is literate: "He reads when he wishes to, which is not often. He can also write, although he seldom does so. His attitude towards the schools in Fife that his two young children have attended could be called a blend of condescension and contempt."[112] Porter and Gower also highlight the fact that after her 'discovery' by Hamish Henderson, Robertson went on to share her home with other singers, who would stay with her and learn songs from her repertoire by oral transference. Porter and Gower maintain that she "transformed the Revival by channelling its direction away from bookish sources toward the vital spring of oral tradition nurtured by Travellers."[113] Other non-Traveller singers and storytellers are

[111] Niles, *Homo Narrans*, 6
[112] Ibid., 110
[113] Porter and Gower, 58

also seeking out this method of learning, including David Campbell, who learned material from Duncan Williamson. Campbell describes learning a song as an intense experience: "in the Traveller mode he sings it into me, 'eye to eye, mind to mind, heart to heart'".[114] It is clear that Campbell feels oral transference is not just a method of learning, but a way of connecting to another singer, their traditions and culture. Projects such as the *Song Collector's Collective*, created by Sam Lee and Irish Traveller Tommy McCarthy, train amateur song collectors to record singers and upload their material onto an open-access website.[115] Sam Richards himself served a four-year apprenticeship learning the folk songs of Scottish Traveller singer Stanley Robertson.[116] A similar project was established by Pádraig MacGréine and Pavee Point in 2002, aiming to create an archive of Traveller oral history.[117] MacGréine made an important contribution to the study of Traveller culture, publishing observations he had made about Irish Travellers whilst collecting their stories and examples of Cant language for the Department of Irish Folklore in the early 1930s. A selection of his work was published in the journal *Béaloideas*.[118] It is noteworthy that, after spending several years recording Cant phrases and stories from interviews by Irish Travellers, settled schoolteacher MacGréine began to use them for the purposes of teaching Cant to Traveller children. In doing so, he acknowledged the importance of orality to Traveller

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[114] Campbell and Williamson, *A Traveller in Two Worlds: Volume One*, 46

[115] The Song Collectors Collective, "Overview of Song Collecting", *Song Collectors Collective website*. Accessed November 12, 2013. <http://songcollectorscollective.co.uk/collecting/about-collecting/how-to-collect/>

[116] Sam Lee, "About Sam", *Sam Lee website*. Accessed November 5, 2013. <http://samleesong.co.uk/about-sam/>

[117] Pavee Point, "Newsletter May 2004", *Pavee Point website*. Accessed May 23, 2013. <http://paveepoint.ie/pdf/NewsletterMay04.pdf>, 10-11

[118] Pádraig Mac Gréine, "Irish Tinkers or 'Travellers'", *Béaloideas* (1931): 170-186; "Further Notes on Tinkers' 'Cant'", *Béaloideas* (1932): 290-303; "Some Notes on Tinkers and their 'Cant'", *Béaloideas* (1934): 259-263

culture, and the necessity of keeping oral culture alive, by enabling the next generation to express their traditions in their own language.

Travellers should be able to access education without having to leave important aspects of their culture behind in the process. The songs and stories discussed in this chapter represent only a snapshot of the wealth of traditions and experience that Travellers pass down to their children. In a foreword to Jeremy Sandford's book *Rokkering to the Gorjios*, Charles Smith, Chair of the Gypsy Council in the UK, acknowledges the fear of Gypsy parents that their children will become culturally assimilated if they attend mainstream schools. However, he also highlights the political usefulness of knowing "how the Gorjios operate" in a struggle for equal rights.[119] It is only through organised campaigning that governments in the UK and Ireland might be forced to change their education system and assist Gypsy and Traveller education. Ethnic minority recognition in the Republic of Ireland, with its associated legal protections, could help stimulate changes in education. However, in the UK, although Irish Travellers, Gypsies and Scottish Gypsy-Travellers are recognised as ethnic minorities, there are still unresolved issues with Traveller education in mainstream schools.

In Australia, Gypsy families appear to be much better served by the education system than in the UK or Ireland. In fact, some overseas families appear to have voted with their feet: Ken Lee, a Romany academic, states that "some Romanies emigrated

[119] Jeremy Sandford, *Rokkering to the Gorjios* (Hertfordshire, University of Hertfordshire Press, 2000), 167-168

from England *precisely* so their children could attend school without harassment."[120] Cathy Kiddle also draws attention to Australia's inclusive system of education, with an effective distance-learning programme available to all citizens, developed to combat the problems of large distances between major towns and isolated communities. She reports that approximately half of the students on the distance-learning courses are Travellers. As a result, "most Australian Romanies complete school education and many go on to higher education courses."[121] However, both Lee and Kiddle present a utopian view of Australia, which conveniently sidesteps the adverse treatment of Aboriginal children and asylum seekers by the Australian government, many of whom would not be able to access the distance learning system. There is also no equivalent system in the UK or Ireland at present, but the availability of free educational materials is expanding online, and it is possible that distance learning may become an option for Travellers in the future.

Traveller culture is inextricably bound to mainstream culture in many ways, and Traveller families could only exist through their interaction with settled communities in order to make a living. However, Travellers' contribution to mainstream British and Irish history and culture is often unrecognised, a subject which is explored in the song "Living on the Edge of your Town":

> The books you read at school
> Do not mention me,
> Because I am the Invisible Man

[120] Ken Lee, "Australia – Sanctuary or Cemetery for Romanies?", *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity*, 77
[121] Kiddle, *Traveller Children*, 107

In this country's history.[122]

Written by Paddy Houlihan, a settled individual who worked with Travellers in Ennis, County Clare, "Living on the Edge of your Town" was recorded by Irish Traveller musicians The Fureys. (A full version of the song is included in appendix 3.5) In the song, a Traveller describes how he was once welcome on a settled farmer's land because he provided essential services to him: he sold the farmer a horse, harvested his crops, and repaired his tin vessels. Schools now educate students from a wide range of ethnicities, and expressions of minority culture, including Traveller orality, should be explored as part of the school curriculum. An ideal way of achieving this would be a cross-cultural exchange of songs, stories and languages.

Traveller memoir writing, whether it manages to embody Travellers' oral culture successfully or not, can supply narratives that resist the stereotypes of Travellers promoted by mainstream society and its media. It can highlight and celebrate under-represented aspects of Traveller culture, such as stories, ballads and Cant language. It can also preserve ephemeral cultural material for successive generations, and allow the material to be examined academically. But, unless more is done to recognise and respect the ethnic identity of Travellers, the only representations of Traveller culture left will be those contained in the pages of memoirs and academic titles.

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[122] Sandford, *Songs from the Roadside*, 27

Chapter Five

Travellers in the UK and Irish Media: Newspapers, Radio and Reality Television

Travellers as 'Other' in the Media

José Lanters, in *The 'Tinkers' in Irish Literature* (2008), broaches the subject of media representation and its role in the "Othering" of Irish Travellers. The media, by promoting an image of Travellers which marginalizes their culture and repeats reductionist stereotypes, has helped to institutionalise negative ideas about an entire social group. At the same time, limited opportunities have existed for the repudiation of stereotypes by Travellers themselves:

> The image that exists among the sedentary population of the nature of Travellers as exotic and threatening may in part be the result of the virtual absence of Traveller self-representations in the Irish written and broadcast media.[1]

The word "exotic" has positive connotations, and by using it Lanters might appear to give the impression that Travellers are thought of as "glamorous" or "culturally sophisticated" by settled people. For the vast majority of individuals in mainstream society, the very opposite is likely to be true. The idea that Travellers are seen as

[1] Lanters, *The 'Tinkers' in Irish Literature*, 189

"threatening" is more plausible given the regular publication of sensationalist crime articles in newspapers such as the Irish *Sunday World* and British *Daily Mail.* Television programmes, such as *Traveller Feuds* (2012) produced by the Irish channel TV3, also draw attention to examples of violent clashes between Traveller families, making it seem that this type of behaviour is a regular occurrence within the community. Lanters deploys "exotic" in a similar way to Edward Said's use of "Oriental" in *Orientalism* (1978), as Said explores the ways that colonial populations came to be defined as inferior, backward and in need of "civilising" by their European occupiers: "Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analysed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved."[2] In recent times, Travellers appear in various forms of the media increasingly often, but, like Said's Orientals, the way that Travellers live is typically judged as being undesirable, backward, and problematic. The solution to their deviant lifestyle is often deemed to lie in policies of cultural assimilation.

Although this chapter discusses contemporary representations and attitudes to Travellers, criticism of nomadic culture has a long history. Michael Hayes, in *Irish Travellers: Representations and Realities* (2006), points out that "anti-Traveller sentiment is not something new but draws on a tradition of anti-nomadic sentiment and action that has deep roots in the Western European imaginary."[3] Tensions between sedentary and nomadic populations in Europe have arisen from the theory that, over the passage of time, populations developed from nomadic hunter-gatherers to more sedentary modes of living in agrarian settings. Robbie McVeigh (1997) also explores

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[2] Said, *Orientalism*, 207
[3] Hayes, *Representations and Realities*, 239

the concept of "social evolutionism", which is founded on the belief that as societies shifted from being nomadic to sedentary, "a movement towards civilisation, security and modernity" was achieved.[4] In fact, as McVeigh points out, the transition was neither absolute nor reversible, as groups of nomads still exist in most sedentary societies today. For example, the Masai continue to exist in southern Kenya and northern Tanzania, and the Bedouin are located in North Africa and the Middle East. McVeigh also argues that the transition between nomadic and sedentary modes of society was not universally unproblematic or entirely positive. Some nomadic populations had societies which were "just as sophisticated as their sedentary counterparts" and were more equal than a society based on land ownership for the benefit of a rich minority.[5] For these reasons, the concept of civilisation should not be equated with sedentarisation.

For Hayes, anti-Traveller sentiment has also developed from a long history of "moral and political anxiety" over groups that are regarded as "Other", and who are "perceived to be rootless or external to the social order".[6] This is evident in media representations of Travellers, which often involve situations where Travellers are seen to encroach upon settled people's lives, or refuse to assimilate into mainstream culture. For example, local newspapers often feature negative articles on the arrival of Traveller caravans on public land. National newspapers and British television channels also generated extensive coverage of Dale Farm, when its residents resisted eviction by Basildon council, and rejected placements in standard housing. For centuries, Gypsies

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[4] Robbie McVeigh, "Theorising sedentarism: the roots of anti-nomadism", *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity*, ed. Thomas Acton (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997), 10
[5] Ibid., 13
[6] Hayes, *Representations and Realities*, 239

and Travellers have provided a symbolic opposition to mainstream British culture and society. Gypsies, in particular, are used as symbols of freedom and rural simplicity, representing Britain's pre-industrial Golden Age. In literature, idealised and romantic 'true' Gypsies appeared in the works of numerous writers including George Borrow and Walter Scott. (For a more detailed discussion of the 'true' Gypsy, see Chapter Seven of this thesis.) However, Gypsies also represented an uncivilised, internal 'Other', against which mainstream British society could define itself. Jean-Pierre Liégeois's idea of the "stranger", which he describes in *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers* (1994), helps to explain how Gypsies and Travellers came to embody the traits rejected by sedentary society:

> The image of the stranger and of the strange, updated every few years, exposes the fears and worries of those who create it, by giving shape to the group's idea of its 'opposite'; this idea is then- like a film- projected away from the group, so they can see it clearly and distance themselves from it. Just as a tent is held up by the guy ropes holding it down, the group needs a counterbalance to stand upright. The worries projected onto this image are the worries on the mind of the group at any given time. Therefore, whenever we look at how Gypsies and Travellers are treated, we are at the same time looking at the social history, the politics and the psychology of those who are reacting to them.[7]

[7] Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1994),199

Sinéad Ni Shúinéar (1997) reinforces the importance of Gypsies and Travellers in their capacity to reflect the problems of sedentary society, by stating that "Gaujos need Gypsies to personify their own faults and fears, thus lifting away the burden of them."[8]

In *The Racialization of Irishness* (1996), Robbie McVeigh suggests that the oppression of nomadic peoples such as Gypsies and Travellers in western societies can be understood as a "specific form of racism" which is derived from underlying sedentarist attitudes.[9] While this racism does not always directly involve colonialism, anti-nomadism shares core characteristics of other racisms, including "an asymmetrical power relationship and institutionalised violence."[10] Western societies are based on the belief that sedentarism is the only viable model for modern life, and that nomadism is a 'backward' mode of living, resembling less 'civilised' times. This is evident in the development of laws involving private land ownership and trespassing, and the requirement of a static address for many services such as healthcare and welfare. These systems place nomadic groups such as Gypsies and Travellers at a huge disadvantage in terms of employment, health and education.

McVeigh also points out that the denigration of Traveller culture is made in a colonial context. For example, there have recently been instances of Scottish and Irish councillors and Irish judges making anti-Traveller statements, such as District Court Judge Seamus Hughes describing Travellers as "Neanderthal men lying in the long

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[8] Sinéad Ni Shúinéar, "Why do Gorgios hate Gypsies so much, anyway? A Case Study", *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity*, 27

[9] Robbie McVeigh, *The Racialization of Irishness: Racism and anti-racism in Ireland* (Belfast: Centre for Research and Documentation, 1996) , 13

[10] Ibid., 14

grass and living by the law of the jungle".[11] Here, Irish Travellers, an indigenous, white group, are racialized in terms of a colonial metaphor. This is also explicit in the titles of some traditional Irish songs, which refer to the "Yellow Tinker".[12] As a further example of this, the final verse of the song "Raggle-Taggle Gypsy", which is an Irish version of "The Gypsy Laddie", features the line: "I'd rather have a kiss of the yellow gypsy's lips/Than all the cash and money-o". (See Appendix 6.8) In this particular song, the difference between the settled woman who leaves her husband, and her nomadic lover is racialized by the suggestion that the Gypsy is "yellow". However, McVeigh states that "colonialism created broad stereotypes and *modes of thinking* that transferred laterally to groups that were not directly linked by a colonial nexus."[13] This would help explain why Scottish and Irish people, once persecuted and dominated by the English, now view Travellers as uncivilised strangers. Many of the stereotypes attributed to Irish Travellers by settled Irish people in particular, resemble the stereotypes levelled at the Irish by British colonists. Speaking of the relationship between Irish Travellers and mainstream Irish society, Mairin Kelly (1994) states that both sides are "caught up in a post-colonial dynamic – we the power-holders, the sedentary, still with a coloniser mind-set; the Travellers with a colonised one."[14]

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said discusses the processes by which the representations of colonised people became established in Western Europe. Taking influences from Gramsci's theories on hegemonic formation and Foucault's ideas about

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[11] Pavee Point, "Pavee Point Calls for the Resignation of Judge Seamus Hughes for his prehistoric attitudes to Travellers", *Pavee Point website*, September 11, 2012<http://www.paveepoint.ie/pavee-point-calls-for-resignation-of-judge-seamus-hughes-for-his-prehistoric-attitudes-to-travellers/>
[12] McVeigh, *The Racialization of Irishness*, 15
[13] Ibid., 16 (original emphasis)
[14] Mairin Kelly, "Final Thoughts: A Cause for Celebration?" *Irish Travellers: Culture and Ethnicity*,181

representation and discourse, Said's work focuses on the construction and transmission of fixed ideas about colonial populations which were shaped by a number of nineteenth-century European writers. These authors judged the peoples they were describing from the viewpoint of their own culture, a viewpoint shaped by historically pejorative ideas about the non-Western world. For Said, essentialist ideas about the Middle East and Asia went on to influence the writing of other European travel writers and critics, building on the idea by some commentators that the colonial territories of the East were culturally inferior.

> One of the most important developments in nineteenth-century Orientalism was the distillation of essential ideas about the Orient – its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits, its inaccuracy, its backwardness – into a separate and unchallenged coherence; thus for a writer to use the word *Oriental* was a reference for the reader sufficient to identify a specific body of information about the Orient.[15]

Said's "distillation of essential ideas" about communities, where the culture of those communities differs from that of Western Europe, and is judged to be inferior, is a process that has arguably been applied to Gypsies and Travellers. In many cases where the media engages with Travellers, only the elements of Traveller culture that differ most from or encroach upon mainstream culture are represented and sensationalised, and these elements are repeated so often that they become entrenched and unchallenged or simply regarded as 'common sense'. Just as Said mentioned that a writer using the

[15] Said, *Orientalism*, 205

word "Oriental" would prompt a reader to "identify a specific body of information" about the Orient, the mention of "Traveller" in a newspaper headline or television programme prompts the reader or viewer to recall the many stereotypes and "truths" about Travellers they have previously encountered.

However, Orientalism as a concept has not escaped criticism for its all-encompassing nature and the selective base of literature used by Said in developing his theory – a selection which conveniently disregards Western writers who have celebrated cultural aspects of the East. Aijaz Ahmad, in "Orientalism and After", criticises the concept of Orientalism for its failure to incorporate voices of resistance. Comparing *Orientalism* to the work of Derrida and Foucault, Ahmad labels Said's discourse as equally "extreme and uncompromising" because:

> nothing, nothing at all, exists outside epistemic Power, logocentric Thought, Orientalist Discourse – no classes, no gender, not even history; no site of resistance, no accumulated projects of human liberation, since all is Repetition and Difference, all is corruption – specifically Western corruption – and Orientalism will always remain the same, only more so with the linear accumulation of time.[16]

For Ahmad, Orientalism works as a monolithic entity, sweeping away cultural nuances and challenges to Western thought, replacing them with over-simplistic binary oppositions. Since no aspects of colonial culture can escape the influence of Orientalist thought, native resistance and political uprisings only serve to strengthen the case for

[16] Ahmad, "Orientalism and After", *In Theory,* 195

the Other to be characterised as "problematic" and "backward" in their opposition to the West. Ahmad also describes how Orientalism "panders to the most sentimental, the most extreme forms of Third-World-ist nationalism", as any atrocities carried out by formerly colonised peoples, are rendered insignificant in the face of over two thousand years of victimisation by the West.[17] This reading makes Orientalism not only self-perpetuating, as it absorbs and neutralizes all challenges into its discourse, but also dangerously dismissive of internal differences and political development within the East.

Ahmad makes an important point here, which also has consequences in readings of Traveller culture and its historical representation. While Travellers are stereotyped as "threatening" by mainstream media, a small proportion of Travellers have been guilty of perpetrating violent crimes against members of their own community, by taking part in feuds. The term "Travelling community" also masks the heterogeneous nature of Traveller society, which is made up of a non-formalised collection of individual families, a social structure described as "anarchic" by Scottish Traveller Willie Reid.[18] Fellow Traveller Duncan Williamson describes the situation in similar terms: "Even though they are a family, there's no bosses, no law, no king, no nothing. No union, no nothing. Everyone is an individual. Everyone goes their own way."[19] The highly individualised nature of Traveller community allows Travellers to maintain their independence, but also makes it easier for more influential or powerful families to exploit others.

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Braid, *Scottish Traveller Tales*, 32
[19] Ibid.

In a further critique of *Orientalism*, Dennis Porter raises the problem of Said's inability to embrace challenges to Orientalist discourse which appear within Western travel literature. In "Orientalism and its problems," Porter states that Said ignores some key Western writers who represented non-Western societies in a non-essentialist way. [20] Porter explains that Said, despite stating that he "intends to be attentive to individual voices" fails to do so, because "no counter-hegemonic voices are heard."[21] Porter accuses Said of only mentioning Marco Polo's *Travels* in order to fit it into a Western tradition of writing that categorised the East into the Near and Far East, while *The Seven Pillars* by T.E. Lawrence is mentioned *in passim* without extended discussion. Porter maintains that both writers question the validity of a unified Western discourse in their variety of ethnic representations, their "heterogeneity and fragmentariness", and in their "accounts of various Easts".[22] Aspects of these works may indeed consist of racial descriptions from an authoritative Western perspective, particularly *The Seven Pillars* which is written from the outlook of a British Army officer, but Porter insists that they also contain material which subverts the Orientalist discourse as "literary texts may in their play establish distance from the ideologies they seem to be reproducing."[23] Said, it is suggested, misses the subtle voices within the texts which challenge the established views of the West.

It is clear from the above critique that, although there may indeed be a dominant discourse which shapes the way minority cultures are represented in the West, it is also imperative to seek out those voices that speak against, and the behaviours that

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[20] Porter, "Orientalism and its Problems", *The Politics of Theory*, 182
[21] Ibid., 181
[22] Ibid., 186
[23] Ibid., 192

challenge, the hegemony of mainstream culture. It is also important not to encourage the idea that there is one single dominant discourse, as cultural narratives are subject to change over time due to different cultural factors. To do so would involve the same process of essentialisation Western society is accused of performing in *Orientalism*. It would also create a position of powerlessness for those working to alter the perceptions of minority groups by the rest of society, as there would be no opportunity to create real change. In the media and elsewhere, minority cultures, such as Travellers, are often represented in ways which encourage others to regard them as inferior to the rest of society. But there are also settled academics, journalists and politicians who are attempting to provide other ways of representing Travellers, who have in time themselves become more politicised, and who are increasingly able to access traditional forms of the media and the internet.

In recent years, the issue of Traveller representation by the media has become increasingly complex due to the popularity of the television series *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* (*BFGWs,* 2010-2014), which has created renewed interest in the lives of Travellers among settled people. The programmes were hugely successful for Channel 4, with figures of 9.7 million viewers at its peak.[24] For many people, the *BFGWs* programmes provided their first introduction to Traveller culture, and superficially address some issues which affect Travellers, such as the lack of culturally-appropriate accommodation and the importance of the family. Yet, more often than not, the central topics included in each episode centre on material that feeds into the stereotypes of Traveller culture, building on centuries of stories about crime, dirt, ill-gotten wealth and

[24] Tyler, *Revolting Subjects*, 145

inferiority. Sensationalist programmes on Irish Traveller feuding and crime for TV3 have been in regular production over the last few years, including *Following the Traveller Millions* (2012) and *The Town the Travellers Took Over* (2014), along with other productions that appear to attempt more positive representations of Travellers, like *Traveller Women: Telling it Straight* (2012).

The reality television show *Big Brother* featured Irish Traveller Paddy Doherty, a regular of the *BFGW* series, as the 2011 winner of its "Celebrity" edition, which itself must count as a positive representation of Travellers. His popularity among the show's settled audience may have been due to Doherty's likeable personality, or his behaviour in an apparently more 'natural' setting than the *BFGW* programmes. Alternatively, it could be argued that Doherty personified all the stereotypical characteristics of a male Traveller with a background in bare-knuckle boxing, a low standard of literacy, and staunchly masculine opinions. Another Irish Traveller who received positive representation on Irish television in *The Voice of Ireland* was Kelly McDonagh Mongan, who came second in the 2013 singing-based talent show. Like Doherty, much of Mongan's success in the programme was reliant on the audience phoning in to vote for her, showing that she was a popular contestant by many settled viewers as well as Travellers. Mongan often spoke of her pride in her Traveller heritage and image, wanting to provide a positive example of an individual from the community. It is very likely that the people watching the show simply enjoyed hearing her performances. However, it is also possible that her glamorous appearance and the fact that she was visibly pregnant whilst appearing in the show could have represented the kind of Traveller woman a settled audience would expect to see: an elaborately dressed female

who places great importance on getting married and having children. These examples of the popularity of individual Travellers on reality television programmes points to the existence of an irresolvable complexity or ambivalence surrounding the representation of Travellers by the mainstream media.

Alongside these programmes created for national television channels, there are other smaller-scale productions, designed to provide a source of self-representation for Travellers. The Traveller Movement, along with other Traveller organisations, often embed content into their websites in the form of video diaries or short informative pieces, which have the benefit of being made and voiced by Travellers themselves. Information DVDs, such as *Pavee Céilidh* (2009) which are designed to be shown in schools, are another outlet for Traveller self-representation.[25] YouTube also has a growing amount of material produced by Travellers, and typical clips feature Traveller singers, weddings, and sulky racing. Arguably, social media formats like YouTube are the least mediated forms of representation, and much of the content seems to be produced by and for other Travellers. Yet, some of the content could be considered negative, as it achieves little more than the creation of more examples of stereotypical Traveller behaviour. Driving a sulky and boxing are important aspects of Traveller culture for some individuals, and are also recognisably skilled pursuits. But when races occur on main roads, or fights break out in public places, they risk being seen as nothing more than evidence of Traveller criminality.

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[25] The Traveller Movement, *Pavee Céilidh: Irish Travellers Talk about Their History* (The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain, 2009)

This chapter will briefly discuss three studies of newspaper reports on Irish and Scottish Travellers, and also examine selected radio and television programmes in order to explore some of the principle ways in which Travellers are represented in mainstream media. The chapter will also consider how a number of Travellers have attempted to engage with the media, and will evaluate how successful these interactions can be in influencing their positive representation.

Newspapers and Traveller Representation

Gypsies and Travellers have long been popular subjects for press coverage. In 1973, Jeremy Sandford had the opportunity to glimpse the extent of this during his time spent editing *Romano Drom*, an illustrated newspaper written by and provided as a service for Gypsies in the UK:

> I subscribed to a press-clipping agency who sent me every reference to Gypsies which appeared in the national and provincial press. I had to cancel my subscription after two months or so because of the sheer bulk of clippings that poured through my letter-box. It was overwhelming, both financially and emotionally.[26]

Sandford found the amount of UK coverage to be unexpectedly large and also "tragic", as each clipping usually documented either local objection to a Gypsy or Traveller site in one area, or a family being forcibly moved on by the police. In more recent times,

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[26] Jeremy Sandford, *Gypsies*, 206

the popularity of press coverage on Travellers has continued, featuring similar themes of conflict between settled populations and the 'invasion' of unofficial Traveller campsites, along with associations of crime and dirt. The three studies below survey a selected range of newspaper coverage of Travellers in the UK, Ireland and Scotland.

Rachel Morris, co-ordinator for the Traveller Law Research Unit at Cardiff Law School, monitored the national press and "as much of the local press as possible" for newspaper articles featuring Travellers between the years 1998 and 2000.[27] In "Gypsies, Travellers and the Media: Press regulation and racism in the UK", Morris attacks the press for perpetuating negative assumptions about Travellers, stating that the print media represents Travellers and Gypsies "in a stereotypical and prejudicial fashion" despite the existence of professional standards that serve to prevent this, such as the Code of Conduct by the National Union of Journalists and the Code of Practise by the Press Complaints Commission.[28] She also suggests that the press abdicate responsibility for their representation of Travellers when they really should be challenging the pervasive myths that surround them:

> In creating largely negative images of Travellers, the press may argue that they are merely reflecting standard public opinion; and they may be right. But in reflecting it they condone, encourage and confirm racist assumptions whereas, some might argue, it is part of their role to counter such bigoted simplifications.[29]

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[27] Rachel Morris, "Gypsies, Travellers and the Media: Press regulation and racism in the UK", *Communications Law* 5.6 (2000), 214
[28] Ibid., 213
[29] Ibid.

This view, although compelling, is perhaps over-idealistic. It is especially so in the context of diminishing newspaper sales and declining readerships, where populism assists the survival of ailing publications. It does, however, reflect the disparity of power between the views of mainstream society and minority groups like Travellers. Travellers often do not have the opportunity to explain themselves, or else may be unable to access the articles written about them in the first place, due to low rates of literacy. The unfairness of the situation, for Morris, appears to resemble a case of schoolyard bullying: "Not only are they taunted, denigrated and laughed at, it is done behind their back."

In 1998, an Irish researcher, Aoife Bhreatnach conducted a comparative analysis of articles appearing in the *Irish Times* in the mid-1960s and 1990s, and her findings were published by the *Irish Studies Review*.[30] In "Travellers and the print media: words and Irish identity", Bhreatnach found that although there was a more positive shift in the interpretation of the "difference" embodied by Travellers, replacing discussions of the 'itinerant problem' with issues affecting the "Travelling community", there was an increasing tendency by the Irish press to "portray Travellers within a conflict situation."[31] In the 1960s, criminal behaviour or violence by Travellers was likely to be portrayed as a result of the community living in conditions of poverty. By the 1990s, negative press reports featuring Travellers began to present feuding and criminality as evidence of the deviant nature of Traveller culture:

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[30] Aoife Bhreachnach, "Travellers and the print media: words and Irish identity", *Irish Studies Review* 6.3, (1998), 285-290

[31] Ibid., 285, 288

> In the 1990s, a violent action by a Traveller is no longer excused as the consequence of poverty, but is viewed as a manifestation of an unbridgeable gap between Travellers and the settled community. Though no longer spoken of as a 'problem' to be 'rehabilitated', stereotyped as violent, Travellers are excluded from being 'citizens' of the state.[32]

On top of this, Bhreatnach discovered that reports of violence by Travellers towards other Travellers had increased, from 4 per cent of the total coverage on Travellers in the 1960s to 15 per cent by the 1990s. With Travellers also falsely accused, in some reports, of being responsible for rural crime, Bhreatnach concludes that Travellers have endured a "criminalisation of ethnic difference."[33]

In a more recent study of these issues, Amnesty International commissioned the McCallum Media Monitor service to monitor Scottish media outlets for references to Scottish Travellers during four months in 2011 to provide a "snapshot" of media coverage of Scottish Gypsy Travellers.[34] The results suggested that there was "disproportionate scrutiny and negative reporting associated with Scottish Gypsy Travellers" as, despite making up less than half a percentage (0.5%) of the Scottish population, around one-and-a-half articles a day were written about them, usually involving Travellers pulling onto land without prior permission, or protests at the possible development of council-approved sites. When newspaper articles featuring

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[32] Ibid., 289
[33] Ibid.
[34] Amnesty International, "Caught in the Headlines: Scottish Media Coverage of Scottish Gypsy Travellers", *Amnesty International website*. Last modified March 4, 2014. <http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/amnesty_international_caught_in_the_headlines_2012.pdf>

Travellers appear at such frequency, there is a risk of distortion, that the "public may form the impression that this is a bigger issue than is actually the case."[35] In addition, for a community that is estimated at being between only 2,120 (for those living on Traveller sites), and 20,000 (to include those who may be in ordinary housing and not identifying themselves as Travellers), the frequency of articles on Travellers encourages the idea that most people of Traveller origin are involved in suspicious practices. When compared to other ethnic minorities, Travellers were found to be reported on "disproportionately" in articles that referred to a subject's ethnicity.[36]

Although some positive stories about Travellers have been reported, they are outweighed by negative reports which unnecessarily highlight their ethnic identity and reinforce links between Travellers and perceived crime. This means that, almost every day, the settled community are presented with messages about Travellers that give credence to the negative stereotypes associated with them. This is despite the existence of three different suggested guidelines for ethical reporting, including the Code of Conduct by the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) which covers the UK and Ireland, The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and The Society of Editors, which draws specific attention to fair reporting on Travellers.[37] Hayes points out that, while certain terms once used to describe Travellers have been deemed offensive since 1996 by the NUJ, "recognising ethnic difference without resorting to the use of

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[35] Ibid., 6
[36] Ibid.
[37] National Union of Journalists, "Code of Conduct", *NUJ website*. Accessed May 23, 2013. <www.nuj.org.uk/innerPagenuj.html?docid=174>; Equality and Human Rights Commission, "Gypsy Travellers in Scotland: a resource for the media", *Equality and Human Rights Commission website*. Accessed May 22, 2013. <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/scotland/scottish-news/gypsy-travellers-in-scotland-a-resource-for-the-media/>; Society of Editors, "Reporting Diversity", *Society of Editors website*. Accessed May 23, 2013. <www.societyofeditors.co.uk/userfiles/file/Reporting%20Diversity.pdf>, 23

stereotypes" is still a major issue for mainstream media.[38] Since very few settled people knowingly interact with Travellers on a regular basis, most non-Travellers do not have a direct basis for alternative responses to these stereotypical media representations. In many cases, different media outlets will combine to saturate the public with the same stories, providing further bias towards the negative stereotypes of Travellers. An example of this is the significant number of articles in the Amnesty Media Report which feature commentary on *BFGWs*, increasing the frequency of stories about extravagant Traveller weddings appearing in newspapers.

The media can also reflect pervasive myths surrounding Gypsies and Travellers, as exhibited in the recent case of two Roma Gypsy families in Ireland who came under suspicion of child abduction. After a story ran internationally about the investigation of a Greek Gypsy couple for the possible abduction of a blonde, blue-eyed child who was living with them, Irish newspapers reported that two children had been removed from their families in Dublin and Athlone under similar circumstances. The two children were subsequently found to be related to their parents and therefore no 'abduction' had taken place. Seemingly, the reason the children's families had been investigated stemmed from a comment left on a website for TV3, a channel that frequently broadcasts stereotypical Traveller-based programmes. TV3 reporter Paul Connelly conveyed the details to the Gardaí, which resulted in the children being taken into temporary care.[39] According to Thomas Acton, the idea of Gypsies kidnapping children may be pervasive, but it is no more than a myth: "I know of no documented case of

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[38] Hayes, *Representations and Realities*, 242

[39] Conor Lally, "Garda removed girl from home after 'tip off' to TV3", *The Irish Times website*. October 23, 2013. <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/garda-removed-girl-from-home-after-tip-off-to-tv3-1.1570811>

Roma/Gypsies/Travellers stealing non-Gypsy children anywhere."[40] Instead, Acton explains that many cases have been documented of the opposite situation, with Roma children being taken into state care. One example of this is the Swiss charity Pro Juvenute, which removed 600 Gypsy children from their families between 1926 and 1973.[41]

To a lesser extent, Irish and Scottish Travellers are also assumed to have abducted settled children, which may stem in part from the practise of informal adoption, either within or from outside Traveller communities. For example, several Scottish Travellers in *The Summer Walkers* (1996) talk of their adoption into Traveller families from unmarried, settled young mothers.[42] Pecker Dunne also describes how his mother brought up two settled boys along with her own children in *Parley-Poet and Chanter* (2004).[43] Folklore researcher Pete McGuire comments that "Old and contemporary European folklore is full of stories about Roma, Europe's most vilified minority, abducting children. In Ireland, the Travellers, an indigenous ethnic minority, sometimes represent the abducting bogey."[44] This supports George Gmelch's findings, as during his interviews with settled Irish people in the 1970s, Traveller abduction was mentioned as a threat used by some parents to discipline their children, they were warned "if you don't behave I'll let the Tinkers take you away."[45] Walter Simson, in *A*

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[40] Louise Doughty, "An angel kidnapped by Gypsies? In the absence of all the facts, age-old libels are being replayed", *The Guardian website*, October 22, 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/oct/22/angel-kidnapped-by-gypsies-libel-replayed>
[41] Angus Fraser, *The Peoples of Europe-The Gypsies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 253
[42] Neat, *The Summer Walkers*, 4, 9, 97
[43] Dunne, *Parley-Poet and Chanter*, 5
[44] Peter McGuire, "Do Roma 'Gypsies' Really Abduct Children?" *The Huffington Post online*, October 24, 2013. <http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/peter-mcguire/roma-gypsies-children_b_4152869.html>
[45] Gmelch, *The Irish Tinkers*, 35

History of the Gipsies, also discussed how some Scottish families used the threat of abduction by "the Tinklers" to discipline their children:

> When a child will become unruly, the father will often say, in the most serious manner, "Mother, that canna be our bairn—the Tinklers must have taken ours, and left theirs—are you sure that this is ours? Gie him back to the Gipsies again, and get our ain."[46]

According to Simson, mothers would then soothe their children by singing the following lullaby: "Hush ye, hush ye, dinnae fret yet/ The Black tinkler winnae get ye."[47] In this context, the reference to a "black tinkler" shows that indigenous Scottish Travellers have been racialized as a terrifying "Other", and used as a tool to frighten non-Traveller children. Simson published his account in the nineteenth-century, when the myth of Gypsy and Traveller child abduction was already an old and well established one. The media, while not responsible for creating the myth of the child-stealing Gypsy and Traveller, has helped to perpetuate this myth by reporting such stories in a sensationalist style.

Newspapers written by Travellers, and produced for Travellers and the settled community, exist and feature aspects of Traveller life that provide a more varied picture of Traveller culture than any mainstream newspaper. The latest edition of *Travellers' Voice*, an Irish publication, includes an interview with musician Christy Moore and an

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[46] Walter Simson, *A History of the Gipsies: with Specimens of the Gipsy Language*, edited by James Simson (New York: M. Doolady; London: Sampson Low, Son & Marston, 1866), 45
[47] Ibid.

article on the subject of cyber bullying.[48] Recent articles featured on *Travellers' Times Online*, which also exists as a printed magazine in the UK, broach the subjects of Travellers in Norway and new Traveller accommodation sites in Solihull.[49] However, these publications, although well produced and informative, cannot hope to compete with mainstream newspapers, even if they are widely available. It is doubtful that a settled person holding a negative view of Gypsies and Travellers would buy a newspaper aimed at Travellers in the first place, even if the intent was to also help inform this audience. Instead, national and local newspapers, in the UK and Ireland, need to take a more responsible attitude to reporting stories about Travellers.

Traveller groups such as Pavee Point and the Irish Traveller Movement, and the Traveller Movement in Britain, have an important role in responding to newspaper misrepresentation on behalf of Gypsies and Travellers. For example, the Traveller Movement initiated a case against an article in the *Spectator* magazine. The article by Rod Liddle, entitled "What do you call travellers when they are no longer travelling?" was a stereotype-fuelled attack against Gypsies and Travellers under the guise of a sarcastic discussion about the political correctness of terms such as "pikey" and "gyppo":[50]

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[48] Michael Power, "An Ordinary Man", *Travellers' Voice*, (Autumn 2014), 18-19; David Murphy, "Cyber-bullying", Travellers' Voice, (Autumn 2014), 22-23;

[49] Anne-Mari Larsen, "The Travellers of Norway", *Travellers' Times Online*, January 8, 2015. <http://travellerstimes.org.uk/Blog--Comment/The-Travellers-of-Norway.aspx>; Julie Colman, "Rooftop Housing Association are pleased to invite applications for pitches on our new Gypsy and Traveller site", *Travellers' Times Online*, December 18, 2014. < http://travellerstimes.org.uk/News/New-Gypsy-and-Traveller-Site-Pitches-in-Solihull.aspx>

[50] Rod Liddle, "What do you call travellers when they are no longer travelling?" *The Spectator online*, October 26, 2013. <http://www.spectator.co.uk/columnists/rod-liddle/9064071/what-do-we-call-the-people-who-abducted-maria-its-a-minefield/>

> Clearly the terms which hitherto some of us may have employed, not always affectionately — pikey, gyppo, tinker — are likely to get you into trouble with the police these days. Probably more trouble than if you, for example, dug up the road to remove a few hundred yards of fibre optic cable, or declined year upon year to pay your taxes. So those three are out.[51]

In response to the article, the Traveller Movement drafted a petition to hand into the offices of the *Spectator*, and lodged an objection with the Press Complaints Commission (PCC). In an email to signatories of their petition, the Traveller Movement explained that the adjudication panel, made up of editors of national and local newspapers, decided to uphold only one minor accuracy point. The discrimination element of the complaint was thrown out by the editors, who said that the complaint "did not come directly from an individual identified within the article".[52] They also commented that "the article may have been intended to be 'ironic'".[53] At the time of writing, the Traveller Movement are pursuing an appeal against the decision of the PCC.

Radio and Traveller Representation

A song which addresses many of the stereotypes attributed to Gypsies and Travellers in the media appeared on Ewan MacColl's "Radio Ballad" *The Travelling People.* Originally composed by MacColl, "The Gypsy's Answer" has also entered Gypsy and

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[51] Ibid.
[52] The Traveller Movement, personal email correspondence with the author, April 30, 2014
[53] Ibid.

Traveller repertoires, as it has been recorded by several individuals, including English Gypsy Ezekiel Warner for Jeremy Sandford's songbook *Songs from the Roadside* (1995). The song identifies several criticisms made against Gypsies and Travellers and highlights certain negative actions perpetuated by sedentary society. (A full version of the song appears in Appendix 4.1.) The first verse of the song concentrates on the stereotype that Gypsy and Traveller encampments fill rural or 'green belt' land with rubbish:

> They say we leave litter and mess up the land,
> We're the dirty travelling people.
> But who laid the blight on each mill and factory site?
> Was it us-or the Gorgio people?[54]

Compared to industrial sites, which regularly generate large quantities of production waste, any litter that is left on the ground following a Traveller site eviction appears trivial. The "blight" mentioned by MacColl may also point to the changes made to pieces of land when factories are built on them: an unspoilt plot on the edge of town might be replaced by an ugly, man-made building. As small mobile structures, caravans leave much less of a visual and physical impact on the environment. In his version of the song, Ezekiel Smith changed the third line, altering it to: "But who laid the blight on each meadow and strand?"[55] Smith may have chosen these words to highlight the

[54] Sandford, *Songs from the Roadside*, 65
[55] Ibid.

pollution caused by industrialisation more generally, and his words connote emotive images of green fields swamped with rubbish and litter washed ashore on beaches.

The next four verses of "The Gypsy's Answer" explore further Gypsy and Traveller stereotypes. On each occasion, the criticisms levelled against Gypsies and Travellers are compared to similar behaviour which has occurred in settled society. However, the actions of settled people are represented as being much worse than those of Gypsies and Travellers. For example, although Gypsies and Travellers are described as "a menace to the health of the land" due to sedentary perceptions of them as "unhealthy" or dirty people, the song identifies settled people as the culprits who poison "the air and rivers everywhere". This is presumably another reference to environmental pollution due to industrial processes, or is the result of a modern 'throwaway' culture, where it is cheaper to dispose of damaged goods than to repair them. In contrast, many Gypsies and Travellers traditionally repaired tin vessels, plates and other items for themselves and sedentary populations. Before recycling became a more widespread activity, Gypsies and Travellers collected scrap materials, sorted them into bulk waste and sold them to merchants. One Irish Traveller in the north east of England has argued that Travellers were "the first greens", although he recognised that the job used to be regarded as an unsuitable one for settled people, or "dirty work for the 'tinks only'".[56]

In the next two verses of the song, Gypsies and Travellers are accused of dishonesty, criminality and violence. Once again, settled people are represented in the

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[56] Colin Clark and Micheál Ó hAodha, "'We were the First Greens': Irish Travellers, recycling and the State", *Radical Statistics Group website*. Accessed August 14, 2013. <http://www.radstats.org.uk/no073/article1.htm>

song as committing far worse crimes in comparison. The negative sedentary behaviours mentioned in the third verse are reminiscent of newspaper crime headlines, including someone who "kills for gain", bank robbery, and a possible reference to the British "Great Train Robbery" of 1963. The crimes described in the fourth verse are those which are committed against humanity. Of course, the crimes levelled at settled people in the song are extreme examples, and are perpetuated by a small number of individuals, or in the case of war, are officially sanctioned by the government. The negative behaviour of one settled individual is not representative of the entire sedentary community. Yet, Gypsies and Travellers are frequently subjected to this logic.

In the final verse of the song, Gypsies and Travellers are represented as intellectually inferior:

> They say we are backward, retarded and dull,
> The ignorant travelling people.
> But who judges and condemns those who're different to them?
> Why you do-the Gorgio people.[57]

Nomadic culture has been variously denigrated in mainstream society. From the viewpoint of many settled individuals, the rejection of a sedentary way of life by Gypsies and Travellers is due to their adherence to a culture that has no place in modern society. Therefore, nomads are presumed to be "backward, retarded and dull". The final verse of "The Gypsy's Answer" draws attention to these views, and redirects them onto settled people. It suggests that it is the sedentary population who should be

[57] Sandford, *Songs from the Roadside*, 65

seen as ignorant for their failure to grasp the value of an alternative way of life. Some Gypsies and Travellers describe settled people in negative terms, for example Judith Okely points out that the term many Gypsies and Travellers use describe non-Travellers people, "gajé" or "gorgio", is pejorative and implies uncleanliness. "A gorgio – and I am one – is usually seen as polluted, stupid and potentially persecuting."[58] Although this indicates that Gypsies and Travellers are also capable of judging and condemning people in mainstream society for living a settled lifestyle, the difference in power and influence between the two groups is significant. Warner's version of the song changes the third line of the final verse to: "but who judges and condemns for his own ends?" This subtly refers to the dynamics of the sedentary and nomadic relationship, suggesting that it is in the interest of mainstream society to discriminate against nomadism.

"The Gypsy's Answer" was one of several songs included in MacColl's "Radio Ballad" *The Travelling People* that provided alternative representations of Gypsies and Travellers. Many of the songs were composed from the viewpoint of Travellers, and the programme included sound clips recorded from Gypsies and Travellers, alongside a number of settled peoples' responses to them. This effectively reversed the usual practise of mainstream media which represents a minority community from a sedentary position. However, the success of *The Travelling People* was intrinsically connected to the influence of two key figures from the settled community. Were it not for MacColl and Seeger's credibility as renowned folk singers and collectors, the programme might never have been made. In addition, their involvement in the programme ensured that

[58] Judith Okely, "An Anthropological Perspective on Irish Travellers", *Irish Travellers: Culture and Ethnicity*, 4

the BBC Home Service provided a platform to broadcast it to the widest possible number of British households.

On other occasions, Traveller songs have featured on radio, but have been altered in such a way as to reduce their impact. In *Scottish Traveller Tales*, Duncan Williamson expressed anger over a verse omitted from his song "The Hawker's Lament", during an unspecified broadcast for the BBC.[59] The song addresses the interrelated issues of police harassment and an undersupply of legal camping sites. It also highlights the role of Traveller soldiers fighting in the British army during World War Two. (A full version of "The Hawker's Lament" is included in Appendix 4.2) Williamson states that the third verse of the song, which questions why Travellers sacrificed their lives only to face further eviction and persecution, was deemed "too political" by the BBC:

> But what did we fight for and why did we die?
> For freedom to wander around.
> But where can we wander we have no place to go,
> For they're closing our camping grounds down.[60]

Williamson took the omission as a personal affront. In an interview with Donald Braid, he argued that his song "had nothing political in it" and that the lyrics were "telling the actual truth".[61] To support his views, Williamson told Braid that a number of his family members had given their lives fighting for freedom. Williamson's Uncle Sandy had

[59] Braid, *Scottish Traveller Tales*, 217
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., 219

fought in the First World War, and had been away from Scotland for over a year before he was allowed home to visit his wife in Dumbarton. Sandy's wife had camped on the beach, and not long after Sandy arrived, a policeman told the couple that they were on private land and were required to move on. Despite Sandy telling the policeman that he had only just returned from the trenches, it made no difference, as he reportedly said: "I don't care if you're back from France or Germany, but you're not going to stay here for the night."[62] This event disrupted the last two weeks that Sandy ever spent with his wife, as he was killed on his return to France.

Braid, commenting on the editing of Williamson's song, regarded it as symptomatic of a wider ethnocentric viewpoint, which can only tolerate the representation of the concept of 'freedom' in a sedentarist way:

> From the perspective of a settled worldview, the connections made through the song's logic between sacrifice and freedom may be difficult to accept. While everyone might agree that the war was fought for freedom, the concept of freedom is inevitably defined ethnocentrically – from each group's point of view. Yet, it is this apparent contradiction between Traveller and settled interpretations of freedom that is key to the potency of Duncan's song.[63]

If settled listeners identified with the Traveller viewpoint expressed in the song, they might recognise the injustice of a situation where the freedom of Travellers to live a nomadic lifestyle has been curtailed, when many Travellers perished defending the

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[62] Ibid., 220
[63] Ibid., 219

freedom of the UK. By removing one of the most emotionally charged verses of "The Hawker's Lament", containing the most explicit contrast between different concepts of 'freedom', the BBC may have lessened its influence.

Williamson is not the only singer from a nomadic community to raise these issues. In *Songs of the Open Road*, Jeremy Sandford includes the song "The Deserter", by Wiggy Smith, which describes how a Gypsy questions the concept of freedom and sacrifice. (A full version of the song appears in Appendix 4.3) Sandford comments that, "Gypsies, with their large families, have provided many soldiers to fight and often to die in our wars"; he also notes many may have found it hard to follow orders, and may have tried to escape.[64] In the song, the Gypsy soldier deserts, but is quickly captured and imprisoned. The third verse expresses the confusion felt by the Gypsy: It does not make any difference to him who he is fighting for, as he does not feel valued in the same way as settled people:

> You take off the heavy irons, and you let him go free,
> For he'd make a brave soldier for his King and country.
> You take off the heavy irons, and you let him go free,
> For he'd make a brave soldier for his Queen and country.[65]

The "heavy irons" in this context represent imprisonment; they also act as a metaphor for the erosion of the Gypsy's freedom, and the restrictions imposed on a nomadic lifestyle. The Gypsy is only seen as an equal when he is a soldier, and this idea is

[64] Sandford, *Songs from the Roadside*, 46
[65] Ibid, 47

reinforced by the repeated lines: "Sure if I had my own home and my sweet liberty/I would do no more soldiering, neither by land nor by sea."[66]

Williamson's incident with the BBC appears to have made a lasting impression, as David Campbell discovered when he wished to collaborate with Williamson on another project for BBC radio. After reading Williamson's story "Mary and the Seal" in *Fireside Tales of the Traveller Children*, Campbell thought that the story would be perfect for a schools programme he was producing for BBC Radio Scotland.[67] However, the programme slot was only twenty minutes in length and Campbell believed that the story would need to be cut in order to fit. After contacting Williamson's publishers, Campbell was told that Williamson would not allow his story to be used, because it could not be changed or cut in any way.[68]

By engaging with the media, Travellers are able to create more accurate representations of their identity and culture, but they require a respectful platform in order to reach a wide audience on their own terms. An excellent example of this is provided by the radio series *Atchin Tan*. Dan Allum is an English Gypsy and the director of the Romany Theatre Company, an organisation which aims to "break down the barriers of mistrust and misconception that exist between the Gypsy, Romany and Traveller and settled communities while nurturing talent using the medium of drama".[69] Allum created *Atchin Tan*, a radio drama about Gypsy and Traveller culture, which is written and performed by English Gypsy, Irish Traveller and Roma actors. *Atchin Tan* (2008), *Atchin Tan*: *A Gypsy Wife* (2009), and a third series of *Atchin Tan* (2010) were

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Campbell and Williamson, *A Traveller in Two Worlds: Volume One*, 100
[68] Ibid., 101
[69] Romany Theatre Company, "Home", *Atchin Tan website*. Accessed August 7, 2014. <http://www.atchingtan.com/>

broadcast on BBC Radio 4.[70] In an interview with Katherine Quarmby, Allum saw his interaction with mainstream radio as a positive experience, because BBC Drama had been "very sensitive and respectful to the Traveller community throughout" and had kept "kept authenticity at the centre of the work."[71] However, Allum's comment that he "never thought in a million years I'd hear Traveller voices speaking the Romani Language on Radio 4" demonstrates that this authentic representation of Gypsies and Travellers in the media is unusual.[72]

Radio programmes have provided a number of opportunities for Gypsies and Travellers to influence their representation in mainstream media. The existence of Traveller-focussed radio, such as Rokker Radio in the UK, and internet radio stations including Traveller.fm in Ireland, provide another way for Travellers to shape the way their culture and identity is presented to those outside their community. It is less expensive to produce programmes on radio than through other media formats such as television, which makes it easier to create radio programmes on minority cultures. However, when compared to television, radio attracts much smaller audiences and is therefore less influential. As the next section of the chapter illustrates, the inclusion of Gypsies and Travellers in mainstream television, where more money is invested in the creation of programmes, and the pressure to ensure success is higher, does not always produce such progressive representations as those found in *The Travelling People*.

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[70] Romany Theatre Company, *Atchin Tan* (Three Counties Radio, 2008); *Atchin Tan: A Gypsy Wife* (BBC Three Counties Radio, 2009); *Atchin Tan*, Third Series (BBC Three Counties Radio, 2010)
[71] Quarmby, *No Place to Call Home*, 275
[72] Ibid.

Television and Traveller Representation

The 1950s folk revival popularised a number of Irish and Scottish Traveller singers, and provided some of the first opportunities for Travellers and their music to appear on television. However, even though influential song collectors were involved in the recordings of these performances, television producers necessarily adapted Traveller culture to fit their own requirements. In 1961, Scottish Traveller Jeannie Robertson was invited to London by Ewan MacColl to take part in a programme about folk music for Independent Television. To prepare for the recording, her physical appearance and performance had to be altered. In the era of black and white television, Robertson required the attention of a make-up artist before appearing in front of the cameras. After being told beforehand that she would require "little make-up" due to her striking natural colouring, Robertson did not recognize herself:

> Well, when I lookit masel' i' the mirror, I said if I come out like this folk'll tak me for some Oriental body. I thought, I wes as like a Chiny or a Japany as ivir I seed. But funny, when I lookit into the monitor tube I wes a bitty amazed to see that I jist lookit ma natural sel'.[73]

This transformation was essential for her to appear attractive on television. Robertson mentioned her "Oriental" appearance as a comment on her extreme make-up, rather than any attempt by the producers to make her appear more 'exotic' as a Traveller. However, her experience is indicative of the changes that occur during the processes of

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[73] Porter and Gower, *Jeannie Robertson*, 51

television production. Robertson's self-confidence was put into question by the pressures of her involvement in television. She was aware that the producers were re-fashioning her performance, by focussing on her face and cutting her expressive arm movements from the shot, to make her more closely resemble their presentation of an archetypal folk singer. Because of this, Robertson, an experienced singer, felt acutely embarrassed.

Robertson was also asked to reduce her song "Son Davit" to three verses for the programme so that it could fit into her allocated time-slot, just before the live broadcast was due to take place. (A full version of the song is included in Appendix 4.4.) In their examination of Robertson's life and evolving repertoire, Porter and Gower emphasise the importance of "Son Davit" to the singer. The song was her most requested tune because it was perceived as rare by scholars and the general public.[74] The words and melody of the song were also regarded by singers and collectors as particularly impressive. The song collector Francis James Child said that the song was "not only unimpeachable, but has ever been regarded as one of the noblest and most sterling specimens of the popular ballad".[75] "Son Davit" was also prized by Robertson for its status as one of the few remaining "old songs" that had remained in Traveller repertoires but were lost among settled singers.[76] Finally, the song was also deeply personal to Robertson, as Porter and Gower explain: "Jeannie's whole vision of her life, and especially the trauma of Jeemsie's death, became embodied in the song. It took on the status of a lament."[77] In "Son Davit", Robertson takes on the role of the mother,

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[74] Ibid., 274
[75] Francis James Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, vol 1, 167
[76] Porter and Gower, *Jeannie Robertson*, 274
[77] Ibid., 275

with her living son James as the protagonist who has killed John, representing Jeemsie. In real life and in the context of the song, Robertson pleads for an explanation for her son's death, as she finds it impossible to understand. Porter and Gower state that Robertson agreed to trim down the song to three verses for the BBC, but that the experience contributed to changes in her singing style. Robertson began to alter the songs in her repertoire, including "Son Davit", to better fit her new audiences. As she sang less and less to groups of Travellers, her songs became "enlarged, projected, and stylized to suit new, anonymous audiences in larger halls, as well as media technicians in empty, soundproof studios".[78]

More recent music-focused broadcasts about Travellers, for example *For One Night Only* (2012), featuring Finbar Furey, have celebrated the musical culture of Travellers in a more respectful way.[79] However, where Traveller culture becomes more accessible in the form of reality TV shows, it is often exploited and lampooned. Michael Hayes states that Travellers are at a disadvantage when attempting to define their identity because "the power of the media and the presentation of 'image' is paramount."[80] Television series such as *BFGWs*, whilst allowing the involvement of Traveller families, present nomadic culture from a sedentary perspective, and often misrepresent an entire community. In the spirit of other reality television series, such as *The Jeremy Kyle Show* and *The Only Way is Essex*, the individuals and families that are sought out and given attention by filmmakers are often those which fit a pre-established idea or format. Of the original brides-to-be in the first one-off *BFGW* programme in

[78] Ibid., 275
[79] Finbar Furey, *For One Night Only: with Finbar Furey*, RTÉ1, first broadcast August 17, 2012
[80] Hayes, *Representations and Realities*, 10

2010, one bride chose to design her dress in a modest style compared to the others. The subsequent series, developed after the success of the first show, focussed solely on brides who planned increasingly outlandish dresses and celebrations, giving the impression to a settled audience that all Traveller weddings must be similar occasions.

Some of the episodes in *BFGWs* addressed incidents of racism towards Travellers. For instance, in the final episode of series one, a bride refused to reveal the location of her wedding reception to her dressmaker, such was her fear that the venue would discover that the wedding party and guests were Travellers, and cancel the booking.[81] However, although the voiceover introducing each episode of *BFGWs* promises to give a settled audience an insight into the "hidden Gypsy world", the success of the series appears to lie in the portrayal of an essentialised and sensationalised version of Irish Traveller and Gypsy culture. Furthermore, Judith Okely has identified that the voiceover framing device of *BFGWs* is a method of reinforcing the stereotype of nomadic culture as 'backward'. Okely points out that "every opening shot of the series began with a horse drawn Gypsy caravan with the gravitas voice-over of Barbara Flynn declaring that 'the Gypsies had to be dragged into the 21st century'".[82] According to Okely, this presentation of Gypsy and Traveller culture is an example of "deliberate fakery", since it employs footage filmed at a fair, a "special occasion to parade the traditional horse drawn wagon" to suggest that the use of traditional wagons is an everyday occurrence.[83] This is in direct contrast to the reality, where "for the rest

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[81] *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings*, "Bride and Prejudice" (Firecracker Films for Channel Four, first broadcast May 14, 2011)
[82] Judith Okely, "Recycled (mis)representations: Gypsies, Travellers or Roma treated as objects, rarely subjects", *People, Place and Policy* 8.1 (2014), 82
[83] Ibid.

of the year, or simultaneously, Gypsies drive their motorized vehicles with entirely modernized lifestyles."[84]

It is not clear how much of the footage of Travellers in *BFGWs* is staged or edited to fit a pre-conceived production narrative. Journalist Polly Dunbar has suggested that the producers of *BFGWs* rehearsed and reshot certain scenes, and encouraged some of the teenage girls to wear provocative clothing in a process described as "nurtured reality".[85] Imogen Tyler, in *Revolting Subjects* (2013) also points out that programmes such as *BFGWs* draw on many of the formal techniques of "socially committed" television documentary, such as hand-held cameras and improvised scenes in order to create an "authenticity" which implies an association with "documentary realism."[86] This "realism" is used by production companies to justify the exploitation and voyeurism inherent in the creation of reality programmes. The *BFGWs* series of programmes were not made to educate settled people about the lives and culture of Britain's Gypsies and Travellers. The primary motivation behind reality shows is profit. Firecracker films made eleven million pounds in 2011 from selling the first series of BFGWs to television networks around the world.[87] This figure does not include money made from overseas franchises, which have generated further reality shows based on Gypsies and Travellers.

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[84] Ibid.
[85] Polly Dunbar, "Big Fat Gypsy goldmine: Behind the scenes claims that TV company has exploited travellers to make it very rich indeed", *Daily Mail website*, February 26, 2012. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2106498/Big-Fat-Gypsy-goldmine-How-TV-company-exploited-travellers-make-rich-indeed.html#ixzz3JMPHJrSR>
[86] Tyler, *Revolting Subjects*, 145
[87] Ibid.

Some aspects of *BFGWs* are problematic for Travellers as they attract negative speculation about their lifestyles. While the brides and children featured in the programme talk openly to camera, the majority of the male Travellers have blurred faces. The men may not want their identities to be recognisable on camera, due to the potential loss of earnings that might occur with settled employers or customers if their Traveller ethnicity was revealed. However, the blurred male faces are often left unexplained. Blurring of faces more frequently appears in programmes where a crime is taking place, so a settled audience may perceive this preservation of anonymity as evidence of inherent Traveller criminality or perhaps welfare fraud. It may be the case that some of the male Travellers appearing on *BFGWs* are taking part in illegal activities, but by leaving this aspect of the programme unexplained, the audience are free to infer that all the faces are obscured for this reason. Another topic that featured on the *BFGWs* series was the concept of "grabbing", where young Travellers girls were seemingly pressured, using physical force, into kissing boys. This practice is not a part of Irish Traveller or Roma culture and appears to have been entirely made up, either by the production team or by the young people taking part in the filming. Including it in the programme as a common practice in Traveller culture encourages the idea that women of the community are being subjugated by the men. Martin Collins, assistant director of Pavee Point, says that "I'm a 47-year-old Traveller man and I've never heard of that term before the show… It's grossly offensive, especially against women."[88] A young Romany Gypsy writer, Filip Borev or 'Pipopotamus', comments

[88] Amy Croffey, "Why these 7 Traveller myths are untrue", *The Journal.ie*. 29 March, 2013. <http://www.thejournal.ie/vee-point-why-these-7-traveller-myths-are-untrue-849182-Mar2013/>

that "in reality, no one actually knows what grabbing is, in fact Gypsy and Traveller men actually have a lot of respect for their women after all."[89]

Journalist Katherine Quarmby, in *No Place to Call Home*: *Inside the Real Lives of Travellers* (2013), describes how the popularity of *BFGWs* has not only reinforced existing stereotypes surrounding Gypsies and Travellers, but has created new ones, directly influencing many settled people's perceptions of Travellers:

> Ask anyone in the street what the word 'Gypsy' means to them and they will almost certainly come up with *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*...Big dresses, spray tans, skimpy outfits and make-up slathered on with a trowel became the emblems of Gypsies and Travellers as a result.[90]

Television shows like *BFGWs* attract huge audiences among the settled and nomadic communities; yet they are a missed opportunity to represent aspects of Traveller culture that would dispute the usual stereotypes. Travellers in *BFGWs* are Othered so successfully that it becomes easy for settled viewers to form the opinion that all Travellers follow a lifestyle that is far removed from sedentary culture. Yet, the popularity of *BFGWs* has also created the opportunity for the creation of more programmes that feature Gypsies and Travellers. Besides a number of exploitative *BFGWs* spin-off series, a range of reality shows have emerged that present a different view of nomadic communities. *A Gypsy Life for Me*, which first aired in 2011, featured

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[89] Filip Borev, "An Open Letter to Channel 4", *Pipopotamus*, 18 February 2012. <http://pipopotamus.blogspot.ie/search?updated-min=2011-12-31T16:00:00-08:00&updated-max=2012-06-01T19:31:00%2B01:00&max-results=9&start=4&by-date=false>

[90] Quarmby, *No Place to Call Home*, 182

the artistic side of Traveller culture by following the preparations for the annual "Travellers Got Talent" contest in the UK. Kelly McDonagh Mongan also appeared in two different reality series on Irish television, which documented her struggle to find accommodation for her family, alongside her pursuit of a career as a professional singer.

Travellers, a two-part BBC documentary about a Scottish Traveller family, has also attracted praise for its balanced presentation of Traveller culture.[91] In her review of the programme, Jane Renton explains why it compares so favourably against *BFGWs*:

> The gentle narration and the sensitive focus on universal issues – family, livelihood, conflict with neighbours – promotes a very real sense of sameness. Where *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* narrowed the focus, *Travellers* broadens it out – landscape, as opposed to portrait.[92]

By presenting the similarities between sedentary and nomadic culture, media representation can create the space to celebrate the uniqueness of Gypsy and Traveller culture without distilling it into essentialised examples of Otherness. While there still needs to be more media representation of Travellers in non-stereotypical roles, such as lawyers, teachers or academics, a recent Irish drama series has taken a bold step forward by including an Irish Traveller actor to play the part of a pipe-bomber in its storyline.

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[91] *Travellers* (BBC 2 Scotland, first broadcast April 11 and 18, 2011)
[92] Jane Renton, "Travellers v Big Fat Gypsies", *The TV Collective website*, July 22, 2011. <http://www.thetvcollective.org/2011/07/22/travellers-v-big-fat-gypsies-by-jane-renton/>

The television drama *Love/Hate* portrays rivalry between characters involved in Dublin's criminal underworld, and has attracted large viewing audiences in Ireland and beyond. The character of Patrick Ward, played by Irish Traveller actor John Connors, takes a central role in episode four of the fifth series, where he mourns the death of his young son, who has been inadvertently killed by his father's involvement in criminality. Rosaleen McDonagh, in an article for the *Irish Times*, recognised the significance of this representation of Travellers, as she wrote:

> The superb performance by Connors demonstrated the dynamic character of Patrick who displays emotional ambivalence about being caught up with gangster mafia. Tenderness, confusion and love are part of the mix of machismo, adrenaline and violence, and all aspects of Traveller masculinity are explored.[93]

The character of Patrick Ward is more than a one-dimensional Other or stranger, and the depth of his role allowed a sedentary audience to feel empathy towards him, not as a minority figure, but as a father who had lost his child. For the first time on mainstream television, a song in Cant was used to open an episode, framing the depiction of a Traveller's inner turmoil. The scenes of a wake and graveside vigil would be familiar to a settled Irish audience, yet the deployment of the song, in a language unknown to non-Travellers, reinforced the distinctiveness of Traveller culture. The rituals surrounding death are one of the keys ways in which cultural differences are expressed, and the

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[93] Rosaleen McDonagh, "'Love/Hate' breaks important new ground in portrayal of Travellers", *Irish Times online*, November 10, 2014. <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/love-hate-breaks-important-new-ground-in-portrayal-of-travellers-1.1994402>

Traveller child's grave was noticeably different from typical sedentary memorials: it was large, elaborate and decorated with family mementos. McDonagh remarked that the Cant song "captured Traveller culture" and the prominence of the song at the start of the episode rendered it "quintessentially Pavee".[94] The opening scenes also established a sombre context for the rest of the episode, where murder, death and revenge featured in the storylines of both sedentary and Traveller characters.

The song "Lasún Gátna" or "Beautiful Child", written and performed by Jack Delaney, explores the subject of Traveller identity. The song describes positive and negative aspects of Delaney's life as an Irish Traveller. (A full version of the song in Cant and English is included in Appendix 4.5) In his song, although Delaney states proudly that "the life of a Tinker is the best for me", he also notes that he has been moved on by Gardai and suffered ridicule whilst performing in the street. He also feels torn between a desire to live among the beauty of the countryside and the need to remain in a city where he can earn money. The final two verses of the song discuss the survival of Traveller culture, and focus on providing a positive message to young Travellers in particular. Verse six of "Lashún Gátna" reveals the uncertainty that some Travellers feel regarding the future of their culture:

> Milk a' Mikérs táral stésh the Minkérs tásp'd,
> sik erpa wid stésh nid'esh achíver arák.
> My d'íl táral stésh gochil inochs atap,
> na be getúl súblín for no midal is d'arp.

[94] Ibid.

> Some Tinkers think that the Tinkers are dead,
> Some others say it will never be the same,
> But I am saying that everything is alive,
> Don't be afraid young lad for no Devil is true.

The difference of opinion between Delaney and other Travellers reflects the ongoing debate within Traveller communities about how their way of life might survive. Traveller culture has undergone many changes in recent times, and some Travellers believe that their lives were better in the past. (For a more detailed discussion of Travellers and nostalgia, see chapter six of this thesis.) However, this belief does nothing to encourage young Travellers to take pride in their identity and culture, or to help them make sense of the prejudice they experience in mainstream society. Jack Delaney explains that the final two verses of "Lashún Gátna" are an appeal to young Travellers to be resilient. Speaking from his own experiences, Delaney explains that although there is now more support for young Travellers, there are very few people, both inside and outside the community, "who actually understand the internal/external struggle that a young Traveller has growing up".

> It seems to me that although there are people growing up in worse conditions, more challenging circumstances and so forth, the specific situation of a young Traveller is problematic in the sense that it is unique. Without going into the situation too much: the peculiar situation of living in a First World country with people that look similar, dress similarly and speak the same language and

> having the heavy weight of persistent de-humanization is a hard thing to understand as a young person.[95]

Delaney also contrasts the experiences of younger and older generations of Travellers, and how each group copes with prejudice from people in sedentary society. In the past, previous generations of Travellers maintained a degree of separation between their own community and settled people, creating a "bubble" of safety where they felt that they need not be judged or affected by the wider population. However, young Travellers are more integrated in settled society, and Delaney believes that this is why "there is an elevated psychological battle within younger Travellers."[96]

In the episode of *Love/Hate* which features "Lashún Gátna", Patrick Ward discussed Traveller identity with his ten-year-old son, Brandon. Brandon admitted that he sometimes wished to be "more like the others", or non-Travellers. His father responds by reassuring him that his feelings are nothing to be ashamed of, but that he should still be proud of his identity. Delaney concludes his song by addressing young Travellers with a similar message. The third line of the final verse reads: "get getúls mishli past lim a' d'ílsha", which means "let your worries go past the side of you". However, the last lines advise: "grober aga d'ílsha/skop lurks and súni m' lashún Gália", or in English, "there is work to do/open your eyes and see my beautiful child". Delaney explains:

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[95] Jack Delaney, personal email communication with the author, December 12, 2014
[96] Ibid.

> The last two verses of the song are hopefully a communication by someone from their own community, in their own language, to firstly stay alive and secondly to stand and fight in any way possible, primarily mentally.[97]

Travellers are not the only minority group be misrepresented by the media, and this type of manipulation has a long history. In his biography of Alan Lomax, *The Man Who Recorded the World* (2010), John Szwed describes how, in 1935, Alan Lomax, his father John and the blues musician Lead Belly became involved in the production of a newsreel, *March of Time*, which portrayed Lead Belly's discovery by the Lomaxes. Although Alan Lomax wrote a script that "emphasized American ideals", the producers chose to base the film on a reworking of a sensationalised newspaper article, which highlighted Lead Belly's criminality.[98] All three men agreed to perform in the newsreel, but in doing so, they were seen as "approving the accuracy of what was depicted", and both Lead Belly and John Lomax were typecast by their characters.[99] In a typical scene from *March of Time*, Lead Belly is represented begging John Lomax for a chance to serve him. After presenting Lomax with a knife, Lead Belly says "I'll use it on somebody if they bother you, boss. Please, boss, take me with you. You'll never have to tie your shoestrings anymore, if you'll let me – long as you keep me with you." Lomax replies: "All right, Lead Belly, I'll try you".[100] This misrepresentation of Lead Belly as subservient to Lomax was far from the truth, and instead reflected wider racist

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[97] Ibid.
[98] John Szwed, *The Man Who Recorded the World: A Biography of Alan Lomax* (London: Heinemann, 2010), 72
[99] Ibid., 73
[100] Ibid.

opinions of the place of African Americans in white-dominated US society. In reality, the relationship between John Lomax and Lead Belly was more equal.

The key to accurate media representation of minority groups appears to lie in community involvement. Rosaleen McDonagh points out that over thirty Irish Travellers were involved in the filming of *Love/Hate*, both on camera and behind the scenes.[101] The creator of the series, Stuart Carolan, also spent time at the halting site of John Connors and his family, and sought help in composing accurate dialogue for his character. As a result, Irish Travellers in the programme use realistic Cant phrases. Instead of imposing his own sedentary assumptions about Travellers, Carolan was receptive to their nomadic culture. However, where Travellers are depicted in ways which connect them to criminality, sensitivity is required. *Love/Hate* manages to achieve this because the Irish Travellers in the drama are drawn to criminality alongside settled individuals. Traveller culture itself is not represented as being inherently criminal.

The 1996 film *Trojan Eddie* also featured an Irish Traveller actor, Pecker Dunne. Dunne played a part in the film and performed his song "Tinker's Lullaby". Although the majority of the actors playing Irish Travellers in the film were settled people, Richard Harris sought help from Dunne in order to accurately depict his character. Dunne mentions in his autobiography that Harris "asked me to teach him some words of the Cant for the film and he was very respectful of it and was interested in the Cant and Traveller culture generally."[102] Unfortunately, *Trojan Eddie* ultimately

[101] McDonagh, "'Love/Hate' breaks important new ground", *Irish Times online*
[102] Dunne, *Parley-Poet and Chanter*, 55

reinforces sedentary assumptions about Irish Travellers, as Mary Burke has observed. Violence and crime are portrayed as essential aspects of Traveller culture. Only in the closing shot of the film, when the protagonist has stepped away from Traveller culture, and "has opened a legitimate business in a permanent premises", is the audience allowed to sympathise with him.[103] The more recent film *King of the Travellers* (2012), written by Mark O'Connor, although featuring several Irish Traveller actors, including John Connors, suffers from the same bias.[104] The film represents Traveller culture as characteristically violent, featuring a plot that centres on Traveller feuds, murder, revenge, and bare-knuckle boxing. Whilst there are some brief glimpses of realism, including a pub landlord refusing to serve Travellers, *King of the Travellers* presents an overwhelmingly bleak, stereotypically aggressive and male-orientated version of Traveller culture.

This chapter has illustrated that is not appropriate for mainstream media to exploit the 'otherness' of Travellers and represent their culture through the lens of sedentary society. Gypsies and Travellers, along with other minority cultures, need the opportunity to become more involved in the portrayal of their communities. In the context of newspaper representation, a vicious circle has developed where many Gypsies and Travellers are reluctant to engage with the press, due to a history of negative reports. This has resulted in the viewpoints of Travellers becoming rarely present in the articles written about them. In this situation, Traveller groups including Pavee Point have taken on the role of community involvement, and provide an

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[103] Burke, *'Tinkers'*, 243

[104] *King of the Travellers*, dir. and written by Mark O'Connor (Scannán na hÉireann /Stalker Films/Vico Films 2012)

important check to damaging media representations. However, articles on Traveller culture which are written by Travellers themselves are also becoming more common, including Rosaleen McDonagh's article for the *Irish Times*.

Radio programmes, including the drama series *Atchin Tan*, have also given Gypsies and Travellers the opportunity to portray their culture authentically. The popularity of Traveller-produced radio programmes among both nomadic and sedentary communities suggests that similar projects could be commissioned in the future. However, many media projects created by Travellers are often restricted by funding requirements. *Atchin Tan* received Heritage Lottery Funding as part of a project by the Romany Theatre Company, which also created an oral history archive and developed a Traveller-themed resource for schools.[105] Funding for the project ended in 2011, which signalled the end of the radio series. There is a pressing need for mainstream radio and television to fund more ventures created by Travellers, and produce more programmes that represent Traveller culture in a positive light. Another way for Travellers to influence their representation in the mainstream media is through technical involvement. The development of Irish Traveller Television, an internet-based production company, is one of the most recent attempts by Irish Travellers to represent their culture in a positive way. Irish Traveller Television has created videos on topics including cookery, Cant, and men's health, but also aims to "challenge perceptions, grow talent and provide opportunities for members of the community to develop skills

[105] Romany Theatre Company, "Atchin Tan: A project by the Romany Theatre Company", *Atchin Tan website*, accessed December 12, 2014. <http://www.atchingtan.com/project-info>

in broadcasting and media".[106] The involvement of Travellers in mainstream media, as writers, directors, and in other technical roles, could provide a positive influence 'behind the scenes' on Traveller representation.

Radio and television programmes, including *The Travelling People*, *Atchin Tan* and *Love/Hate* are examples of how mainstream media can represent Gypsies and Travellers by challenging the negative stereotypes which often surround them. However, settled and Traveller audiences are also capable of indulging in a type of cultural nostalgia, involving horses, wagons and a rosy depiction of the past. As the next chapter will discuss, some of the nostalgic beliefs associated with Travellers can celebrate traditional culture, but they also consign Traveller culture to the past.

[106] Irish Traveller Television, "About", *Irish Traveller Television website*. Accessed December 12, 2014, <http://irishtraveller.tv/about.html>

Chapter Six

Travellers and Nostalgia

"The Good Old Days"

> Today people often describe the old way of life that Travellers had as a very romantic one. According to some of the books you read we were all happy-go-lucky people without a care in the world. We spent our days trotting along with our horses and wagons from one campsite to the next. Sure, there were times when there was a bit of romance attached to that life. Sure, there was always something special about travelling the *tóhbar* and there always will be. But it was not all fun and games. Far from it.[1]

In his 2004 autobiography *Parley-Poet and Chanter*, Pecker Dunne describes his life growing up as an Irish Traveller in Ireland and, later in life, working and busking around the world. Despite his acknowledgement of the tendency for writers to romanticise the lives of Travellers, Dunne cannot avoid falling into the same trap himself. His childhood memories are often couched in romantic terms, with Dunne reminiscing "it was lovely back then" and how travelling represented "a form of freedom" to him.[2] He imagines the existence of a physical connection between himself and nomadism by describing travelling as something that was "in his blood", and how

[1] Dunne, *Parley-Poet and Chanter*, 19
[2] Ibid., 6, 18

he was unable to stop because he "could not forget the road."[3] Dunne also believes that there was less prejudice when Ireland was a more rural country, saying that "You could multiply the prejudice against Travellers by ten and you still wouldn't be anywhere near what it is really like today."[4] However, if Dunne is guilty of romanticising some aspects of his childhood, he also takes care to recount the dangers and difficulties he experienced as a Traveller. He recalls that his earliest memory was waking up cold and damp from the rain-soaked ground after sleeping in a tent.[5] He also describes the environmental dangers faced by Traveller families: how busy roads, electricity lines and hazardous materials in dumps or waste ground had the potential to injure children who camped near them.[6] Dunne also admits that there was often confrontation between Travellers and farmers over horses, when the horses were let into farmer's fields overnight without permission, although sometimes Travellers could also provide a convenient scapegoat for disagreements between rival farmers.[7]

It is Dunne's music, however, which gives him the greatest opportunity to blend together his nostalgia for the road, the harshness of living a nomadic life, and the negative treatment he received by settled people. Dunne describes the songs he writes as being "real", like those written by Woody Guthrie, the American folk singer whom he once met and felt a close affinity with. Dunne explains that he and Guthrie wrote about similar things, as he "wasn't afraid to say what it was like to be treated like an outsider and he wrote about this in his songs just as I wrote what Travellers experienced

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[3] Ibid., 24
[4] Ibid., 36
[5] Ibid., 20
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., 36

in this country."[8] Dunne, although holding some romantic notions about nomadic life in the past, clearly wants to bring awareness to the difficulties faced by himself and other Travellers. This is the main reason that he aims, above all, to achieve a 'real' representation of his life and it is no coincidence that his latest collection of music is titled "Real".[9]

The aim of this chapter is to explore the tendency of Travellers and settled people to hold nostalgic views about aspects of Traveller culture. There are two main themes which shape nostalgic constructions of Traveller culture, and these also provide a starting point to consider why nostalgia might occur. Firstly, the decline of nomadism has influenced some Travellers to reminisce about their childhood experiences or about the past more generally, when they enjoyed more freedom to travel. Some Travellers express the opinion that their lives were simply better when they lived in tents or caravans, as they had a wider freedom of movement due to there being open access to traditional stopping places and less legislation to keep them from "pulling in" by the roadside. Simultaneously, some Travellers play down the hardships that had to be endured when living "on the road", or overlook the advantages of becoming less nomadic, such as better access to healthcare and education. The housing of Travellers in bricks-and-mortar accommodation has also forced major cultural changes to occur within the community. Many Travellers are nostalgic for lost traditions, skills and the declining use of Cant or Gammon language, which are similar to the concerns of individuals in other minority cultures which have also experienced rapid change.

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[8] Ibid., 27
[9] Pecker Dunne, *Real* (Dublin: Temple Bar Traders, 2012)

Secondly, Travellers and settled people alike seem to believe that both communities enjoyed a better relationship with each other in the past. The contact between Travellers and the wider community through various jobs such as rag collecting, knife-sharpening and chimney sweeping has disappeared in recent times. Some Travellers still follow traditional occupations or are self-employed, while others take up general waged work within settled communities. An unknown proportion of Travellers currently "pass" or conceal their ethnicity in the work they undertake with settled people to avoid discrimination. In a community with a high unemployment rate, many Travellers also claim welfare as a necessity, which makes it easy to label them as "lazy" and as "parasites", receiving money from the state. Part of the idealisation of the past relationship between Travellers and settled people stems from British and Irish society undergoing rapid modernisation and the transformation of both countries, and particularly in the UK, away from the rural and towards more densely populated city life.

Definitions of Nostalgia

Although it is widespread in contemporary culture, the concept of nostalgia is difficult to define. Fred Davis, writing about nostalgia in *Yearning for Yesterday* (1979), commented that it is "susceptible to semantic vagueness, drift and ambiguity."[10] Dennis Walder, in his book *Postcolonial Nostalgias* (2011), warned that nostalgia "eludes clear definition" and expressed his surprise on "how little, relatively speaking, has been

[10] Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 7

written on it from a critical or analytical point of view."[11] Perhaps the most authoritative text on the subject is Svetlana Boym's *The Future of Nostalgia*, a study of the development of nostalgia as a concept and its manifestations in the culture of post-Communist Bloc cities. Boym defines nostalgia as a generalised "longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed."[12] As the "mourning of displacement and temporal irreversibility", nostalgia is "at the very core of the modern condition."[13] Nostalgia may be a way of expressing feelings of loss or displacement, but it can also be the rumination of a personal fantasy and a search for origins. Boym also argues that progress exacerbates the need for nostalgia as it "inevitably reappears as a defence mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historic upheaval."[14] As the world appears to speed up and alter around us, and as we encounter unfamiliar territory, we attempt to understand new events by interpreting them through the filters of past experience. Although holding fantasies about the past can be comforting, Boym warns that nostalgia tends to "confuse the actual home and the imaginary one."[15] We may become convinced that our pasts were much better places than they actually were, idealising aspects of our childhood experiences whilst simultaneously obscuring the hardships. Using these definitions of nostalgia, it becomes clearer why many people, including Travellers, might become nostalgic about their past life experiences. As British and Irish society has transformed over the years, Travellers have become displaced from traditional patterns of nomadism and other aspects of their culture. If a

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[11] Dennis Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgia: Writing, Representation and Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 4
[12] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xiii
[13] Ibid., xvi-xvii
[14] Ibid., xiv
[15] Ibid., xvi

person's current lifestyle is beset with stress, discrimination and poverty, it might be tempting to view the past as a better time to have lived.

Definitions of nostalgia have widened since Johannes Hofer first coined the term in 1688. Its origins lie in medicine, as nostalgia was first understood as a physical condition with the potential to incapacitate the body. It was initially identified as "a condition of extreme homesickness among Swiss mercenaries fighting far from their native land", with symptoms such as "despondency, melancholia, lability of emotion, including profound bouts of weeping, anorexia, a generalised 'wasting away' and, not infrequently, attempts at suicide."[16] Although first thought of as an exclusively Swiss affliction, physicians began to recognise that other nationalities could also suffer from symptoms of nostalgia. Fred Davis, tracing the development of nostalgia from a medical to a social phenomenon, suggests that the construction of nostalgia as a "disease" was influenced by early Enlightenment thinking and also helped to moderate the effects of nostalgia in soldiers, who were likely to suffer low troop morale, feelings of defeatism, and tendencies toward desertion when affected by it. Interpreting nostalgia as a "disease", therefore, prevented soldiers from becoming subjected to ineffectual punishments and instead opened up the possibility of management via "scientific diagnosis, treatment and cure."[17] Davis suggests that nostalgia existed in society many generations before Hofer's labelling, as "an unfortunate but familiar vicissitude of life".[18] However, by framing nostalgia as a physical condition it could be

[16] Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 1-2
[17] Ibid., 2-4
[18] Ibid., 2

understood as a personal yet "contagious" affliction, rather than as an expression of loss or longing caused by changes in broader society.[19]

In contemporary society, although nostalgia can be felt as an intensely personal emotion, we recognise that wider cultural changes both prompt nostalgia and shape definitions of it. "Homesickness" no longer seems as pertinent when attempting to describe nostalgia, as our ideas about "home" have altered over time. Davis, among others, argues that increased mobility caused by the pursuit of education, work and a general shift away from the rural towards city life, has caused "constant movement in sociogeographic space", so individuals have less psychological attachment to particular places.[20] Nostalgia, instead of allowing people to long for a lost home *per se*, enables them to yearn for the loss of less tangible things, such as "the slower rhythms of the past, for continuity, social cohesion and tradition."[21] Travellers, even as nomads living in tents and caravans, would still have well-established patterns of travel, work opportunities and regular stopping places. Their idea of "home" would simply be wider in scope than a single dwelling or village, and would rely instead more heavily on the extended family and shared customs and traditions.

As more Travellers have moved into cities, they have become subject to social changes caused by rapid industrialisation and modernisation. It is therefore perhaps inevitable that many Travellers are susceptible to feelings of nostalgia. Yet, while mainstream society has become more mobile in nature, the movements of many Travellers have instead become increasingly restricted. Many Travellers appear to be

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 3
[21] Ibid., 16

faced with a stark choice: to aim for wider opportunities in mainstream society through increased cultural assimilation, or to accept further segregation and inequality between themselves and the majority population. In this context, nostalgia may be interpreted as a coping mechanism for Travellers undergoing rapid cultural change, and an attempt to preserve aspects of their culture as it evolves to fit the realities of the present day.

However, nostalgic views of Travellers held by settled people, even if they bear close resemblance to the nostalgic images and memories cherished by Travellers themselves, have the potential to be culturally damaging. Without lived experience to balance out sentimental representations of Travellers, settled people run the risk of reducing Traveller culture to a series of stereotypes and limiting it to a collection of "authentic" signs and symbols. Irish Traveller Michael McDonagh explains that culture is "something alive, something adapting and changing all the time. If we try to look at Travellers in a romantic way, and see the painted wagons, the green fields etc., we are looking into the past and nobody wants to live in the past, people want to live in the future."[22]

Nostalgia for Nomadism, Health Concerns and Past Traditions

> I used to love the times when my mother would tell me about the old times when they were young. I would sit down all day listening to the stories about those times. They were very different from now. They think we have a life of

[22]Michael McDonagh, "Ethnicity and Culture", *Travellers: Citizens of Ireland*, 29

> luxury today. All they had were tents and horses. The richer ones would have wagons. What I thought was nice was they had no worries. They would live day by day.[23]

Kathleen McDonagh, in *Moving Stories: Traveller Women Write* (1992), is aware that living a sedentary lifestyle has provided her with a standard of living which would be regarded as "luxury" in the eyes of her parents and earlier generations of Travellers. Yet, she still appears to envy the simplicity of life on the road in the past, and this is shown by her belief that Travellers had "no worries" apart from surviving from one day to the next. She is not alone in this belief. In his 1995 study *Travellers and Ireland: Whose Country, Whose History?* Jim Mac Laughlin noted the tendency of "many" Travellers to "regard the travelling life as healthier and preferable to life on the dole in disadvantaged urban areas."[24] One example he uses is Missie Collins, a young Irish Traveller from Finglas, who states that she would prefer to be living a more nomadic lifestyle because she believes that "you feel better like the old people. They're healthier, but now that you are stuck in one place, it's sicker that they're getting, since they moved off the road. I think it's healthier on the road than it is now."[25] Irish Traveller Johnny Collins, from an older generation than Missie, also felt that living in tents provided a healthier lifestyle. "Them days ya had no sickness or ailments or anythin' like that… So they were good an' it was a healthy place to live in."[26] George Gmelch, writing about Irish Travellers in Dublin in 1977 and how they were adapting

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[23] Southwark Traveller Women's Group, *Moving Stories*, 50
[24] Mac Laughlin, *Whose Country, Whose History?*, 5
[25] Ibid., 6
[26] Pavee Point, *Traveller Ways, Traveller Words* (Dublin: Pavee Point Publications, 1992), 34

to changes in their culture, noted that illness among Travellers was sometimes blamed on conditions related to living in a house. "Tinkers often complain that the heat and the air in houses are unhealthy. Some leave doors and windows wide open for ventilation."[27]

It might seem inconceivable that the health of an ethnic group should worsen when many families move from temporary sites into standard accommodation with modern comforts. Yet, the findings of *Our Geels: The 2010 All-Ireland Traveller Health Study* highlighted the fact that the gap in life expectancy between male Travellers and the rest of the Irish male population had actually increased, from around 10 years in 1980 to 15.1 years in 2010, with the average life expectancy for Traveller men being 61.7 years. [28] The life expectancy of Traveller women was markedly higher, at 70.1 years, but this was still 11.1 years behind settled women. The death rate amongst Traveller infants was also high, at 14.1 per 1,000, compared to 3.9 in the rest of the population.[29] It seems that, although the life expectancy of settled people has increased, for Travellers it has remained the same or in the case of men, worsened. This is despite the fact that the majority of Travellers now live in some form of bricks-and-mortar housing: 73.3% in the Republic of Ireland, and 55.4% in Northern Ireland.[30] However, many households appear to be small and potentially overcrowded, with families of up to five people living in properties of two to four rooms, and a quarter of families (24.4% in the Republic of Ireland and 24.8% in Northern Ireland) living in

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[27] Gmelch, *The Irish Tinkers*, 148
[28] All-Ireland Traveller Health Study Team, *Our Geels: All-Ireland Traveller Health Study* (School of Public Health, Physiotherapy and Population Science, University College Dublin, 2010), 95
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., 46

spaces they considered unhealthy or very unhealthy.[31] Although the picture for female Travellers was more positive (a slight reduction in the life expectancy gap between Traveller and non-Traveller women), the overall health picture was "bleak", with Traveller mortality being much higher than that of the general population and the Travelling community as a whole having "a higher burden of ill-health than does the general population."[32] The *Traveller Health Study* gave a clear message to the Irish government: "The fact that an identifiable disadvantaged group in our society is living with the mortality experience of previous generations 50-70 years ago cannot be ignored."[33]

The picture for Scottish Travellers is broadly similar to the situation facing Irish Travellers, although there is no equivalent health study to *Our Geels*. However, a recent parliamentary report, "Gypsy/Travellers and Care" (2012) does provide some useful details and anecdotal evidence about the health of Gypsies and Travellers in Scotland, and draws from several small-scale local and UK-based studies.[34] In Scotland, there is no legal requirement for local authorities to provide caravan sites for Gypsy/Travellers, forcing many families to live on unlicensed sites or move into houses. Where they do appear, sites tend to be in "undesirable and unsafe locations, such as beside landfill sites and rubbish dumps, canals, or railway lines and under electricity pylons", therefore increasing the potential for health problems and injuries.[35] The report also stated that GP surgeries are able to refuse people as patients without

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[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 80
[33] Ibid., 95
[34] Scottish Parliament, 3rd Report, 2012 (session 4): "Gypsy Travellers and Care", Scottish Parliament website. Accessed 3/05/2014
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/54885.aspx>
[35] Ibid., 1-2

giving a reason and "this often happens to Gypsy/Travellers."[36] Many Gypsy/Traveller families reportedly travelled 200-300 miles to see a GP or dentist whom they trusted, and who would see them, and this obviously impacts on medical treatment. The report states that Scottish Gypsy/Travellers' life expectancy is unknown, although one GP, conducting independent research, and acting as a witness for an earlier committee, "put it as low as 55 for men", therefore making it comparable to, if not worse than, that of Irish Traveller men.[37] In a University of Sheffield study quoted in the report, researchers found that "overall Gypsy/Travellers reported poorer health status than both white British residents and other minority ethnic groups. In comparison, Gypsy/Travellers were much more likely to have a long-term illness, health problem or disability."[38] The Sheffield study also found that Gypsy/Travellers have amongst the highest levels of mental distress in the UK, resulting in part from forced evictions, constant harassment and the physical health problems that many individuals face.

Where Travellers remain on roadside camps or temporary sites, they may endure appalling conditions with no running water, toilets or refuse collection. Colette Spears, of the Irish Traveller Movement, recently stated that 952 families currently live in overcrowded, inadequate or other "crisis" accommodation in Ireland, "add the 330 by the sides of roads and that's 1,282 inappropriately housed Traveller families," she says.[39] Apart from problems related to precarious accommodation, Travellers who choose to move into houses can find that the experience negatively affects their mental and physical wellbeing. Michael McDonagh explains that "when you as a Traveller go

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[36] Ibid., 2
[37] Ibid.
[38] Glenys Parry et al., *The Health Status of Gypsies & Travellers in England* (Sheffield: The University of Sheffield, 2004)
[39] Kitty Holland, "Traveller accommodation crisis", *The Irish Times*, November 23, 2013, 2

into a house it is one of the most frightening experiences you can have" because you are expected to remain living in that house indefinitely, and this can create feelings of confinement and panic.[40] He continues that "some Travellers have become depressed when they move into houses and never adjust to living in one place permanently. Many Travellers have left houses for this reason."[41] Lizzie Johnstone, a Scottish Gypsy/Traveller living in a bricks-and-mortar home, wrote a poem especially for her evidence session with the Scottish parliamentary committee. Her untitled poem describes how cultural isolation and discrimination by both the local authorities and settled communities had affected her. Johnstone had moved into standard housing, having found that it was the only way to access adequate health care for her severely epileptic son. The report states that Johnstone "had lived in 11 houses in five different council areas over an 18 year period, moving because the houses were unsuitable for her son's condition, or because of persecution from their neighbours".[42] One verse of her poem shows the extent of her distress at the situation:

> I have felt frustrated
>
> I have felt isolated
>
> I have felt suffocated
>
> No one taking
>
> Any notice or understanding
>
> How I am feeling
>
> Like an animal trapped in a cage

[40] McDonagh, *Travellers: Citizens of Ireland*, 37
[41] Ibid.
[42] Scottish Parliament, "Gypsy Travellers and Care", 17

Screaming to get out. [43]

The poem ends with Johnstone's wish that no other Traveller should have to go through the same situation. The Scottish parliamentary report also highlighted the fact that a university health study identified that the Gypsy/Travellers who suffered the poorest health were often "those living in houses."[44] In 2010, Margaret Greenfields and David Martin Smith interviewed thirty-seven Travellers and Gypsies about how housing in standard accommodation affected them. In "Housed Gypsy Travellers, Social Segregation and the Reconstruction of Communities", the researchers found that many interviewees exhibited "a significant degree of dissatisfaction" about living in a house, with some displaying "intense (and perhaps mythological) nostalgia. Typical comments included 'I miss the land and the freedom' and 'we don't belong in houses we are born to roam the roads'".[45]

The impact of Travellers moving into housing goes far beyond the creation of wistful feelings about the importance of "the road" or the simple exchange of a trailer for bricks and mortar. Many important cultural aspects of Traveller life are limited when living in a house. Many of these issues are explored in the song "Campfire in the Dark" written by Paddy Houlihan, a settled singer and songwriter who spent many years working with Irish Travellers in Ennis, County Clare. (A full version of the song is included in Appendix 5.1.) In a 2010 interview for the *Clare Traveller Focus* magazine, Houlihan said that he was inspired to write the song after listening to the

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[43] Ibid., 11-12
[44] Ibid., 2
[45] Margaret Greenfields and David Martin Smith, "Housed Gypsy Travellers, Social Segregation and the Reconstruction of Communities", *Housing Studies* 25. 3 (2010), 400

young Travellers he was working with talking about their lives. Aware that he was a settled man writing about Traveller culture, Houlihan felt it was important to him that "my song was heard as a true song by Travellers".[46] The song was recorded by Irish Traveller musicians The Fureys on their 1992 album *Winds of Change*, and it has since been recorded by other Travellers, including Johnny Keenan for the Meath Travellers Workshop's *Traveller Heritage* website.[47] The song is unavoidably nostalgic, comparing cosy family scenes of the past to problematic aspects of Traveller life in the present day. Yet, it does highlight legitimate issues that arise when Traveller culture has to adapt to the restrictions of living in a house. The keeping of horses is usually prohibited on housing estates and many halting sites, for example, and in private rented accommodation dogs are often not allowed as a condition of the lease.

"Campfire in the Dark" reflects these missing elements in the description of absent sounds, with the narrative voice reminiscing about hearing "a collie bark" and "horses moving in the dark". The line, "My Mother likes the house, the hot water and the rooms", acknowledges the comforts of living in housing, but they are offset by the loss of nomadism, a central aspect of Traveller culture, and this is represented as a "hunger deep inside her for a life that's nearly dead". The strongest parts of the song are reserved for images of a community that is now absent: no more socialising around campfires, to "pass the time away with talk about the day" while children play nearby. The father in the song instead finds it difficult to structure his day as there is "nothing much to do", so he fills the time, as many older Travellers do themselves, by telling his

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[46] Clare County Council, *Clare Traveller Focus*, Christmas Edition 2010, 13

[47] The Fureys, *Winds of Change* (Shanacie, 1992); Johnny Keenan, "Campfire in the Dark", *Traveller Heritage website*. Accessed March 15, 2013. <http://travellerheritage.ie/music.asp>

son about the past and "stories of the Travelling life he knew". The sense of social isolation is increased in the song by the local settled community rejecting the Travellers living among them. The Traveller in the song is refused entry to a disco, a situation familiar to many Travellers, and he says that despite trying to connect with settled people, they still regard him and his people as no more than "tinkers" and "still strangers after all these years".

Feelings of isolation created by the loss of nomadism may be a contributing factor to the development of serious mental health issues by Traveller men in particular. Some of the most shocking statistics in the *Traveller Health Study* involved mental health and suicide, as the report found that "a Traveller man is 6.6 times more likely to die by suicide than a man in the general population", which may partly account for the low figures on life expectancy, along with increased alcohol and substance abuse.[48] When Travellers move into standard housing, they often find themselves at a considerable distance from their extended family, breaking up their support system and leaving them vulnerable to feelings of isolation and defencelessness. The *Traveller Health Study* reported that "a loss of social support structures combined with distrust, a sense of anomie, discrimination and low self-esteem is a potent combination likely to have implications for mental health and physical wellbeing."[49] The Scottish Parliamentary Committee Report similarly stated that "living conditions on sites and the fight to improve site quality, alongside social stigma and prejudice experienced as a result of site living, are seen as a main cause of both physical and mental health

[48] All-Ireland Traveller Health Study Team, *Our Geels*, 94
[49] Ibid., 132

issues."[50] When Travellers speak of being healthier in the past, they are not simply yearning for a romanticised, lost nomadic lifestyle. They are often longing for a time when they felt less subject to the mental and physical symptoms of stress caused by forces of assimilation and the pressure to move into houses.

Although there has been little academic investigation on the subject of Scottish Travellers and their attitudes towards housing, several Scottish Traveller authors appear to regard moving into houses as less of a culture shock than Irish Travellers. Timothy Neat decided to title his book on Scottish Travellers *The Summer Walkers*, from a name the "crofters of the north west Highlands give to the Travelling People" who passed through their villages, which reflected their seasonal work patterns.[51] The families of Sheila Stewart, Willie MacPhee and Betsy Whyte all spent periods of time living in houses, often during the winter before travelling again for work in the summer. Houses, for some Scottish Travellers, are regarded as temporary accommodation, rather than symbolising the "end of the road" as described by Irish Traveller Michael McDonagh.[52] However, with Scottish Travellers comprising such a small population, it would be careless to state these generalisations as facts. It also does not mean that Scottish Travellers regard living in houses as necessarily equal to living outside in a tent or caravan. "The Yellow on the Broom", a song written by Duncan Williamson for Betsy Whyte on the completion of her memoir, is based on Whyte's parents Sandy and Maggie. The song features a Traveller man promising to take his wife back on the road when she complains that she longs to travel, but only after the winter snows have

[50] Scottish Parliament, "Gypsy Travellers and Care", 11
[51] Neat, *The Summer Walkers*, vii
[52] McDonagh, *Travellers: Citizens of Ireland*, 37

thawed.[53] Donald Braid, in *Scottish Traveller Tales*, describes the song as highlighting "the recurring conflict between the constraints associated with being housed in the winter months and the freedom that comes in the summer", when Travellers are able to take to the roads again to find work and enjoy socialising with other Travellers.[54] Williamson describes the woman in the song as feeling upset about being confined to the house, saying it was "breaking the woman's heart".[55]

Travellers doubtlessly exaggerate when, like Johnny Collins, they speak of people having "no sickness or ailments" in the past, or claim that they had "no worries" as Kathleen McDonagh has suggested. However, by making these nostalgic statements, Travellers show that they are rightly concerned with the poor present physical and mental health of themselves and others in the wider Traveller community. They highlight the inequality that has seen the health of settled people improve dramatically in the past few generations, while Travellers are stuck with the same life expectancy of 50-70 years ago. Travellers may also be communicating a loss of independence for their own healthcare, as traditional cures were once important aspects of Traveller culture. In their memoirs and recorded interviews, many Travellers speak of herbal or folk remedies that were known to treat illnesses, and of visiting religious shrines and priests to seek a 'cure'. Sheila Stewart, in *A Traveller's Life*, explains how traditional remedies were once used by Scottish Travellers, and lists cures used by her family for sore throats, dandruff and nettle stings.[56] However, Stewart says that cures of this type have recently fallen out of favour. "Long ago we didn't run to the doctor every time we

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[53] Donald Braid, *Scottish Traveller Tales*, 20
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 22
[56] Stewart, *A Traveller's Life*, 113

felt ill. We tried to cure ourselves in those days, but now even Travellers don't bother with the old cures anymore."[57]

Mary McCann, an Irish Traveller, lists cures for many health concerns, including warts and headache, and describes a priest curing a young girl with "slipped hips" by washing her in a stream which ran from a holy well near Dundalk.[58] McCann also places emphasis on how traditional cures were shared between Travellers and settled people when visiting their houses, "women'd ask the Travellin' women for different cures."[59] Travellers, therefore, were once a source of information about cures at a time where many people had little access to healthcare, providing another opportunity for interaction between Travellers and settled people, which has now been lost. Of course, the cures recommended by Travellers to settled people were not always followed up. Irish Traveller Tom McDonnell explains that although he would have no problem telling "a country person", or settled individual, about a cure, he "never heard of any of them going" to seek the cure, probably because they did not believe in them.[60] More of Tom McDonnell's cures, together with information about cures from other Travellers, appear on the Navan Travellers' Workshop webpage.[61]

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[57] Ibid., 160
[58] Pavee Point, *Traveller Ways, Traveller Words*, 142
[59] Ibid., 143
[60] Meath Travellers Workshops, "Cures", *Traveller Heritage Website*. Accessed March 19 2013. <http://www.travellerheritage.ie/cures.asp>
[61] Ibid.

Nostalgia for Inter-Community Relationships

Many Travellers appear to idealise the past, particularly regarding their relationships with settled people. An unnamed Irish Traveller, describing her memories of her father Bernie McDonogh, working on farms in the 1960s, gives an account of how farmers and Travellers enjoyed a collaborative relationship:

> There was no discrimination at that time. The farmers were never abusive. They'd go and give you hay for your pony. They'd give you milk and spuds, turnips and things. The door would be left wide open. There was no stealing or robbing, and every year that farmer would want you back again.[62]

Of course, there is a chance that McDonogh's family enjoyed a particularly friendly association with the farmer whose land they worked on, but the generalised statements of there being "no discrimination" can quickly be countered by incidents in the memoirs of other Travellers, such as Paddy McDonagh, who was born in 1914. Besides describing some positive experiences of camping on farmers' land in his childhood, McDonagh also says that "more o'them wouldn't have you at all" and farmers would send for the police if they suspected the slightest wrongdoing on the part of the Travellers.[63] David Smith and Margaret Greenfields also identified "a strong sense of nostalgia for field work and a sense of sadness at its passing" in many interviews they undertook with Gypsies and Irish Travellers in the UK for their 2013 study, "Housed

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[62] Clondalkin Travellers Development Group, *Travellers: A Way of Life* (Dublin: Community Arts, 1993), 13

[63] Pavee Point, *Traveller Ways, Traveller Words*, 18

Gypsies and Travellers in the UK: Work, Exclusion and Adaptation".[64] George Gmelch, in his study *The Irish Tinkers: The Urbanization of an Itinerant People,* considered the reasons why Travellers began to move "in large numbers" from the Irish countryside to urban centres in the late 1950s. He reflected that "within a fifteen year period the major trades and services Travellers performed had become virtually obsolete… there were obviously not enough economic opportunities to maintain the rural Traveller population at its former level."[65] Industrialisation had a devastating effect on the rural Traveller economy: goods could be mass produced, reducing the need for handmade items and their servicing or repair; farms acquired machinery which reduced the numbers needed for manual labour and the use of work-horses and donkeys; and people became more mobile, using buses and cars to shop in towns rather than buying from a visiting Traveller.

Inadvertently, the decline in agricultural employment in Ireland and the UK also reduced social contact between Travellers and settled labourers. Thomas Acton, describing the changes in work patterns for Gypsies and Travellers in the UK, recognised "a steady shift in occupations away from small scale trading in new goods and repair services with large numbers of the general public to trade in salvage and construction work, in which there are fewer individual transactions, each worth more."[66] This has resulted in a greater social distance and a deterioration of social relations between Travellers and non-Travellers. A female Gypsy, interviewed for Smith and Greenfield's study, supports the view that changes in labour have negatively

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[64] David Smith and Margaret Greenfields, "Housed Gypsies and Travellers in the UK: Work, Exclusion and Adaptation" *Race and Class* 53.3 (2012), 58
[65] Gmelch, *The Irish Tinkers*, 45-46
[66] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 44

impacted the way settled people view Travellers, as she recalls that "everyone used to be on farms, whether they be Traveller or gorjer, we were all on farms and we all worked together. But nowadays that's not there, that's gone. And because that's gone, I think that is the reason attitudes towards us have got worse." [67] The relationship between settled people and Travellers may not be so clear cut, however. Sheila Douglas, in her biography of the Scottish Traveller Willie MacPhee, recalls how one Scottish farmer and local councillor "made a distinction between what he called 'oor traivellers', whose work he valued, whose names he knew and for whose welfare he was concerned, and those who came from elsewhere."[68] Although Douglas seems to interpret this in a positive way, including it in a paragraph that mentions other positive relationships between Travellers and non-Travellers, it could also suggest that some settled people regard only a very narrow selection of Travellers in a positive light.

A previous chapter in this thesis, "The World of Work", explored the song "The Berry Fields o Blair" by the Stewart family, which celebrates the communal work of Scottish Travellers picking berries. The poem "It's a Hard Life Being a Traveller" appears twice in Sheila Stewart's autobiography, and is credited first to her mother and then to herself, and provides a less rose-tinted contrast to the earlier song.[69] In this visit to the berry fields, the family set up camp as they had done many times before, but were forced off by "some heed yins" (in Scottish dialect "high up persons", possibly government representatives or landowners) from Perth. With the persuasion of Hamish Henderson, a Scottish song collector who had been recording the family, their case was

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[67] Smith and Greenfields, "Housed Gypsies and Travellers in the UK", *Race and Class*, 58
[68] Douglas, *Last of the Tinsmiths*, 2
[69] Stewart, *A Traveller's Life*, 69, 225

heard at Perth court and thrown out, leaving the Stewarts and other Travellers free to work again on the fields. Stewart dates the incident at "about 1954", when the social patterns of rural communities were beginning to change. Towards the end of the poem, one verse associates progress with negativity, suggesting that Stewart was aware that her family's legal victory to carry on with their traditional work was only a temporary one:

> I have tried in every possible way
> To live with times that's new
> But we're always hit below the belt
> No matter what we do.[70]

Perhaps the most widely-known song about Travellers was composed not by a Traveller, but by the folk singer Ewan MacColl. "The Thirty-Foot Trailer" was written for a Traveller-themed episode of MacColl's Radio Ballads series on BBC Radio, *The Travelling People* in 1964. (A full version of the song is included in Appendix 5.2.) The song is a nostalgic eulogy for many forms of Gypsy and Traveller culture, wishing "goodbye" to many idyllic aspects of nomadic life MacColl believed to be in decline, such as Cant and Romany language. According to the song, "besoms of heather and broom" and other artisan crafts are a thing of the past due to the emergence of mass produced materials, since "the folks of today they would far sooner pay/For a thing

[70] Ibid., 226

that's been made out of plastic."[71] Working with horses is mourned in the lines "you don't need a strap when you're breaking up scrap", where MacColl suggests that dealing in horses has been replaced by the job of scrap collecting.[72] The tradition of Travellers working on farmer's fields "where we've sweated and toiled/at pulling and shoving and lifting", has become superseded by machines, and Travellers have been edged off the land.[73] In his song, MacColl makes a clear opposition between modernity and Traveller culture, and does so most forcefully in the following verse:

> The old ways are passing and soon will be gone,
> For progress is aye a big factor.
> It's sent to afflict us and when they evict us,
> They'll tow us away with a tractor.[74]

Using a motorised tractor to tow away the Travellers' trailers symbolises the loss of traditional aspects of Traveller culture to modern, mechanised industry. In "The Thirty-Foot Trailer", progress is only "sent to afflict" the way of life for Travellers and never to enrich it. Travellers are warned that "you've got to move fast to keep up with the times", but in MacColl's song they seem powerless and unable to catch up with the hustle of the modern world. Instead, Travellers are condemned to exist as relics, fragments of a lost rural past.

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[71] MacColl, Parker and Seeger, "The Thirty-Foot Trailer", *The Travelling People*, transcribed by the author.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

Jimmy Williamson, Scottish Traveller and son of Duncan Williamson, also composed a song about the changes in Traveller culture over the passage of time, collected by Donald Braid in *Scottish Traveller Tales*.[75] (A full version of the song is included in Appendix 5.3.) The song contains aspects of nostalgia for the past, and compares them with the anxieties and experiences of Travellers today. However, in Jimmy Williamson's songs, there is an underlying theme of independence and self-awareness about how life has improved for Travellers, and what aspects of their culture are the most enduring. The chorus and first verse of "Slow Going Easy" discuss topics that also appear in "The Thirty-Foot Trailer", such as life appearing to speed up, a decline in horse ownership and the growing use of motorised vehicles. However, there are some subtle differences:

> Gone are the days of slow going easy.
> Life is much faster now, we understand.
> But we don't want to catch up, live the life of the gorgio,
> Just be free-living, free moving Travelling men.[76]

This chorus illustrates Jimmy Williamson's acknowledgement of the changes in contemporary society, shown by the phrase "we understand". He is aware that Travellers are expected to match a pace of life that is "much faster now" than in the past, but he also claims a sense of autonomy for Travellers, as they reject the non-Traveller or "gorgio" lifestyle. Instead, Jimmy Williamson wants Travellers to be able

[75] Braid, *Scottish Traveller Tales*, 288-292
[76] Ibid., 288

to have independence ("be free-living") and the opportunity to live a nomadic life. In this, he is speaking for himself and also Traveller "men" more generally:

> Our ways have changed since horse was the master,
> And we didn't worship that god we call oil.
> I know it's improved things, but it goes a lot faster.
> We don't want to earn wages for good honest toil.[77]

In this verse, Jimmy Williamson shows awareness about the changes industrialization have brought to Traveller and settled culture alike. Perhaps the most striking difference between this verse and many of MacColl's is that Jimmy Williamson recognises that modern industry has "improved things", or provided positive developments, while MacColl depicts progress as entirely destructive for Travellers. The idea that life "goes a lot faster" is expressed negatively by Jimmy Williamson, as it symbolises the large scale of modern work and employment. Small, self-employed businesses are less competitive in the world market place, and it is harder to earn an independent wage. The final line reinforces Travellers' rejection of the settled world of work and wage labour, in favour of independence and self-employment. In the mind of Jimmy Williamson, and many other Travellers, hard work or "good honest toil" is best rewarded by earning your own money, rather than have another man dictate the terms of your wages. In the remaining verses of "Slow Going Easy", Jimmy Williamson celebrates the importance of stories being told around the campfire in order to maintain Traveller culture and history, and also presents his anxiety that oral culture could

[77] Ibid.

become lost. He worries that there are less opportunities for gatherings around campfires, and therefore, to pass stories down through the generations. This could lead to the loss of Traveller tradition and history: "When no one remembers, tradition is dead."[78] The song "Slow Going Easy", instead of mourning every aspect of traditional Traveller culture that has become obsolete, expresses the key concerns of contemporary Scottish Traveller identity: these include independence from non-Traveller culture and the importance of oral storytelling, song and history. Jimmy Williamson, describing his ideas to Donald Braid, said that "the nostalgia Travellers often express for the past does not imply that they would give up everything and return to that life with its grim realities."[79]

Realism as an Antidote to Nostalgia

In his study *Postcolonial Nostalgias*, Dennis Walder talks of nostalgia being a "particularly seductive phenomenon for people who have literally been displaced."[80] Perhaps this is due to displaced people searching for an identity that has not only been changed by the passage of time, but also by the movement from one place to another. Travellers fall under this description, since their culture has changed over time and they have also been affected by the pressure of assimilation and the reduction of nomadism. Long-term immigrants and refugees may feel a longing for the country of their birth, yet upon return may find that their memories do not match the land that they remember, or the memories of those who have remained behind. In his essay "Imaginary

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[78] Ibid., 290
[79] Ibid.
[80] Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias*, 9

Homelands" (1982), Salman Rushdie discusses his memories of a return trip to Bombay, where he spent his childhood. Realising that he had changed so much in the years since departing India, Rushdie felt that he somehow needed to reclaim his history. Since this is an impossible feat, Rushdie engages in the process of fashioning his own version of his childhood. In the absence of memories of an actual past, "we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities and villages, invisible ones, imaginary homelands."[81] Since Rushdie is a displaced individual, attempting to describe a past from the position of living in a different country, he is forced to "deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost."[82] When reflecting on the past, it is perhaps too tempting to fill the gaps in the "mirror" with idealised nostalgic projections. However, Walder rejects the idea that nostalgia should only involve the cosy recollection of a lost and treasured past. Instead, nostalgia has the capacity to make individuals question their identity and their present place in the world:

> Exploring nostalgia can and should open up a negotiation between the present and the past, leading to a fuller understanding of the past and how it has shaped the present, for good and bad, and how it has shaped the self in connection with others, a task that may bring pain as well as pleasure.[83]

A "fuller understanding of the past" for Travellers (and settled people alike) must therefore include the exploration of some components of their lives which do not fit the

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[81] Salman Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands", *Imaginary Homelands* (1982; reprint, London: Granta Books, 1991), 9
[82] Ibid.
[83] Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias*, 9

usual romantic ideas of 'the road', and represent more about Traveller culture than the traditional symbols of campfires, horses and tinsmiths. For Walder, exploring links between the past and present requires "a level of self-reflexivity about or within nostalgia". [84] That is, self-awareness about the construction of nostalgic representations and how they are used, is central to a proper engagement with the past and the interpretation of issues surrounding the present. One Traveller song in particular attempts to do this.

As a compliment to "Slow Going Easy", Jimmy Williamson wrote a second song with a group of Scottish Travellers on an occasion when they were reflecting on their nostalgic views of the past. "The Good Old Days" is a nostalgic song which also displays Traveller self-awareness, using sarcasm to poke fun at some of the more romantic ideas about Traveller culture in the past. Instead of the usual Traveller images of open roads and freedom, the lyrics describe the hardships and poverty Travellers endured, followed by the refrain "Oh I remember, (yes, I remember), those were the good old days." [85] (The full version of the song is included in Appendix 5.4.) The first verse sets out a framework for this kind of re-imagining:

> We were rich if we'd a horse and cairt to help us wi' our load,
> to pile our bits and pieces on as we walked the weary road.
> We never had many claes to fit and nae shoes upon our feet.
> And it wasnae very often that we had enough to eat.[86]

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[84] Ibid.
[85] Braid, *Scottish Traveller Tales*, 291-292
[86] Ibid., 291

Here, the ownership of horses is represented accurately: only the more solvent Traveller families would be able to own horses as they require time, skill and money to keep in good condition. Horses were also valuable assets and were used by Travellers as investments in the days before bank accounts were more widely available. Horses could be sold for money, or swapped for less desirable animals, together with an agreed amount of money to offset the deal. Aside from horses, more common modes of transporting goods were prams, bicycles and, inevitably, carriage by hand. The road is also described in this verse as "weary", a very different depiction to the usual romantic symbol of Traveller freedom. Yet, these conditions were also the reality of the "Good Old Days".

> Mother'd go fae door to door and earn whate'er she could.
> But it wasna very easy for to feed a hungry brood.
> Faither'd always dae his share but looking back it seems
> the life that we are living now could only be lived in dreams.[87]

Jimmy Williamson again refers to hunger in this verse, emphasising the poverty suffered by his family in the past. Despite his mother taking up the traditional Traveller role of hawking, or visiting the houses of settled people to sell small items or ask for food, there was never enough to keep the family from going hungry. The practise of hawking relied on good relationships between Travellers and the households they visited, and is an aspect of Traveller culture that is often referred to nostalgically. But not all visits would result in success. Plenty of people turned Travellers away and some

[87] Ibid., 292

even threatened violence. Scottish Traveller Betty Townsley, in a conversation with Donald Braid, recalled how she once was chased down the street from a house by a woman brandishing a knife.[88] She had been trying to sell peat door-to-door around the neighbourhood at the time.

More significant in this verse, however, is Jimmy Williamson's awareness of the positive developments of modern life for Travellers, since Travellers today enjoy a standard of life that could have previously only existed "in dreams". It is true that some aspects of Traveller culture have become obsolete over the passage of time and a selection of these, like the skills of tin-smithing, are very precious and symbolic to Travellers and non-Travellers alike. Yet, the development of the welfare state in the UK and Ireland should mean that Travellers never again have to face starvation or physical exhaustion from the sheer effort of survival. Although there are still shortages in culturally acceptable accommodation, Travellers are now able to access housing more readily than in the past, due to the emergence of council housing and crisis shelters. Even if a listener might suspect that some of the details in the song have been emphasised for dramatic purposes, it is still noteworthy that Travellers such as Jimmy Williamson show their recognition of the improvements in standards of living for Travellers in modern times. His awareness of the ways that nostalgia can alter people's perceptions of the past also shows that, although Travellers may be guilty of glossing over the hardships their parents and grandparents suffered, they are never entirely forgotten.

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[88] Ibid., 205

This is as true for Irish Travellers as it is for Scottish Travellers. In *Travellers... Their life and times* (1996), a project for the Navan Travellers Workshop, Traveller interviewers were used to record the memories and aspects of culture of nineteen Irish Travellers. When asked whether it was better to be a Traveller today or in the past, the respondents expressed opinions which were "split almost evenly down the middle."[89] Some believed that there were more "opportunities for the younger generation" today in education and employment. Meanwhile, others blamed the introduction of welfare payments for a worsening lifestyle, "making people less dependent upon themselves, less willing to work, and more inclined to spend their days sitting around or drinking in the pubs."[90]

Nostalgic songs which celebrate the past are popular amongst many Travellers and may serve to lift the spirit at times of stress, bereavement or cultural upheaval. However, some Travellers and non-Travellers have written songs which attempt to represent the less romantic aspects of Traveller life and focus on issues such as the struggle against discrimination. Many songs written by Pecker Dunne, for example, describe the rejection of Travellers by settled people, as in "Wexford Town", and the persecution of Travellers through the process of evictions, in "Tinker's Lullaby". Scottish Traveller Duncan Williamson also commented on the loss of culturally appropriate accommodation in Scotland in his song "The Hawker's Lament".[91] Williamson's song is important because it highlights the fact that a number of Scottish Travellers fought and died for Britain in the Second World War, a detail often omitted

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[89] Ibid.
[90] Navan Travellers Heritage Group, "*Travellers... Their life and times*", *Traveller Heritage website*. Accessed March 19, 2013. <http://travellerheritage.ie/nthg.asp>
[91] Braid, *Scottish Traveller Tales*, 217

from standard historical accounts. (See Chapter Five for a further discussion of this song.) If, as Dennis Walder suggests, nostalgia can be damaging when it becomes too "absorbed in itself" and "ignorant of history", then the representation of Travellers in historical events like the Second World War has the potential to provide alternative representations of Travellers which question the usual nostalgic images.[92]

Site evictions are a particularly well-represented topic in Traveller songs, possibly because they represent a physical demonstration of settled society's power over Travellers. Unless their families have lived in houses for an extended period of time, most Travellers will have experiences of eviction, which can be terrifying in both the event and in its anticipation. Two of MacColl's songs created for *The Travelling People* present the harsh realities of eviction. "The Terror Time" contemplates where a Scottish Traveller family will live, now that they can no longer stay on farmer's land for work and the Council will seek to move them on. "The Moving On Song" describes the various places Traveller children might be born, and the conditions in which they attempt to live before being evicted. The song's repetitive chorus of, "move along, get along, move along, get along, Go, move, shift" reflects the frequency of the seemingly never-ending cycle of evictions that some Travellers have to endure.

In his printed collection *Songs of Struggle and Protest* (2008), socialist song collector John McDonnell includes a song which describes an unusual Traveller eviction. "The Travellers' Campaign", composed by Irish Traveller Joe Donohue, according to McDonnell, "details their resistance to eviction from a makeshift school at

[92] Walder, *Postcolonial Nostalgias*, 9

Ballyfermot in the winter of 1963".[93] The school was created for political purposes, as a show of defiance to Dublin Corporation, which intended to clear a Traveller campsite at Ballyfermot, acting on the Commission on Itinerancy's policy of placing Travellers in housing. Aoife Bhreatnach, in *Becoming Conspicuous* (2006), describes the school being opened by "the grand old man of Irish politics" Peadar O'Donnell, who stated that the building was "a pathetic gesture by the poor to help the children of the poor."[94] The opening of the school raised public interest in the issue of Traveller accommodation, and was a form of passive resistance, a technique encouraged by British peace activist Grattan Puxon, who had been living on site in a round top wagon. All Travellers were eventually evicted from the campsite in early January 1964, when "a cavalcade of caravans and carts left peacefully and settled on another site a few miles away."[95] Bhreatnach reports that Joe Donohue told the press, "We will not resist but we will camp on one site after another until the Government do something about the Itinerant Commission."[96]

The song "The Travellers' Campaign" recounts these incidents slightly differently, appearing to give a condensed account of the events leading up to the eviction and the various people involved, rather than simply being about the school, as John McDonnell suggests. (A full version of the song is included in Appendix 5.5.) The first verse appears to anticipate a pitched battle, as it ends with the line, "the guards and

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[93] John McDonnell, *Songs of Struggle and Protest* (1979; reprint, Dublin: Irish Labour History Society, 2008), 106

[94] Aoife Bhreatnach, *Becoming Conspicuous: Irish Travellers, Society and the State 1922-70* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2006), 124

[95] Ibid., 125

[96] Ibid.

corporation scabs came to burn our wagons down."[97] However, the eviction was peaceful. Instead, the song outlines an earlier standoff between the Dublin Corporation bailiffs and the collection of Travellers, activists and students who came to the opening of the school. It is interesting to note the solidarity between Travellers and settled people in the song, since the students are described stating "We will come and camp with you, and with you we will fall."[98] It also suggests that the involvement of student activists, thought to be a new phenomenon in the recent Dale Farm eviction in the UK, has a longer history than previously acknowledged. In its fourth verse, the song moves onto an earlier Traveller protest, involving a march undertaken from Ballyfermot to Dublin City Hall. The march was led by John MacDonald, Kevin Keenan and Grattan Puxon, according to Bhreatnach.[99] However, the verse which details the preparations for the march and lists the people involved does not mention Puxon at all:

> Now our slogans they were printed, oh! How plainly they could be seen
> As we marched through dear old Dublin beneath our flag of green.
> T'bould Connors and the Cashes and the Galvins were there too
> Not forgetting Ginger O'Rourke and their leader Joe Donohue.[100]

This could be due to Joe Donohue's misgivings about Puxon, a non-Traveller, attempting to speak for Travellers and steering the political direction of the Traveller Rights movement. In the introduction to his photobook, *Irish Travellers: Tinkers No*

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[97] McDonnell, *Songs of Struggle and Protest*, 113
[98] Ibid.
[99] Bhreatnach, *Becoming Conspicuous*, 124
[100] McDonnell, *Songs of Struggle and Protest*, 113

More, Alen MacWeeny recalls seeing a sign on his first visit to the Cherry Orchard Site in Ballyfermot, which read: "Grattan Puxon has no authority to speak on behalf of the people of this camp – signed Joe Donoghue [sic]".[101] It could also be because the involvement of Puxon attracted the attentions of Sinn Féin, who participated in a Traveller protest march to Landsdowne Park. On this march, according to Bhreatnach, an "IRA 'flying column' on bicycles rode ahead of the wagons to demolish concrete bollards blocking a gate."[102] Puxon was later accused of concealing explosives for the IRA, which undermined his credibility as a peaceful activist and, by association, risked damaging the credibility of the Traveller Rights movement. However, although "The Travellers' Campaign" omits Puxon's involvement, it does mention "the old IRA" in its second verse and names Peader O'Donnell amongst others. Perhaps Donohue reflected that it was politically more beneficial to acknowledge the support of Sinn Féin and the IRA than to emphasise Puxon's involvement. Highlighting the Travellers' connection to Ireland could also have reminded people that Irish Travellers are an indigenous minority, and have as much right to a place to live as settled Irish people.

Evictions sometimes involve violence, and since entire families with elderly people and small children are often forcibly removed from a site, tragedies have sometimes occurred. Song collector Jim Carroll recalls hearing Irish Traveller "Pop's" Johnny Connors being interviewed for a radio news programme in 1963, where he spoke of an eviction in which he had been involved at Brownhills, Birmingham, and sang a song he had written about the incident.[103] On the strength of the radio broadcast, Carroll sought out and interviewed Johnny Connors, and recorded several songs from

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[101] Alen MacWeeney, *Irish Travellers: Tinkers No More*, 2
[102] Bhreatnach, *Becoming Conspicuous*, 124
[103] Jim Carroll, "Irish Travellers Around London", *Folk Music Journal*, 31

him that were subsequently included in the CD collection *From Puck to Appleby: Songs of Irish Travellers in England*. Connors was a Traveller activist and eventually became Vice Chairman of the Gypsy Council in the late 1960s. Jim Carroll explains the significance of the song "Battle of Brownhills" in a message on the *Mudcat Café* online folk music discussion group:

> According to the singer, 'Pop's' Johnny Connors, who made the song, the events described took place in November 1967 at Brownhills, Birmingham, when, during an eviction by police, council officials and private security employees, a trailer was being towed from the site, the owners having been arrested previously and held in custody. A solid fuel heater overturned and three young sisters asleep in the trailer were burned to death in the ensuing fire. The song was first sung at a ceremony to commemorate the Gypsy war dead in December 1967.[104]

The song, which Carroll describes as being "made" by Connors, is very close to "The Traveller's Campaign" in terms of lyrics, but the ballad is set to a different melody. (The full version to the song is included in Appendix 5.6.) References to place names and people involved in the eviction are different, and any Irish cultural references are replaced by English phrases. For example, in Connor's version, the council bailiffs are compared to "Hitler's mob" instead of the "Black and Tans". However, this type of alteration is common in folk music and should not be viewed as deception on the part

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[104] Jim Carroll, "Subject: Lyr Add: Gum Shellac and Battle of Brownhills", *Mudcat Café website*, September 27, 2008. <http://mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=114755>

of Connors. The adaption of an established political song or parody is known as a "squib" in folk singing circles.[105] It is also unclear which song was composed first, or if both versions of the song were inspired by or borrowed elements from Liam Weldon's "The Blue Tar Road". Weldon lived in Ballyfermot and associated with Travellers all his life, according to Tom Munnelly.[106] The "Blue Tar Road" was written after Weldon became deeply affected by the discrimination suffered by Travellers in the 1960s, and mentions the places where evictions occurred in Dublin and the temporary Traveller School at Ballyfermot. The song itself is now very popular and "is sung by many people (including Travellers) who are totally unaware of the identity of the author."[107] All three songs share similar final lines, imploring "please God, in His own good time" to come to the aid of Travellers.

In two verses of "The Battle of Brownhills", Connors sensitively depicts the tragic death of three Traveller children, who were also his cousins:

> In Walsall town one evening, the balance of the day
> When squad-car loads of those licensed thugs came to tow our trailers away,
> Three little sisters asleep in bed, asleep in bed they lay,
> May Our Lord have mercy on their innocent souls; they died in that 'viction that day.
>
> At the graveyard in Bilston we laid them in their grave,
> Our hearts were filled with sorrow, our brave heads bowed with shame,

[105] Jon N. G. Bartlett, "Political Squibs and Parodies", *Come All Ye* VI, 1977, 188
[106] MacWeeny, *Tinkers No More*, 107
[107] Ibid.

It is the wicked and cruel law of Walsall Town that we have to blame. [108]

Connors does not rage at the settled population for the children's deaths, or the bailiffs who moved their caravan and indirectly caused the fire. It is "the wicked and cruel law of Walsall Town" that Connors ultimately blames for this tragic incident.[109] At the time of the eviction, the local council made it impossible for Travellers to camp on a site for more than a few days before being moved on, but families were later allowed back to camp on the same ground. Jim Carroll explained that this enterprise enabled the council "to refute claims that there was a permanent travelling population in the area, thereby absolving them from meeting their legal obligation of providing basic facilities, toilets, running water or rubbish collection. The Travellers participated in this farce in order to be left in peace."[110] The "shame" referred to in the song may be related to the depths the Traveller families felt they had to stoop to simply to have a place to live for a short period.

The final line of the song is used more powerfully than its equivalent in "The Travellers' Campaign", as the words are spoken rather than sung. Connors calls for "human minded people" to find a place for Travellers to stay and educate their children.[111] "Battle of Brownhills", therefore, not only documents the humanitarian struggle of Traveller families to improve their living conditions, it is also a plea for further support from the settled community to help prevent future tragedies during forced evictions. Since the elements of the song can be traced to another song (or

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[108] Carroll, "Subject: Lyr Add: Gum Shellac", *Mudcat Café website*
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.

songs), it also draws attention to the fact that Travellers were still having to "battle", to "campaign", and fight to preserve their way of life as they do today. It also gives the sense of Traveller activism being part of a larger collective struggle, since other political issues have inspired people to write songs which document a range of campaigns.

In conclusion, some Traveller writers and singers have attempted to realistically document their lives by including incidents of discrimination, the grim reality of evictions, and the decline of nomadism and its effects on individuals. Charles Smith, for example, a Romany Gypsy poet, chose to write about subjects such as the Porrajmos ("the devouring") where thousands of Gypsies were murdered alongside Jews and other victims in the Nazi genocide. In his poetry anthology *Not All Wagons and Lanes* (1995), Smith writes about his visit to Auschwitz, how English schools do not teach Romany history or language, and how the official accounts of history often deny the persecution and enslavement of Gypsies. In the introduction to his poetry collection, Smith attempts to dispel some of the nostalgic fictions people may hold about Gypsies. "The Gypsy community of this country does not spend all its time hunting rabbits or going to Appleby Fair; we don't sit around camp fires all day telling old folk tales whilst we make pegs or paper flowers. No the truth is, just like everybody else, we are involved with today's modern world."[112] Smith urges Gypsies and Travellers not to become distracted or dispirited by their nostalgia for the past. He fears that, "if we spend too much time living in the past we shall miss what is really

[112] Charles Smith, *Not All Wagons and Lanes* (Essex: Essex County Council, 1995), 6

happening today and if we do that, we just entrench ourselves into the stereotypes that many in the non-Gypsy society want us to be." [113]

However, romantic or nostalgic representations of Travellers are still popular among Travellers and non-Travellers alike. For Svetlana Boym, nostalgia appears to be an inescapable phenomenon, something that exists "at the very core of the modern condition."[114] Other commentators, such as Gerald Clarke, give nostalgia a longer history, arguing that "all Western culture for the last two thousand years seems to have involved nostalgia" from the time of the Romans looking back at the Greeks.[115] If it cannot be escaped, nostalgia must therefore be interpreted as fulfilling a need within society. By yearning for the 'good old days', individuals are expressing criticism for the way that they are living today, even if the past they are comparing it to is a fiction. Alongside Walder, Boym urges us to view nostalgia as a method of critiquing society in a creative way:

> Creative nostalgia reveals the fantasies of the age, and it is in those fantasies and potentialities that the future is born. One is nostalgic not for the past the way it was, but for the past the way it could have been. It is the past perfect that one strives to realize in the future.[116]

Travellers who describe the past in romantic or idealistic terms are therefore expressing discontent with their present lives. They are also envisioning an idealised version of

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[113] Ibid.
[114] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xvi-xvii
[115] Gerald Clarke, "The Meaning of Nostalgia", *Time Magazine*, 3 May 1971, 77
[116] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 351

their future, which would involve better physical and mental health, adequate accommodation with no more evictions, and positive relationships between Travellers and settled people. For some Travellers, it would also ideally involve a nomadic lifestyle, or the potential to have one with fewer restrictions. Travellers realise that this ideal future is not very likely to emerge unless there are massive changes to attitudes and legislation within mainstream society. It is therefore perhaps inevitable that nostalgia also provides a form of escapism in the face of many social obstacles. However, Traveller activism is growing and should, it is to be hoped, make a difference for Travellers in the future through measures such as ethnic recognition. The nostalgic representation of Travellers held by settled people raises further issues. Perhaps the most problematic issue is the way romantic ideas about Gypsies and Travellers have been incorporated in the research and debate over their origins. In this case, nostalgia becomes more than a romantic representation; it becomes an instrument of discrimination. The next chapter will explore this in further detail.

Chapter Seven

Nostalgia and Traveller Origins

'True' Gypsies, Didikai and Tinkers

> There are relatively few real Romany Gypsies left, who seem to mind their own business and don't cause trouble to other people, and then there are a lot more people who masquerade as travellers or gypsies, who trade on the sentiment of people, but who seem to think because they label themselves as travellers that therefore they've got a license to commit crimes and act in an unlawful way that other people don't have.[1]

Jack Straw, speaking as the British Government Home Secretary in 1999, would not be the first politician to make disparaging remarks about Gypsies and Travellers. Examples of Irish and Scottish politicians also making negative remarks were discussed earlier in this thesis, in the chapter "Travellers in the Media". The argument Straw makes is also far from new, and has been described by Gypsy activist and academic Thomas Acton as indicative of a "scapegoat mechanism".[2] By venerating a small section of the Gypsy and Traveller population as 'real Romany' or 'true' Gypsies, negative and stereotypical behaviour can be blamed on the rest of the Travelling community. Simultaneously, those who do not fit the model of a 'true' Gypsy are perceived to be somehow 'false', and are assumed to imitate genuine nomads in order

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[1] Jack Straw, quoted in Stuart Millar, "Straw's Travellers gaffe 'misconstrued'", *The Guardian online*, August 20, 1999. <www.guardian.co.uk/world/1999/aug/20/race.politicalnews>

[2] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 89

to commit crime or evade arrest. Since fulfilling the definition of a non-existent 'true' Gypsy is impossible, the "scapegoat mechanism" provides a way of questioning the cultural authenticity of all Gypsies and Travellers. During research for his influential study, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change* (1974), Acton identified what he thought to be the earliest "unmistakable example" of this mechanism at work. It appears in a report from a Southampton Committee, formed "*with a view to the consideration and improvement of the Condition of the Gipseys*" which is dated 1830 by the Bodleian Library at Oxford University:

> *A description of vagabonds and itinerant tinkers, repairers of umbrellas, and vagrants of the worst character*, have of late found admission among the Gipseys. Many of these are persons who have lost their character in their parish, and are glad to escape the vigilant eye of the constable. The standard of morals among the Gipseys is of course much lowered by such intermixtures. They have consequently of late years been initiated and enlisted in the commission of the present extensive crime of horse-stealing, and of many other offences, in which, until lately, a Gipsey was rarely to be found implicated.[3]

This passage implies that a 'true' Gypsy has a higher standard of morals and a more noble character than other people of the road, who are labelled "itinerant tinkers" and "umbrella menders" (although the repairing of umbrellas was a service as likely to be performed by Gypsies as Irish or Scottish Travellers). Most importantly, the passage suggests that Gypsies can be corrupted by the influences of non-Gypsies, who are

[3] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change* , 88 (author's emphasis)

assumed to have taken to the road for nefarious reasons, rather than to pursue the romantic wanderings of the 'true' Gypsy.

Acton's "scapegoat mechanism" is based on the idea of a mythical, pure and noble 'true' Gypsy, a standard against which all Travellers are compared. 'True' Gypsies are perceived to lose cultural authenticity through intermarriage and association with settled people and other Travellers, making them an inferior class of Gypsy or 'didikai'. Travellers who are not 'true' Gypsies are blamed for all of the problems often associated with a nomadic lifestyle, such as poverty, squalor, rubbish and crime. The scapegoat mechanism is a stance used by some councils and politicians, as it justifies the decision not to provide adequate accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers, without appearing to be entirely discriminatory. A. M. Fraser, then assistant editor of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* (*JGLS*), voiced his concern about this use of the scapegoat mechanism at a conference of public health inspectors in 1968. Most of the contributors to the conference had delivered papers which attempted to classify the different types of Travellers in their particular district. Fraser felt that this obsession with classification, and concern with helping only the 'authentic' type of nomad, fostered a kind of "inverted racialism":

> A local authority may pay lip service to the virtues of the 'true Romany' and console itself with the thought that it has nothing against *him*, as it closes down yet another stopping place. After all, these curious people it is evicting can't be 'true Romanies'. The trouble is that one would be hard-pressed to find any Traveller who could qualify under the ultra-romantic conception of 'true

> Romany' that is probably implied in this thinking. And in this matter of camping sites, it is the Travelling community as a whole that suffers when one of them is closed.[4]

Over forty years later, this blending of the 'true' Gypsy myth and scapegoat mechanism is still expressed by settled people, in order to validate feelings of anti-nomadism. It appears in media articles and in statements by politicians. It has also been used by some Gypsies and Travellers to shift negative attributes onto other Travellers, as identified by researchers such as Thomas Acton and David Mayall.[5]

This chapter will trace the construction of the 'true' Gypsy myth and the ways in which it has been used to discredit the authenticity of Traveller culture and ethnicity. A selection of Traveller songs and memoirs will also be examined, to discuss whether they contrast with settled peoples' perceptions about Traveller origins, or show how aspects of origin theories and the 'true' Gypsy myth have been employed by Travellers. As Fraser identified, Gypsies, and Irish and Scottish Travellers have all been affected by the pervasive 'true' Gypsy fantasy, due to its influence on settled people's perceptions of Travellers. Scholars of the Gypsy Lore Society (GLS) published a quarterly journal in four series, beginning in July 1888. The *JGLS* published Gypsy research undertaken by its members and collected writing on Gypsies printed elsewhere. In an attempt to reconcile the difference between the romantic 'true' Gypsy and the negative stereotypes associated with actual nomads, a hierarchy of nomadism

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[4] A. M. Fraser, *Public Health Inspector*, March 1968, quoted in Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 84-85 (original emphasis)

[5] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 216; David Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers in nineteenth-century society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 79

emerged among GLS scholars. Exact classifications and hierarchical arrangements varied between each GLS contributor, but broadly adhered to the following order: 'True' Gypsies usually appeared at the top, followed by didikai and less 'pure' gradations of Gypsies. Scottish Travellers were often located somewhat further down the hierarchy, while Irish Travellers frequently occupied the lowest position. A proportion of settled people still only view a very narrow category of Travellers as being culturally legitimate, bringing into question the authenticity of any Traveller who fails to meet the preferred criteria. The Victorian writers of the GLS were perhaps guilty of establishing the idea of the 'true' Gypsy, but modern folklorists have also helped to perpetuate some aspects of it, as argued by Scottish Traveller researcher Willie Reid.[6] Settled researchers' fascination with the origin theories of Irish and Scottish Travellers is an example of this, with some academics seeking ancient ancestral links to the Picts and Celts, while others, like Sean McGrath, representing Irish Travellers as not being "authentic tinkers", but settled people who took to the road during times of social upheaval.[7]

It is also the case that the GLS was formed to pursue the study of a culture in decline, as an attempt to salvage Gypsy folklore before its distinctiveness was lost through industrialisation and association with other Travellers. In such a situation, David Mayall has argued, the researchers were "studying something in recognition that this identity was itself of the past."[8] Because of this, the 'true' Gypsy can also be considered a nostalgic figure. In a similar way, some Irish and Scottish Traveller

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[6] Willie Reid, "Scottish Gypsies/Travellers and the Folklorists", *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity*, 34
[7] Sean McGrath, "Miscellaneous information on Tinkers, particularly in County Clare", Irish Folklore Commission 1439 (1955), 24
[8] Mayall, *Gypsy-travellers in nineteenth-century society*, 75

researchers have indulged in what Jane Helleiner terms "salvage scholarship", focussing on the most ancient Traveller songs that they could find, or recording the oldest storytellers with less emphasis on contemporary forms of Traveller culture.[9] This has only served to strengthen the idea that the 'true' Gypsy belongs to the past. Kathy Kiddle, who has worked with Travellers and non-Travellers in education for many years, comments that "even now, when many non-Travellers are more accurately informed, there remains a certain regret that the Gypsy Traveller cannot somehow be preserved at an imagined ideal moment sometime after the turn of the century".[10] A more militant expression of this is the idea that Travellers have no legitimate place in modern Ireland or the UK: they are either outdated cultural remnants, or inauthentic nomads who fail to live up to 'true' Gypsy ideals. Traveller songs about origins are rare, which might suggest that it is a topic that Travellers themselves are not particularly interested in, even if many Travellers possess extensive knowledge of their ancestry and connections to other Traveller families. However, a number of Traveller writers have chosen to discuss or to refer to possible ethnic origins in their memoirs. Some of the origin theories described by Travellers mirror those of settled researchers, while others appropriate influential figures of the past as Travellers.

Origins of the 'true' Gypsy

In his essay "The Origin and Function of the Gypsy Image in Children's Literature" (1987), Gypsy academic and activist Ian Hancock recalls a conversation that arose

[9] Jane Helleiner, *Racism and the Politics of Culture*, 48
[10] Kiddle, *Traveller Children*, 88

between himself and a student at the end of his Romani Studies course. The student apparently felt disappointed, because "she had learned a lot about Romanies, she said, but they had now become real people for her. She preferred the imaginary Gypsies she carried with her before taking the class, and they'd been taken away from her."[11] The figure of the Gypsy in literature is an important and frequently occurring trope, which for centuries has borne little resemblance to the experiences and culture of real-life Gypsies. In her 2006 study *Gypsies and the British Imagination 1807-1930*, Deborah Epstein Nord draws attention to the "ubiquity of the idea of the Gypsy in British literature and culture."[12] As an example of this, she references GLS member John Sampson's *The Wind on the Heath: A Gypsy Anthology.* Published in 1930, the anthology lists over three hundred excerpts of novels, plays, poems and other genres of literature which feature Gypsies.[13] This "ubiquity" has continued, as an updated (2000) edition of John Fraser Black's *A Gypsy Bibliography* includes 4577 titles relating to Gypsies in the English literary tradition. According to Nord, the Gypsy was associated with "a rhetoric of primitive desires, lawlessness, mystery, cunning, sexual excess, godlessness and savagery-with freedom from the repressions, both constraining and culture building, of Western civilisation."[14] From the Middle Ages to the present day, Gypsies have been used by writers as outcast or exotic figures on which to project many of the negative or undesirable attributes of society. In *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said describes European culture as "gaining in strength and identity by setting

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[11] Ian Hancock, "The Origin and Function of the Gypsy Image in Children's Literature", *The Lion and the Unicorn: A Critical Journal of Children's Literature*, 11.1 (1987), 47-59. *Romani Archives and Document Centre website*, accessed 30th June 2014. <http://www.radoc.net/radoc.php?doc=art_c_language_children_s_literature&lang=en&articles=true>

[12] Deborah Epstein Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination 1807-1930*, (New York and Chichester: Colombia University Press, 2006), 1

[13] John Sampson, ed., *The Wind on the Heath: A Gypsy Anthology* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1930)

[14] Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 3

itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self".[15] Nord points out that Gypsies, as the "domestic or internal other", were deployed in a similar way to test the boundaries of British society. Gypsies were an especially potent symbol because they did not reside in some mysterious and far-flung country, but were instead an established figure in the British cultural landscape.[16] Existing on the periphery of society with a separate, seemingly basic and superstitious culture, Gypsies were also regarded as symbolising a more primitive and innocent age. They were portrayed as visiting fortune-tellers in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), and as rustic noble savages in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928). Nord explains that some writers, such as John Clare and Matthew Arnold, thought that Gypsy culture might contain "clues to essential humanity that might otherwise be lost", or else "could conjure an older, preindustrial England, a golden age before enclosure, urban encroachments, the railway, and other defilements of nature."[17] With the increasing pace of industrialisation, Gypsy culture and the rural society it symbolised, was believed to be under threat of imminent disappearance. Therefore, the GLS was established in 1888 in order to "preserve information" about the culture and lifestyle of Gypsies which "might otherwise perish".[18] Articles from the first issue of the *JGLS* included "Early Annals of the Gypsies in England" by Henry Thomas Crofton, which traces the appearance of

[15] Said, *Orientalism*, 3
[16] Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 3
[17] Ibid., 9
[18] Francis Hindes Groome and David MacRitchie, "Preface", *JGLS* 1st series, 1.1 (1888), 2

Gypsies in English literature and law, and "A Roumanian-Gypsy Folk-Tale: The Bad Mother" by Francis Hindes Groome.[19]

Researchers such as Mayall make the case that although the Gypsy lorists were interested in the study of Gypsy language, history, ethnology and folklore, their main concern was to establish origins, and to identify the 'true' Gypsies, in order to "locate them a race apart", with defined, hereditary characteristics.[20]

> The Gypsy lorists held firmly to the racial view of the extent of 'gypsy-ness' being largely dependent on the amount of pure blood that flowed through the travellers'[sic] veins. It was only the pure-blood Gypsies, the 'real' or Romany Gypsies, who should be prevented from assimilating with the sedentary population, and it was their culture that needed to be preserved and recorded.[21]

'Real' or 'true' Gypsies were believed to be those of pure blood, and superior in character and culture to those of mixed Gypsy and gorgio ancestry known as 'Posh-rats' or 'didikai'. Also lower down in the hierarchy than 'true' Gypsies were Scottish Travellers, as they were thought to have an uncertain degree of Gypsy ancestry. Many of the very lowest groups on the scale were either believed to be Travellers with no Gypsy blood (such as Irish Travellers) or vagrants who had taken to living among Gypsies or Travellers. The latter were categorised, amongst other descriptions, as

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[19] Henry Thomas Crofton, "Early Annals of the Gypsies in England", *JGLS* 1st series, 1.1 (1888), 25-29; Francis Hindes Groome, "A Roumanian-Gypsy Folk-Tale: The Bad Mother", *JGLS* 1st series, 1.1 (1888), 5-24

[20] Ibid.,

[21] Ibid., 131

"Mumpers" or "hedge crawlers".[22] The common theory behind all the different systems of classification was that Gypsies carried inherently genetic cultural characteristics. The assumption of many GLS writers was that 'pure' Gypsies should live a noble, romantic, traditional life, and speak the Romani language. The GLS commitment to the idea of a single, homogenous Gypsy identity left no room for those who failed to live up to the 'true' Gypsy standard. To explain these differences, Gypsy sub-types were invented, which appear to represent little more than negative stereotypes.

Michael Hayes points out that this aspect of GLS research was "very much a product of its time", as ideologies about race were being used to discuss minorities throughout Europe.[23] Colonial ideas about race were also used in this period to explain the differences between people in European and non-European countries and to justify their colonisation. It is also arguable that GLS members were simply following on from influential Gypsy studies written before the formation of the society. Both George Borrow's *Romano Lavo-Lil* (1874), and Bath Charles Smart and Henry Thomas Crofton's *The Dialect of the English Gypsies* (1875), had already begun to make distinctions between different types of Gypsies and non-Gypsies, based on each writer's interactions with regional Gypsy groups.[24] However, not all Gypsy lorists agreed on how exactly to define a 'true' Gypsy or didikai, and some researchers, such as the linguist John Sampson, did not classify Gypsies into sub-types at all. Groome, although generally maintaining the idea of "full-bloods" and "half-bloods", also recognised that Gypsies married outsiders and that some Gypsy family genealogies

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[22] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 74-75
[23] Hayes, *Representations and Realities*, 15
[24] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 89

were composed of more mixed marriages than those purely between Gypsies.[25] The *JGLS* also records frequent examples of marriages between Gypsies and settled individuals. Acton portrays this early period in the development of research by the GLS as one of competitive scholarship, with each writer willing to establish 'their' Gypsies as the best or 'true' Gypsies. In later years, a more general consensus about the 'true' Gypsy versus the didikai became more firmly established. "The process of generalising from limited experience of 'my' Gypsies to propositions about all Gypsies tends to give way to one of imposing the distinctions learned from books onto experience."[26] GLS researchers began to measure their subjects against a body of work that promoted romantic ideas about 'true' Gypsies and found many of their subjects lacking. When this happened, the offending Gypsies were labelled 'didikai' and were considered to be hereditarily and culturally inferior, with inauthentic cultural characteristics that were not worthy of study.

Mayall rightly accuses members of the GLS of choosing not to pursue the realities or difficulties of Gypsy experience, and looking only for "the myth and mystery of Gypsies in the past."[27] He points out that, even as legislation was being discussed in Britain for the formal registration of all Gypsies or "van dwellers", contributors to the *JGLS* based their studies firmly in the past, continuing their search for "a dying language and genealogical lines."[28] The *JGLS* ceased publication in 1892, but was revived in 1907, chiefly due to the influence of John Sampson and his passion for Gypsy lore, and the journal published much of his body of work. At this point in its

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[25] Groome, *In Gypsy Tents*, 249, 252
[26] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 91
[27] Mayall, *Gypsy travellers in nineteenth-century society*, 5
[28] Ibid.

history, several waves of legislation and persecution in wider Europe and by local councils had greatly restricted the lives of Gypsies. Mayall believes that the GLS "had to acknowledge that the Gypsy did not live in a social and political vacuum, immersed in strange taboos and ancient rites".[29] Members of the GLS were finally engaging with the politics of Gypsy discrimination. Still, for Mayall, the content of the *JGLS* was overly dominated by "socio-anthropological and folk-lore" articles.[30] Although Mayall can be criticised for his conflation of folklore with anthropology, his main point is still valid. Looking through issues of the *JGLS* around this time, the attention on prejudice and legislation against Gypsies appears to have been short-lived. About half of the articles in one issue of the journal in 1908 are related to themes such as "The State versus the Gypsy" by Walter M Gallichan, which discusses the impact of law on Gypsies: however, over the following decade, similar content is outweighed by the number of articles which focus on language, costume and folktales.[31] Although these are important areas of study, they do not engage with Gypsy persecution.

It is important to understand that the GLS had not been formed as a means to assist all Gypsies to lead a nomadic existence, nor to fight the laws and authorities that persecuted them. The original members of the GLS were Victorian bohemians and intellectuals eager to learn about the Romani language and way of life. They were undertaking research into a previously unexplored ethnic group. However, a widening gap had opened up between actual living Gypsies and their romanticised portrayals in literature. The writings of Matthew Arnold and Borrow also established the idea of the

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[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Walter M Gallichan, "The State versus the Gypsy" *JGLS* 2nd series 1.4 (1908), 350-358

"Romany Rye", where a gentleman or "Scholar-Gipsy" would dedicate himself to wandering along with Gypsies, leaving his settled life temporarily behind in order to conserve ancient Gypsy lore. Borrow's publications *Lavengro* (1851) and *The Romany Rye* (1857) follow this narrative, as does the protagonist in Arnold's poem "The Scholar Gipsy" (1853). Romany Ryes were usually men of independent means who would spend months each year camping with Gypsy families, befriending them and recording their language and customs. Nord explains that, for lorists such as Charles Godfrey Leland and John Sampson, the study of Gypsies "was an obsession and an entire identity, both an external activity that involved the 'collection' of artefacts and an internal, apparently spiritual state."[32] Members of the GLS were photographed sitting in bender-tents and in front of round-top wagons they had purchased. The alienated, bohemian artist figure had begun to obscure the living Gypsy as a focus for study. Acton describes the "Romany Ryes" as being "prone to a kind of Gypsiological self-praise, each believing that he was the first to enter some cultural Mecca hitherto untrodden by the white man."[33] Many of the studies about Gypsies written by GLS members said more about the philosophical journey of the researchers than the Gypsies themselves. The dedication of the lorists to the promotion of the 'true' Gypsy, therefore, was also a search for real-life Gypsies who were able to live up to their romantic fantasies. Nord states that the GLS academics "were in the paradoxical position of bringing Gypsy culture to light and, at the same time, obscuring it through the force of their own projections."[34]

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[32] Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 128
[33] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 89
[34] Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 16

Although members of the GLS claimed to admire Gypsies, their ideology and obsession with identifying 'true' Gypsies actually supported the interests of campaigners and local authorities who wished to assimilate them. As Mayall explains:

> The antipathy of the lorists to half-bred Gypsies and other travellers was equal to the fervent diatribes made by others about this group of nomads, and they too called for an end to be made to this 'poor imitation' of the Gypsy way of life. These half-breeds, it was claimed, served only to give the 'real' Gypsies a bad name, and were guilty of all the charges laid at their feet. It was they who were the thieves, beggars, illiterates and degenerates, not the Romanies. Any attempt to regulate and restrict the wanderings and activities of this 'mumbly-group' was met with sympathy by the lorists. Their recourse to such a definition thus permitted, and even supported and justified, the persecution of the great majority of travellers.[35]

The question of Gypsy origins is a complicated matter. Origin theories alone cannot be used as evidence of cultural authenticity, or to separate 'true' Gypsies from other nomads. There is still no definitive agreement on where exactly Gypsies originally came from before being first recorded in Scotland around 1505, and different historians suggest various alternatives for the date they first appeared in England. While a number of possible references to Gypsies appear before this time, a lack of definitive historical records has left their origins open to debate, and this has exacerbated their representation as a 'mysterious' people. Gypsies have also at times presented

[35] Mayall, *Gypsy travellers in nineteenth-century society*, 131

themselves in a manner which would make them more agreeable to those who received them. Although there is possible linguistic evidence that Gypsies originated from India, Gypsies were first thought to be a community that was cast out of "Little Egypt", which is reflected in the term 'Gypsy' itself. Historian and Genealogist Donald Whyte, in his *Scottish Gypsies and Other Travellers: A Short History* (2001), states that some Gypsies upon arrival, such as Johnnie Faa or Faw in Scotland, pronounced themselves to be aristocrats, or "Lord and Earl of Little Egypt".[36] Whyte speculates that Gypsies might have created highborn titles for themselves "to gain the confidence of others who looked upon them as poor refugees."[37] It was more acceptable to be seen as an upper-class family on pilgrimage than simply a foreign pauper, and, initially at least, it afforded Faa some protection from the authorities. However, the long-term worth of taking up such titles is debatable, as although they may have allowed Gypsies an easier acceptance at first via the claim of exotic origins, they may also have invited charges of dishonesty.

Suspicions held about Gypsies are also reflected in legislation, as laws criminalising Gypsies began to appear shortly after their arrival in the UK. Mayall reflects in his study *Gypsy Identities 1500-2000: From Egipcyans and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany* (2004), that "the fullest, centrally generated, official references to Gypsies are to be found in the various statutes passed in order to curb, control and end their activities, way of life and presence."[38] Therefore, from their first appearance in official records, Gypsies have been associated with criminal activity. They could be

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[36] Whyte, *Scottish Gypsies and Other Travellers*, 10
[37] Ibid., 11
[38] David Mayall, *Gypsy Identities 1500-2000: From Egipcyans and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany* (London: Routledge, 2004), 54

deported, imprisoned, have their possessions confiscated and even put to death simply for being Gypsies.[39] However, by the late sixteenth century, Gypsies also became caught up in a legislative blanket response to England's growing mobile population. For various reasons, a diverse and fluctuating number of people led an itinerant existence at this time. Unemployed people, ex-soldiers, and scholars migrated around the country, alongside those who sold goods from town to town. There were also individuals who used their mobility to pursue lives of misconduct, as highwaymen and thieves. Whatever their reasons for wandering, the number of people living a nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life was perceived as a threat to the social order. An Elizabethan statute of 1597-98 outlawed all "rogues and vagabonds", defined as "all tynkers wandering abroade, and all such p'sons, not being fellons, wandering and p'tending themselves to be Egipcians or wandering in the habite, forme or attire of counterfayte Egipcians."[40] It is not entirely clear if the reference to "tynkers" actually described Travellers or wandering craftsmen, but the main message was clear: if you undertake the lifestyle of an "Egipcian", you are deemed criminal. The emphasis on "counterfayte" Gypsies also gives the impression that many were regarded as culturally inauthentic. "Rogues and vagabonds" could equally mean minstrels, flower-sellers, fortune tellers, prostitutes and all manner of thieves. The effect of such legislation associated Gypsies (and others criminalised for having an itinerant lifestyle) with a blanket range of anti-social behaviour and crime, creating the idea of a nefarious itinerant underworld. Mayall explains that the process of criminalisation "resulted in the attachment and spread of negative stereotypes to all those similarly labelled and

[39] Ibid, 62
[40] Ibid, 61- 62

grouped" and stigmatised them "from both an official and a popular perspective."[41] Once the criminalisation of nomadism was established, anyone undertaking such a lifestyle was assumed to be doing so for illicit reasons. Nomadism continued to be criminalised in the years leading up to the Victorian period. Consequently, law makers and authorities did not need it to justify their own regulations against Gypsies. If the Gypsies found in local authority areas did not live up to the standards of the 'true' Gypsy, they were classed as mere didikai and prosecuted for their dishonest and deviant lifestyle.

Some social campaigners did not recognise the 'true' Gypsy in the families they saw either, and sought to improve Gypsies' standards of living through legislation that favoured assimilation. People such as George Smith of Coalville viewed Gypsies as inherently inferior to the rest of society, and in need of improvement on the grounds of morality, sanitation and above all, education.[42] For Acton, activists such as Smith were responsible for perpetrating racialism in the guise of "sincere benevolence."[43] Smith campaigned repeatedly, and successfully, for legislation to stop child labour in brickyards and also to regulate those living on canal boats. He then turned his attention to Gypsies. Although whilst campaigning, Smith gave the impression that he was concerned with helping Gypsy children, he bore a dislike of Gypsies which had been established from a number of negative childhood encounters.[44] Although he sometimes made passing reference to the 'true' Gypsy in order to denigrate those he came across, Smith was more interested in attacking the representation of Gypsies as romantic

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[41] Ibid., 65
[42] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 109
[43] Ibid., 103
[44] Mayall, *Gypsy travellers in nineteenth-century society*, 134

figures. His 1880 publication *Gipsy Life,* contained alarmingly hostile generalisations about Gypsies, accusing them of being murderers who brutalised their children.[45] Smith's criticism of the idealistic depiction of Gypsies in literature makes his fierce contempt and disgust for actual Gypsies quite plain:

> To dress the satanic, demon-looking face of a Gipsy with the violet-powder of imagery only temporarily hides from view the repulsive aspect of his features. The dramatist has strutted the Gipsy across the stage in various characters in his endeavour to improve his condition. After the fine colours have been doffed, music finished, applause ceased, curtain dropped, and scene ended, he has been a black, swarthy, idle, thieving, lying, blackguard of a Gipsy still.[46]

Smith's incessant lobbying for legislation to regulate all aspects of Gypsies' way of life was ultimately unsuccessful in a judicial sense, as none of his bills were translated into law. In fact, many of the pre-existing laws against rogues and vagabonds covered much of the same ground, even if they were difficult to apply practically and effectively. However, Mayall has argued that Smith's reflections on Gypsies kept negative stereotypes about them in the public eye.[47] His insistence on assimilation as an answer to the "Gypsy problem" was also an important benchmark for future legislation and

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[45] George Smith, *Gipsy Life: Being An Account of our Gipsies and their Children, with Suggestions for their Improvement* (London: Haughton & Co., 1880)
[46] Ibid., 167
[47] Mayall, *Gypsy travellers in nineteenth-century society*, 149

local authority policy towards Gypsies. Additionally, most of the main concerns addressed in Smith's bills were eventually incorporated into law.[48]

George Smith may have indirectly contributed to the formation of the GLS, as many of its founder members were outraged by his inflammatory claims about Gypsies. However, the GLS was still complicit in the promotion of negative stereotypes of Gypsies and in questioning their cultural authenticity. Their conception of the 'true' Gypsy has also created problems for Gypsy activists attempting to unravel the stereotypes surrounding their community whilst fighting for better living conditions. Michael Hayes describes how the belief of the GLS that the 'true' Gypsy was a dying breed became "a millstone around the necks of those Gypsies and Travellers agitating for their rights."[49] However, despite their many shortcomings, Mayall recognises the major contribution made by the Gypsy lorists to the study of Gypsies, as collectively they provided "the single most substantial body of printed material" on the subject.[50] He also describes the *JGLS* and its published monographs as "essential" sources of research for students of Gypsy culture.[51] It would be too simplistic to accuse all the scholars and members of the GLS of promoting the same stereotypes and romantic ideas about Gypsies. But many of the earlier contributors, in particular, maintained the fantasy of the 'true' Gypsy, producing material which was, at times, "as speculative and fanciful as those of any minor novelist writing fictional stories about the strange Gypsy race."[52] These individuals were not minor figures but respected personages, and gave lectures as recognised authorities on Gypsies and Gypsy culture. Some members of the

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[48] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 120
[49] Hayes, *Representations and Realities*, 27
[50] Mayall, *Gypsy Identities*, 178
[51] Ibid., 179
[52] Ibid.

GLS held positions of influence in Britain and some, like Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald, were engaged as government advisors to shape policies on Gypsies and Travellers. Their ideas about 'true' Gypsies appeared to only extend to families still working in traditional rural roles, and employed, as Acton has suggested, as "illiterate farmworkers who lack the initiative to try to improve their situation."[53] The changing modes of Gypsy culture, as reflected in working patterns and living arrangements were not recognised as responses to industrialisation. Instead, any Gypsy or Traveller who deviated from the static 'true' Gypsy trope was considered culturally illegitimate.

Gypsies, Identity and Terminology

Gypsies themselves are sometimes guilty of promoting ideas about racial purity by taking on the lorists' classifications and using the scapegoat mechanism against other nomadic groups. Acton describes a "pride of birth that might almost be called snobbery" among some English Gypsies, and a tendency for many individuals to "look down on speakers of different dialects other than their own."[54] It is important to remember that Gypsies and Travellers, as with any other ethnic group, are composed of individual families who may have very little in common with each other. Families may hold complex political relationships with other families, or have to compete against them for the same work. Such issues can actively encourage animosity, and the various hierarchical categories of Gypsy, as suggested by some GLS researchers, provides a convenient method for one individual or group to proclaim their superiority over

[53] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 208
[54] Ibid., 55

another. It is very likely that the GLS writers based their classifications on the competitiveness they observed between Gypsies. Acton blames the GLS writers for only being critical of Gypsy culture where it suited their own scholarly interests. "They have accepted at face value the claims of their Gypsy informants to be the only 'true' Gypsies, and have been flattered to be made the confidants of such aristocracy."[55] However, their academic authority transformed what were, perhaps, expressions of family pride into a system of racial determinism. It is also possible, as Judith Okely suggested in her study *The Traveller-Gypsies* (1983), that only those Gypsies who allowed the lorists into their camps, and were friendly towards them, were classed as 'true' Gypsies, while other groups were rejected and labelled didikai "or some other pejorative term".[56]

Some Gypsies appear to be well versed in the labels settled Gypsy lorists have attached to them. Acton suggests that the interaction between non-Traveller researchers and Gypsies produced a highly complex "chicken and egg" scenario, with Gypsies reinforcing the lorists's stereotypes by feeding their ideas back to them. Gypsies, after spending time with the settled academics who joined their ranks, would know exactly what sort of information researchers were seeking. In Dominic Reeve's account of Gypsy life, *Smoke in the Lanes* (1958), the author describes himself as being "assigned to the ignominious ranks of the *diddikais*".[57] By using this label, he shows awareness of the ideology of the GLS. He also defends his status by emphasising the fact that he still has some Gypsy blood, stating that "almost all the contemporary wagon-dwellers are

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[55] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 84
[56] Judith Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies*, 16
[57] Dominic Reeve, *Smoke in the Lanes* (1958; reprint, Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2008), 17 (original emphasis)

more than half-Romani, and many are pure-blooded." [58] Reeve describes how he has heard many of his peers refusing to be called Gypsies, and choose instead to emphasise their Englishness over their perceived exoticism. "We ain't gypsies-gypsies is furrin! We'm English, like yerself. We'm Romanies-roamers-travelling peoples sir."[59] This refusal of identity, although understandable in the context of persecution, arguably assists the perception of Gypsies as inferior didikai. By distancing themselves from the 'true' Gypsy stereotype, they inevitably fall into the lesser category. Reeve's writing, when reviewed by Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald for the *JGLS*, was deemed culturally inauthentic, and the people Reeve described were not considered 'true' Romanies because of their vulgar antics and language. Instead, Vesey-Fitzgerald suggested that it was an account of life with 'the Travellers' rather than Gypsies. [60] Reeve's Gypsies simply did not fit the romantic, noble 'gentlemen of the road' model their GLS members were used to reading about.

Jim Riley, an English Romany Gypsy interviewed by Jeremy Sandford for *Gypsies* (1973), makes a similar point about his identity, saying that although he acknowledges his Gypsy ancestry, he does not see himself as a Gypsy but as "Romany", because "by the law we're British and we're born and bred in England."[61] Mayall provides a practical purpose to this insistence of "Englishness" on the part of some Gypsies, as "the most virulent anti-Gypsy racism on the part of the English was reserved for foreign Gypsies", such as those from Greece, Serbia and Hungary.[62] Promoting yourself as not 'foreign' was a protective instinct for some Gypsies: in the

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[58] Ibid., 172
[59] Ibid.
[60] Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald, "Review of *Smoke in the Lanes*", *JGLS* 3rd series 37.3-4 (1958), 139
[61] Sandford, *Gypsies*, 62-63
[62] Mayall, *Gypsy travellers in nineteenth-century society*, 91

eyes of settled people, it was bad enough to be considered a Gypsy, but a foreign Gypsy was far worse. Riley appears to direct the scapegoat mechanism onto other Gypsies, as he defines a recent visitor to his camp as a "Mumpley Traveller", explaining the term as "not what you'd call true-blooded Traveller, he's half and half."[63] According to Riley, "Mumpley Travellers" are inferior because they lack skills and do not have the knowledge to enable them to "do a job of work".[64] "Hedgecrawlers" are another category mentioned by Riley, also known as the "tramp Gypsy". He explains that these Gypsies are looked down upon because they are too lazy to wash themselves and all they want from life is "to lay around a fire, to eat and drink and smoke."[65] It seems clear that Riley has fully absorbed the kind of Gypsy categorisations favoured by the GLS, as he boasts of knowing eight or nine different types of Gypsy. However, what he really seems to be describing are the stereotypes expected of those who are not considered 'true' Gypsies. Somewhat surprisingly in this context, he defines a didikai as "a true travelling bloke" who can "turn his hand to anything". Riley even defines himself in this way, by stating "I am a Didecoi."[66]

There appear to be as many ways of using the term "didikai" as there are of spelling the word itself. The term is said to originate from a difference in pronunciation of the phrase "Dik acai", meaning "look here", in Romani language. Smart and Crofton imply that full-blooded Gypsies would use a standard dialect, while those of mixed ancestry would instead mispronounce these words, as "did akai" or "dit akei".[67] Acton

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[63] Sandford, *Gypsies*, 63
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Bath Charles Smart and Henry Thomas Crofton, *The Dialect of the English Gypsies* (London: Asher, 1875), 51

appears sceptical of this idea, saying "we are supposed to believe that when pure-bred Gypsies heard the half-breeds exclaiming, in their simple half-bred accent, 'Didakai, Didakei', they called them the 'Didakais'".[68] The idea that a dialect can be passed on genealogically is highly contentious, yet one of the defining factors of being a full-blooded 'true' Gypsy for GLS researchers like Smart and Crofton was use of the "correct" language. More recent researchers, such as Judith Okely, have discounted linguistic usage as evidence of cultural legitimacy, as "the use of Romani vocabulary varies *within* each group".[69] Okely recognises that Romani words also appear in the dialects of Irish and Scottish Travellers.

Furthermore, not all linguistically-minded GLS members agreed on what the definitive version of Romani language actually was. For example, John Sampson in *The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales* (1926) thought that aspects of the Romani dialect usually favoured by didikai were more inflected and older than the dialect used by those considered to be 'true' Gypsies.[70] As an alternative explanation, the use of 'didikai' to mean a Gypsy of mixed ancestry may have emerged from rivalries between different Gypsy groups. According to Acton, "'half-bred' or 'Gaujo' are two of the first insults that would come to a Gypsy's mind, especially where the quarrels concern things like the observance of cultural taboos like mochadi avoidance." [71] Mochadi avoidance, or cleanliness rituals, prevent pollution by the special treatment of 'unclean' items. For example, Gypsies generally wash food-related items and clothing separately,

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[68] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 70
[69] Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies*, 18
[70] John Sampson, *The Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales: Being the Older Form of British Romani Preserved in the Speech of the Clan of Abram Wood* (1926; new ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 82
[71] Ibid.

to avoid food becoming contaminated by association with the body. Different families will have varying practises and strong opinions on what is considered to be 'clean' and 'unclean' behaviour, which gives Acton's theory some weight. A family with stricter cleanliness rituals might feel that they are of higher social stature than those whose behaviour more closely resembles the non-Traveller or "Gaujo". Therefore, any insult along these lines might question the heritage of those not observing the same rituals. This would also suggest that the GLS notion of 'true' Gypsies and didikai could have initially been inspired by comments from Gypsies themselves.

However the term came into use, both settled people and Gypsies appear to use the word 'didikai' in different ways: as an insult, as a synonym for 'Gypsy', or as a positive badge of identification. One meaning of the term didikai appears in the traditional song "I'm the Romany Rai". This song, well-known amongst many Gypsies and Travellers, is regarded as a sort of nursery rhyme and exists in numerous versions. *The Romano Drom Songbook* includes a version of the song entitled "The Gypsy Gentleman", which is the English translation of the phrase "Romany Rai". The song itself is composed in Anglo-Romany, combining English with phrases of Romani language or slang. (A full version is included in Appendix 6.1.)

I'm the Romani rai,

I'm a true didikai,

I build my castles beneath the blue sky.

I live in a tent and I don't pay no rent,

And that's why they call me the Romani rai.[72]

The first verse of the rhyme creates two contrasting versions of Gypsy identity. The pretentious, idealistic "Romani Rai" persona is juxtaposed with an impoverished "didikai". The accompanying note states that "didikai is a jocular, almost insulting word for a less respectable traveller [sic]", while the glossary at the back defines didikai as "a rough traveller".[73] This suggests that the word didikai is associated with a lower-class Gypsy identity. The term "Romani Rai", an alternative spelling of "Romany Rye", also requires definition. Mayall reasons that it is likely the Gypsy lorists invented the name for themselves "in order to bestow prestige and status on their activities."[74] Originally used by settled scholars, it is sometimes used by Gypsies to mock their peers, if they seem prone to delusions of grandeur or too much pride. For example, in Reeve's *Smoke in the Lanes*, a Gypsy called Orphie dresses in spectacular style for his visit to the local Fair. He is described as wearing "a very loud, ill-fitting plaid suit in which yellow predominated, a red *diklo* [neck-tie], a green hat and very large muddy boots laced with string."[75] The group of Gypsies he is staying with poke fun at him, exclaiming "Here comes a dear ole Romani-*rai*!" and draw attention to his appearance in order to embarrass him.[76] The song also appears to make fun of a man who is overly concerned with his identity. He has grand, unrealistic dreams but he still lives in a tent in poverty. The second verse has two similarly contrasting lines: "My home is a

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[72] Stanley, *The Romano Drom Songbook* , 7
[73] Ibid., 37, 39
[74] Mayall, *Gypsy Identities*, 166
[75] Reeve, *Smoke in the Lanes*, 100
[76] Ibid.

mansion beneath the blue sky/I was born in a ditch, that's why I'll never grow rich."[77] The chorus incorporates several Romani language words:

> Kakka chavvi, dik akai,
> Father's gone to sell a mush a kushti grai,
> And that's why they call him the Romani rai.[78]

The first line can be translated (using the book's glossary) as "be quiet child, see here".[79] It is interesting that the phrase "dik akai" is the version of Romani language thought by some GLS researchers to be used by the 'true' Gypsy and not the didikai. It is unclear if this was chosen consciously by the songwriter, perhaps to draw attention to how the term "didikai" came to be created, or if it is simply a common phrase. A "mush" is a man and "kushti grai" is a "good horse" in English. Therefore, the "father" in the chorus is making money in a traditional Gypsy way, through horse-dealing.

The song appears to give the message that too much pride in your identity might tempt other Gypsies to make fun of you. There is also the possibility that the rhyme is making fun of settled "Romany Rye" researchers themselves, by drawing attention to their rigid conceptions about Gypsies: you were either a respectable, romantic 'true' Gypsy or a "rough", lower class didikai. In this context, the chorus indicates several 'true' Gypsy stereotypical attributes, such as using the correct language and making money from traditional means. A variant version, recorded by Peter Kennedy in

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[77] Stanley, *The Romano Drom Songbook*, 7
[78] Ibid., 7
[79] Ibid., 37

Folksongs of Britain and Ireland, would endorse this interpretation of the song, since the first line reads "I'm no Romany Rye, I'm a real Didikai".[80] However, Kennedy also records other versions of the song which add more romantic elements: "O, give to me the open sky/And the song of the lark that is flying high", or "I would travel all round this country/With a heart that's ever willing."[81] (These versions of the "Romany Rai" song are included in Appendix 6.2 and 6.3 for comparison.) To further complicate things, it is very difficult to settle on definitive meanings behind Traditional songs, or to uncover their original creators. Some "Romany Rye" researchers are known to have created songs which represent their ideas about nomadism, and this material may have passed into Gypsy and Traveller singers' repertoires. Traditional songs are also open to many possible alterations and applications. The addition of the lines "And I will cry/Why you can buy/Three pots for a shilling", to "I'm a Romany Rye", for instance, makes the song double as a hawkers' cry. This is the third version of the song included in Appendix Six.

The idea of Gypsy sub-types has found its way into other songs which are well-known and performed by Travellers and Gypsies. For example, the first verse of "Appleby Fair" mentions two sub-types of Gypsy, 'didikai' and 'dealers'. (A full version of the song appears in Appendix Six of this thesis.)

'Tis in Appleby Top you will find a horse fair,
Which it brings all those Travellers yes, year after year.
You'll see all those dealers, both Diddys and liars,

[80] Kennedy, *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, 750
[81] Ibid., 751

Sat cooking their scran around smoky wood fires.[82]

"Diddys" is a shortened version of the term didikai. In this version of the song, recorded by Irish Traveller 'Rich' Johnny Connors, the contrast of "diddys" with "liars" appears to give the term didikai a positive association, suggesting that some Travellers are honest about their ancestry, whilst others are not. Passing yourself off as a relative of another Gypsy or Traveller might give you an economic edge or a better reputation as a dealer, although the strategy itself is risky, since the majority of Travellers would be well aware of their own relations and those of other families. However, reading the line a different way, all didikai could be classed as "liars" and therefore not 'true' Gypsies at all.

The term "dealer" is also considered to be another nomadic sub-type, that of a financially successful migrant, not necessarily a Gypsy. In a survey taken by Berkshire County Council in 1965, classes of people living a nomadic or marginal lifestyle ranged from "Romanies", who were identified as "the genuine gipsy by birth", down to homeless people.[83] In the same survey, "Diddicoy" or "persons of unsettled habit who tend to live by their wits, working seasonally", were distinguished from the "Dealer" class, who were typically "self-employed persons engaged in the business of dealing in second hand cars and scrap metal, firewood and such like."[84] These classifications, although based on the racial principles of the GLS, appear to have been centred on work habits rather than any specified ancestry. The people engaged in classifying and

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[82] Jim Carroll and Pat Mackenzie, *From Puck to Appleby: Songs of Irish Travellers in England* , inlay notes, 13; "Scran" is Romany slang for food.
[83] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 207
[84] Ibid., 207-208

recording families for the survey noted themselves that there was "little difference" between the "Diddicoy" and the "Dealer". Acton also notes that another class, "Mobile Contractors", may have incorporated Travellers or Gypsies, since they are described as undertaking typically Traveller-related work. They are said to be "a special group, mainly engaged on small scale construction of paths and drives."[85] In this context, the classification of different sub-types of Gypsies and Travellers seems to be essentially arbitrary. The song "Appleby Fair" appears to blur the lines between the culture of Gypsies and Irish Travellers. Although it contains certain Romany words like "scran" meaning 'food', and "grai" for 'horse', and therefore is thought to originate from Gypsy singers, many Irish Travellers also sing the song. In the notes accompanying *From Puck to Appleby*, Jim Carroll and Pat Mackenzie comment that the song "seems to be fairly popular among the Irish. We recorded it from three singers and we knew of several others who also sang it."[86]

Ewan MacColl's' song "The Gypsy is a Gentleman" appears in *The Travelling People*, an episode of his Radio Ballads series.[87] The song appears near the end of the programme, following a selection of sound-bites from several different people giving their opinions on Gypsies. Firstly, a male voice is heard saying, "We're sick to death of Gypsies living in our area".[88] Next, a female voice describes Gypsies as "vagrants" and "filthy dirty people". She continues to say, "I object to calling them Gypsies" because they are "nothing but lazy people." The final, male voice explains that, "I would say the

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[85] Ibid., 208
[86] Carroll and Mackenzie, *From Puck to Appleby*, inlay notes, 13
[87] MacColl, Parker and Seeger, "I mean, we're fed up of Gypsies living in our area..." *The Travelling People*
[88] Ibid.

Gypsy is a gentleman. These people are not." [89] The opinions of the last two speakers have obviously been influenced by the romantic notions of Gypsies promoted by writers such as the Gypsy lorists, as they seem to have a pre-established idea of what a Gypsy should be. The song "The Gypsy is a Gentleman" attacks this fantasy of the 'true' Gypsy by representing the character in a highly sarcastic manner. The chorus itself is a reference to the title of John Sampson's book *The Wind on the Heath: A Gypsy Anthology*. It suggests that the romantic 'true' Gypsies know their place and keep well away from settled or "decent" people. Simultaneously, it mocks the romantic trope of the 'true' rural Gypsy who only camps in the wild countryside. (A full version of the song is included in Appendix 6.5.)

> And the wind is on the heath,
> And the heath is far away,
> From towns and private property
> Where decent people stay.[90]

The initial verses of the song introduce the idea of the noble Gypsy man and list many positive attributes. For example, the Gypsy is "reticent and shy" but also "happy and content". He is "wise and proud and courteous", and "loyal, brave and true." Subsequent verses present more Gypsy stereotypes, describing physical appearance and lifestyle. The Gypsy's face is "weather-beaten" and he "wears a red cravat". He also lives in a "picturesque" caravan, which is "colourful and bright". The Gypsylorists

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[89] Ibid.
[90] MacColl, Parker and Seeger, "The Gypsy is a Gentleman", *The Travelling People*, transcribed by the author

believed that Gypsies were bearers of secret knowledge, and the Gypsy in the song reflects this, as he "knows the ways of nature" and is "full of ancient wisdom." Finally, the Gypsy takes part in stereotypically traditional pastimes, such as playing the violin and crafting objects from wood, described as "carving object d'art." This is in contrast to less romantic means of earning a living, such as scrap collecting, which would suggest that 'true' Gypsies do not change their culture to adapt to modern life. The third verse of "The Gypsy is a Gentleman" directly addresses the "Romany Rye" scholars and George Borrow's influence on GLS researchers:

> He wanders through the forest
> Adding to his gypsy lore,
> Or he's leafing through *Lavengro*
> And he's never, ever poor.[91]

This verse describes one of the "Romany Ryes" themselves, since reference is made to "wandering through the forest" and collecting "gypsy lore". *Lavengro* was George Borrow's second publication about Gypsies, and although the book was generally poorly received, it proved to be very influential for those interested in, or wishing to study, Gypsies.[92] Dora Yates, who gave herself the title of "Romany Rawnie", and made substantial contributions to the *JGLS*, states that Borrow's writing was the reason, "in five cases out of six", that her peers became interested in Gypsies.[93] Therefore, the

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[91] Ibid.
[92] Mayall, *Gypsy Identities*, 158
[93] Dora Esther Yates, *My Gypsy Days: Recollections of a Romani Rawnie* (London: Phoenix House, 1953), 11

person in the song who is "leafing through *Lavengro*" is likely to be a "Romany Rye", especially since he is "never, ever poor", having a source of private wealth. By depicting the "Romany Rye" in a similar way to the Gypsy in the song, the song also suggests that the settled researchers have created a fantasy figure to represent themselves.

The scapegoat mechanism used to blame Travellers instead of Gypsies for any negative behaviour associated with their lifestyle is addressed throughout the song. For example, Irish Travellers (or possibly Scottish Travellers) are blamed for the practise of letting horses into farmers' fields without permission or allowing them to wander into people's gardens:

> And if you find a pony
> Grazing in your garden plot,
> Don't blame the noble gypsy,
> But that awful tinker lot.[94]

A similar opposition is made between Gypsies and didikai. The Gypsy is "full of ancient wisdom" and wit, unlike "those thieving Diddies /Who come knocking on the door." Other nomadic subtypes appear in the final verse, as "tinkers and hedge-mumpers", but this is only to deny any connections they might have to the 'true' Gypsy: they are not "of his kin." The focus on the scapegoat mechanism is emphasised as the song ends, with a verse that celebrates the stereotype of the gentleman Gypsy

[94] MacColl, Parker and Seeger, "The Gypsy is a Gentleman", *The Travelling People*, transcribed by the author

who is definitely "not like that other lot!" MacColl's song, by reiterating romantic stereotypes about Gypsies, exposes the absurd contrast between 'true' Gypsies and actual, living people. The language used to praise the Gypsy is so glowing and idealistic that it could only represent a fantasy character. The practise of using the scapegoat mechanism to set Gypsies against other Travellers is also opened to ridicule by the song's exaggeratedly biased comparison of Gypsies to other nomadic sub-types.

Although the "Romany Rye" researcher is mocked in one of the verses, it seems that the main target of "The Gypsy is a Gentleman" is the stereotypes that have persisted long beyond the influence of the GLS. The opinions about Gypsies and Travellers which appear in *The Travelling People* still imply an adherence to the idea of the 'true' Gypsy, even though these comments were recorded during the 1960s. Government documents in the UK still referred to mythical "Real Romanies" during the 1950s and 1960s, when the first surveys of the Gypsy population were being attempted by local authorities.[95] As the next section of this chapter will explore, the idea of the 'true' Gypsy also influences settled people's perceptions of Scottish and Irish Travellers, and the approach adopted by researchers.

Irish Tinkers: the New Didikai?

> Where the 1954 Staffordshire report talked of 'didecais and moppers', the 1968 West Midlands report talks of 'tinkers'; the definition is almost the same. We have found another word to describe all the Gypsies who are not 'farmers' men'

[95] Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies*, 16

> (a term which one perceptive Gypsy told me is the equivalent of 'what you students call an "uncle Tom"') The word is to be 'tinkers'. The cycle is complete; the myth has been reborn; the bankrupt ideology has opened shop again under another name.[96]

In *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, Thomas Acton makes his case that the negative stereotypes associated with Irish Travellers in the UK are only a recent phenomenon, since they emerged from social friction between Irish Travellers, Gypsies, and local authorities in the late 1950s and 1960s. Due to the financial difficulties Irish Travellers faced in Ireland, owing to the country's changing economy, many families migrated to the UK at this time in search of better work opportunities. This initially caused friction between incoming Irish Travellers and local Gypsies and Travellers, as they introduced new competition to traditional sectors of work and sometimes indulged in undercutting, or other "unethical practises", in order to grasp an economic edge.[97] The fact that Irish Travellers initially congregated on large urban sites, such as Balsall Heath in Birmingham, gave them an obvious physical presence, and marked them apart from longer-established families who were dispersed across the country. Acton also states that some Irish Travellers who were "leaders of the agitations of the early 1960s", or individuals who had demonstrated their frustration against the "state and church schemes for the 'Itinerants' in Ireland", also relocated to the UK.[98] These politicised Irish Travellers were more likely to stand up against persecution by local authorities.

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[96] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 211
[97] Ibid., 207
[98] Ibid., 206-207

Therefore, it was easy for the settled population to view Irish Travellers as trouble-makers and different from "their" Travellers or 'true' Gypsies.

Acton states that by 1968, use of the term "didikai" had begun to decline. Local authorities, who had previously claimed that they did not need to provide accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers because there were only "didikais" living in their area, came to realise that their protests "no longer bore conviction".[99] The Caravan Sites Act of 1968, a culmination of action by the Gypsy Council, the Ministry of Housing and individuals in Local Government, increased the pressure on local authorities to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers. "Though no scientific or systematic account of the nature of ethnic diversity amongst Travellers had been given, the mechanics and effects of the commonest manifestation, of one particular racist account, the use of the 'diddicai' scapegoat-stereotype had been exposed."[100] However, a new scapegoat quickly emerged in its place: Irish Tinkers or Travellers. In the past, Scottish Gypsies and Travellers had also been labelled 'tinkers', for example in *Guy Mannering* by Walter Scott, or as 'Tinkler-Gypsies' by Andrew McCormick. However, by the late 1960s, 'tinker' had become a solely Irish label, and not a complimentary one. In *The Traveller-Gypsies* (1983), Judith Okely recognises that Irish Travellers often took the blame for any negative behaviour attributed to Gypsies or Travellers:

> In practise, the Irish label was conveniently attached to *any* Travellers coming up against the authorities. The tinker became synonymous with every unpopular

[99] Ibid., 204
[100] Ibid., 204

> or stigmatised aspect of any Gypsy groups: scrap work, travelling, urban proximity, law breaking, elusiveness and independent life style.[101]

Previously, any attention Irish Travellers had received was mostly from members of the GLS and was mainly fleeting in nature, due to an overriding interest in the language and culture of 'true' Gypsies. While David MacRitchie, co-editor of the *JGLS*, (1889) claimed that "the tinker caste" in Ireland were "Gypsy to some extent", the majority of GLS researchers did not concur.[102] The focus of much early material written on Irish Travellers centred on the Cant or Gammon language, which Charles Leland claimed to first identify as "Shelta" in 1876 and discussed in his book, *The Gypsies* (1882).[103] Researchers had identified the possible Indian origins of Gypsies through the study of Romani dialects, and felt that it was also conceivable to trace the origins of Irish Travellers from their Shelta vocabulary. In an 1890 article for the *JGLS*, linguist John Sampson concluded that Shelta was of "Celtic origin", after examining the language of an Ulster Traveller he had encountered in Liverpool.[104] He felt that his research was enough to suggest that Irish Travellers had origins which were independent from Gypsies.[105] Fellow linguist Kuno Meyer (1891) agreed with Sampson that Shelta had ancient Irish origins due to the presence of a number of archaic Irish words in its vocabulary. He proposed that Shelta derived from eleventh century poets and scholars, but was now only spoken among Travellers.[106] However, Meyer did not believe that

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[101] Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies*, 19 (original emphasis)
[102] David MacRitchie, "Irish Tinkers and their language", *JGLS* 1st series 1.6 (1889), 351
[103] Charles Godfrey Leland, *The Gypsies* (Boston and London: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1882)
[104] John Sampson, "Tinkers and their talk", *JGLS* 1st series 2.0 (1890), 208
[105] Ibid., 204
[106] Kuno Meyer, "On the Irish Origin and the Age of Shelta", *JGLS* 1st series 2.5 (1891), 258

Travellers had the skill to create their own language because they were illiterate, and he therefore did not date Irish Traveller origins to the same time period. Leland (1892) later added to the idea of Irish Travellers as mere carriers of an ancient language by characterising Shelta as an "artificial, secret or Ogham tongue" used by the bards, before being transferred to metal workers and eventually descending to Travellers.[107] However, not all GLS researchers believed that Shelta had such ancient roots. R. A. Stewart MacAlister's *The Secret Languages of Ireland* (1937) printed stories in Shelta with a side-by-side English glossary and collated Shelta vocabulary words into a dictionary.[108] Unlike Sampson and Meyer, MacAlister saw Shelta as being a more modern creation, since as late as the 1880s it appeared to be almost entirely based on the English language. Nevertheless, MacAlister believed that the originators of Shelta were not Travellers, but educated people who had taken to the road, such as the monks fleeing the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII.[109]

Some strands of early research on the language of Irish Travellers appears to have achieved three things. Firstly, a division was made between Gypsy and Irish Traveller origins, clearly dispelling any links between Irish Travellers and 'true' Gypsies. There are, in fact, several Romani language words and phrases contained in Cant or Gammon, and these must have been acknowledged by researchers, but, as Okely recognises, they were explained away as English influences.[110] Secondly, Irish Travellers were characterised as mere carriers of an ancient language. They were

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[107] Charles Godfrey Leland, "What we have done: A few parting words from our President", *JGLS* 1st series 11.4 (1892), 195
[108] R. A. Stewart MacAlister, *The Secret Languages of Ireland, with Special Reference to the Origin and Nature of the Shelta Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937)
[109] Ibid., 128-129
[110] Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies*, 18

deemed to have been incapable of knowing the various literary techniques required to engineer it by themselves. In addition, Irish Travellers' use of an ancient language was thought to hold no bearing on the antiquity of their origins. Okely rightly points out that if a similar logic had been applied to Gypsies and Romani language, it would have contradicted the work of researchers who argued for ancient Indian origins.[111] Irish Travellers were regarded as simply the latest in a succession of groups, of decreasing status, to inherit the language. Thirdly, the emphasis on the Irish origins of Irish Travellers provided, alongside various social pressures, more reasons for settled British people to position them as the new nomadic scapegoat. They were not exotic enough to be 'true' Gypsies, yet their Irish identity made them a target for anti-immigration and anti-Irish sentiments.

Acton notes that, from the late 1960s, contributors to the *JGLS* began to criticise Irish Travellers. Acton also states that, by 1970, many councillors tended to claim that all "their Gypsies" were in fact "tinkers", and should be "sent back to Ireland", even when there were no Irish Traveller families to be found in the area.[112] Some settled people also began to organise action groups to challenge the requirements of the Caravan Act on the basis that they did not want a site for Irish Travellers in their area. Enoch Powell, perhaps best known for his inflammatory, anti-immigration "rivers of blood" speech in 1968, also found time to air his views on Irish Travellers. In a speech to Wolverhampton Conservative Party members in 1970, he mused whether certain Travellers should have been "admitted to this country in the first place" and needed to

[111] Ibid., 12
[112] Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, 211

be dealt with through the "laws of nationality and immigration."[113] Although the main thrust of Powell's speech focussed on an overall repeal of the Caravan Sites Act, he suggested that Gypsies and Travellers did not deserve special consideration, and implied that Irish Travellers were the least entitled of all.

Celtic Origins and the Revivalists

> The racialization of Irish 'tinkers' as Celts led to them occupying a marginal position at the intersection of Gypsiology and another scholarly discourse, that of Celticism. Just as the Gypsy Lore Society had glorified the minority of 'true' Gypsies at a time when Traveller-Gypsies were being harshly repressed (and Orientalism celebrated aspects of the colonized East), so, too, the scholarly subfield of Celtic antiquarianism glorified an ancient Gaelic Irish past while ignoring the historical present of colonial domination.[114]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, resistance to British rule in Ireland had begun to intensify into a nationalist struggle for independence. Protestant Anglo-Irish nationalists became interested in aspects of pre-colonial Ireland, such as language, folklore and Gaelic heritage, and a number of writers chose to articulate their politics through the Irish Literary Revival. As Helleiner notes, in the same way that 'true' Gypsies became a symbolic 'Other' for British writers, Irish Travellers, among other

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[113] Enoch Powell, "Speech to the Annual General Meeting of the Wolverhampton South West Conservative Association" 11th December 1970. *The Speeches of John Enoch Powell Archive*. <http://enochpowell.info/Resources/July-December1970.pdf>

[114] Jane Helleiner, *Racism and the Politics of Culture*, 39

wanderers, were used by Irish writers to symbolise aspects of Celtic Ireland and expressions of Irish nationalism. Linguistic research by *JGLS* contributors John Sampson and Kuno Meyer located the origins of Irish Traveller language (if not Travellers themselves) in Gaelic Ireland. As Celticists, they were chiefly interested in Irish Travellers due to their possible links to an ancient past. Echoing the GLS rush to document Gypsy language and culture before its disappearance, Sampson wished to record the "archaisms" expressed by Irish 'tinkers', "before Time with his harsh breathing aspirates them out of existence."[115] Meyer plainly stated that he would not have been attracted to studying Shelta "if it were nothing but tinkers' cant, fabricated from Irish in modern times", and his curiosity lay in the "evidence to the great antiquity" of the language.[116]

The study of Irish Travellers and their language by the GLS must have influenced many Anglo-Irish Literary Revivalists to take an interest in them, but clear connections between the two groups are hard to prove. Helleiner makes a number of associations, such as Sampson and Meyer having "personal connections" to Ireland, and Douglas Hyde, co-founder of the Gaelic league, having knowledge of Shelta. [117] However, Mary Burke in *'Tinkers': Synge and the Cultural History of the Irish Traveller* (2009) provides the strongest link, in the form of a letter written by William Butler Yeats requesting information on "Irish tinkers" from John Sampson.[118] Yeats, a major figure of the Literary Revival, was researching material for his play *Where There*

[115] Sampson, "Tinkers and their talk", *JGLS*, 221
[116] Meyer, "On the Irish Origin and the Age of Shelta", *JGLS*, 261
[117] Helleiner, *Racism and the Politics of Culture*, 41
[118] Burke, *'Tinkers'*, 94

is Nothing (1903).[119] For Burke, this formal correspondence indicates "the degree to which the Revival fashion for tinkers emerged from the contemporaneous British mania for Gypsies before situating itself as a nationalist alternative."[120] She also suggests that, to an extent, the colonialist treatment of Irish Travellers by the GLS may have encouraged nationalist Anglo-Irish writers to reclaim and venerate them. Instead of languishing near the bottom of the Gypsy hierarchy, with doubts surrounding their cultural authenticity, Irish Travellers and other wanderers became "an aboriginal exotic and carrier of archaic Irishness to rival the 'pure-blooded' British Gypsy".[121] However, such views should also be considered in the context of a wider European interest in primitive cultures, and the search for authenticity as an antidote to modern life. Paul Delaney suggests that "one might ask whether the Revivalists' interests were part of an international attraction to non-bourgeois lifestyles as expressed by the contributors to the Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society".[122] Irish Travellers represented, for Synge and other Literary Revival writers, a simpler way of life which was inaccessible for those born in modern Europe.

Unlike the GLS, the Literary Revival writers who featured Irish Travellers in their work did not create a racial hierarchy between 'true' tinkers and other wanderers who inhabited the landscape of the Irish past. However, Irish Travellers were still used symbolically and idealistically, to represent an ancient and pre-colonial Ireland. According to Helleiner, they signified "the antithesis of what was considered to be the

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[119] William Butler Yeats, *Where There is Nothing: Being Volume 1 of Plays for an Irish Theatre: Vol 1* (London: Chiswick Press, 1903)
[120] Burke, *'Tinkers'*, 58
[121] Ibid., 56
[122] Paul Delaney, "Representations of the Travellers in the 1880s and 1900s", *Irish Studies Review* 9.1 (2001), 65

materialism, stultifying Catholicism and repressed sexuality of post-famine Ireland."[123] Irish Travellers were seen as poor but with enviable freedom. They were able to support themselves independently and apparently existed outside the bounds of Catholic morality. Many Revivalist representations of Irish Travellers pursued a generic type, and featured Traveller characters indulging in stereotypical behaviours such as violence, drunkenness, theft and promiscuity. Some of these representations were undoubtedly influenced by speculative *JGLS* material, which suggested that Irish Travellers swapped wives and had "slight regard for the rites of the Church".[124] Burke also suggests that the Revivalists drew on a long tradition of vagrant or rogue depictions, imbuing their representations of Irish Travellers with "centuries-old and European-wide beliefs about peripatetic peoples."[125]

Some rural Irish people appear to have regarded Irish Travellers as immoral, with their nomadic existence viewed as a punishment for religious transgression. Lady Gregory collected accounts of Traveller origin stories from rural people in the West of Ireland, and came across some very negative representations. For example, in *Poets and Dreamers* (1903), one origin story depicts the "tinker" as the only person who would drive the nails into the hands and feet of Christ, and from that moment, every Traveller was made to "walk the world".[126] Other origin stories recorded by Gregory involved "tinkers" either deceiving St. Patrick over the value of a piece of gold, or refusing to make a vessel for Christ. Helleiner explains that these "consistently negative" accounts about Travellers functioned to reflect their status as outsiders, who "served as economic

[123] Helleiner, *Racism and the Politics of Culture*, 41
[124] Sampson, "Tinkers and their talk" *JGLS*, 204
[125] Burke, *'Tinkers'*, 62
[126] Lady Augusta Gregory, *Poets and Dreamers: Studies and Translations from the Irish by Lady Gregory, including nine plays by Douglas Hyde* (1903; Gerrard's Cross: Colin Smythe, 1974), 96

links to a wider market economy".[127] She also suggests that the negative views of Travellers held by rural Irish people can be read as "a displaced critique of capitalist morality".[128] It is possible that farmers held suspicions about Travellers because they saw them as part of an economic system that had made it increasingly difficult to survive by working on the land. However, origin stories that describe Gypsies being punished for making the nails for Christ's crucifixion have been in existence for centuries across Europe. Micheál Ó hAodha, in *"Insubordinate Irish": Travellers in the Text* (2011) describes the "Nail" legend as "one of the most well-known 'anti-nomadic' myths internationally" and the story "undoubtedly had a significant role in the perpetuation of anti-nomadic prejudice both abroad and in Ireland."[129] Traveller origin stories like those collected by Lady Gregory and discussed by Ó hAodha, assign Irish Travellers a pariah status and justify their marginalisation from mainstream society. Irish Travellers are themselves aware of the "Nail" legend - for example, Patrick Stokes tells a variant of the story in *Puck of the Droms*.[130] In his version, a "tinker" is asked to fashion the cross for the crucifixion, but on its completion, a blacksmith is forced to crucify the tinker by two Jewish men. Both the blacksmith and the tinker are cursed by Christ for their offences, but a carpenter, who refused to make the cross, is promised good luck forever. Alternatively, Sean Maher, in *The Road to God Knows Where*, provides an origin story which works to subvert one of these 'anti-nomadic' types of myths. Instead of tricking St. Patrick, Maher states that Travellers helped him escape his enslavement because "the travellers hated any form of slavery or

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[127] Helleiner, *Racism and the Politics of Culture,* 43- 44
[128] Ibid., 44
[129] Micheál Ó hAodha, *"Insubordinate Irish": Travellers in the Text* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 113
[130] Artelia Court, *Puck of the Droms*, 88-89

being tied down to settled life".[131] Lady Gregory's enquiries into the origins of Travellers, and her observations about settled peoples' attitude towards Travellers, provide an example of some of the first research of this kind in Ireland. As the next section will show, later research into Irish Travellers also focussed heavily on the 'origins' question.

Irish Folklorists, Nostalgic Origins, and the 'Drop-out' Theory

Pádraig MacGréine was the first folklorist to contact Irish Travellers and ask them directly about aspects of their culture. In three papers written for *Béaloideas*, the journal of the Folklore of Ireland Society, MacGréine recorded stories, language and other aspects of culture from the Irish Travellers he met in his search for traditional storytellers. Through his research, MacGréine was able to dispel some of the misconceptions settled people held about Travellers, stating that "they are all Catholics" and "among tinkers, the standard of sex morals is very high, although many people think to the contrary".[132] MacGréine saw Travellers as sources of Irish tradition, with links to the bards and Gaelic culture. He also argued against Travellers being forced to change their lifestyle and culture, although his comments were framed in such a way that they represented Travellers as living a primitive or anachronistic existence: "Leave us our wandering tinkers. House them and they pine; they have no outlet for their restlessness. Why cage a bird? Why civilise a tinker?"

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[131] Maher, *The Road to God Knows Where*, 63
[132] MacGréine, "Irish Tinkers or Travellers", *Béaloideas*, 175

The Folklore of Ireland Society was formed in 1927 and its object was to collect, preserve and publish the folklore of Ireland. The more widespread interest in folklore developed by the Society and its journal led to the establishment by the Irish government in 1935 of the Irish Folklore Commission. The Commission chiefly wished to document Irish oral culture and the traditional rites of rural Ireland. Travellers, thought to be one of the oldest classes of Irish society, were also approached by the Commission. Helleiner explains that the "nostalgic harnessing" of Travellers as symbols of "a 'national' tradition on the wane" made them subject to research that was "a form of salvage scholarship". [133] In the 1970s, Tom Munnelly recorded Irish Traveller singers as part of a project for the Department of Irish Folklore, University College Dublin, which had developed from the Irish Folklore Commission. Where Pádraig MacGréine had protested at what he saw as the government attempting to "civilise" Travellers in the 1930s, Munnelly portrayed Traveller culture as being almost entirely extinct:

> It is probably vain to hope that any concentrated effort will be made now, at half-past the eleventh hour, by ethnologists, anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, collectors, anyone at all. For as well as continuing work on their songs and music, the travellers' beliefs, stories, crafts, their whole life style, still needs to be properly recorded. It must be done now while it is still possible.[134]

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[133] Helleiner, *Racism and the Politics of Culture*, 48
[134] Tom Munnelly, "The Singing Tradition of Irish Travellers", *Folk Music Journal*, 30

This form of research, chasing after evidence of a 'near-extinct' way of life, continued into the later twentieth century and beyond. It may even have become internalised by Travellers themselves, and provide part of the reason why many so titles of Traveller memoirs suggest that their culture is in danger of dying out.

In 1952, a "Tinkers: 'Travellers' Questionnaire" by the Commission asked settled Irish people to contribute their knowledge about Irish Travellers. The dual title reflected the names used by both settled Irish people to describe Travellers, and how Travellers defined themselves. Included in a list of topics were questions about the origins of Travellers, and a range of ideas emerged: Travellers were described as descendants of Irish people from pre-Christian times, for instance, or as the colonial dispossessed.[135] Although most participants in the questionnaire thought that Travellers were indigenously Irish, some believed that they had descended from the lost children of Egypt or Israel. An official Irish government line on the origin of Travellers was not decided until a decade later. Jane Helleiner points to another folklorist, Sean McGrath, as an important figure in the construction of a dominant "new paradigm" in the origin of Travellers, as a precursor to the 1963 *Report of the Commission on Itinerancy*.[136] The *Report* signalled the beginning of the Irish government's concerted effort to end Traveller nomadism through the introduction of official halting sites and a policy of housing and settlement. Writing for the Irish Folklore Commission in 1955, McGrath concluded that the majority of Irish Travellers who remained on the roads were the descendants of small landowners who were displaced by Oliver Cromwell's policies, or

[135] Helleiner, *Racism and the Politics of Culture*, 31, 283
[136] Ibid., 48

of families dispossessed during the famine. [137] McGrath considered Travellers to be important historically, as they were "symbolic of an older Ireland", but concluded that the majority of Travellers living today were those of colonial origin and were therefore culturally inferior to the authentic Travellers of old.[138]

Michael Hayes, in *Irish Travellers: Representations and Realities* (2006), has suggested that while McGrath's views as a folklorist did not have a direct bearing on the Irish government's Traveller assimilation policies, his ideas enjoyed "a much wider audience" than folklorists like MacGréine, because he informed the public of his research via a series of radio talks broadcast on the national radio station Raidió Éireann in the early 1950s.[139] Using the familiar scapegoat mechanism to denigrate contemporary Irish Travellers, McGrath reflected that the "vagrants on the Irish roads today" were "a shame and a disgrace" when compared to the mythical people he described as being the "true Traveller class", the "real traveller", and "genuine tinkers".[140] His views promoted the value of historical Traveller culture, but merely as a symbol of an older Ireland. Contemporary Travellers, were by contrast, considered neither authentic nor of interest to scholarship. McGrath's opinions also appeared in the context of increasing anti-Traveller sentiments within settled society. Helleiner notes that a similar scapegoat mechanism was utilised by some TDs (members of the Irish government) around this time, to give them the opportunity to criticise Travellers, while escaping any charges of colonial-like domination over them. As an example, one TD stated that "while the 'tinkers' were linked through descent to 'ancient families' they

[137] Sean McGrath, "Miscellaneous information on Tinkers, particularly in County Clare", Irish Folklore Commission 1439 (1955), 28
[138] Ibid., 19
[139] Hayes, *Representations and Realities*, 32
[140] McGrath, "Miscellaneous information on Tinkers", 23-4, 8

had to be distinguished from 'newcomer vagrants' who had joined the road more recently."[141]

In 1960, the Irish government set up the Commission on Itinerancy to address what was seen as the growing "problem" caused by the presence of Irish Travellers, or "itinerants" in Ireland.[142] The Commission's 1963 *Report* clearly laid out its main aim: "to promote [itinerants'] absorption into the general community".[143] Michael Hayes comments that "every facet" of the *Report* was "turned against the notion of the survival or reinforcement of Traveller culture".[144] The *Report* argued that settlement was the most positive step forward for Travellers, since it regarded their way of life as being no longer economically or socially viable. Settled people were also seen to benefit from this solution, as the freeing up of land otherwise used by Travellers for halting sites would aid development and help create a modernised Ireland. In *Travellers and Ireland: Whose Country, Whose History?* Jim Mac Laughlin examines the Irish State's predilection to sweep aside the culture of Irish Travellers in the name of progress and nation-building:

> Nationalism, together with the cultural and territorial imperatives of nation-builders, was equated with progress and growth. Nomadism on the other hand, and Travelling communities within Ireland, were looked upon as social

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[141] Helleiner, *Racism and the Politics of Culture*, 63
[142] Department of Social Welfare, *Report of the Commission on Itinerancy* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1963), 110
[143] Ibid.
[144] Hayes, *Representations and Realities*, 36

> anomalies, relics from a 'barbarous' past that was best forgotten because they represented all that was backward, unstable and evil about Irish society.[145]

This image of contemporary Travellers is in stark contrast to those of pre-colonial Gaelic Ireland, which Mac Laughlin posits as being seen as more "prestigious", due to their highly skilled and specialised craftsmanship.[146] The Commission did not acknowledge any links to the ancient existence of Irish Travellers, and carried out no new research into their origins. Instead the *Report* summarised popular origin theories, including those concerning Famine victims and Cromwellian evictions, and proposed that Traveller origins dated from anywhere between "the last century" and "a "few centuries" ago.[147] Hayes suggests that the use of these dates served the purposes of the State, as they linked the emergence of Travellers with colonial events, therefore "absolving the Irish government of any blame for the Traveller problem."[148] The *Report* also equated contemporary Travellers with poverty, squalor and unsanitary living conditions. The association between Irish Travellers and poverty was reinforced in 1971 by Patricia McCarthy's study "Itinerancy and Poverty: A Study in the Sub-Culture of Poverty". McCarthy posited that Irish Travellers were mostly likely the descendants of Irish peasants driven onto the roads due to necessity, and their culture was simply that of the rural Irish, but frozen in time. Sinéad Ní Shúinéar (2004) says that this thesis was so influential because:

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[145] Jim Mac Laughlin, *Whose Country, Whose History?*, 28
[146] Ibid., 23
[147] Department of Social Welfare, *Report of the Commission on Itinerancy*, 34
[148] Hayes, *Representations and Realities*, 38

> it comprised the first ever fieldwork undertaken with Travellers, 'scientifically' confirming their conformity to virtually every characteristic on the then-fashionable 'culture of poverty' checklist, it was enthusiastically promoted by the Itinerant Settlement Committee set up to implement the recommendations of the Commission, who mimeographed it and sold it at cost price, bypassing publication.[149]

The accessibility of McCarthy's study, in terms of low cost and promotion by a governmental body, made it widely influential. McCarthy later went on to refute her work, stating that the theoretical framework she used was inappropriate, as it had "nothing to offer Irish Travellers as an explanation for their existence of their lifestyle."[150] She also noted that her work had "been used by certain people to discredit Travellers and to negate their separate cultural identity".[151]

However, McCarthy's work influenced other researchers, including George Gmelch, who lived with his wife Sharon as participant observers among a group of Travellers in Galway over two periods during the 1970s. In *The Irish Tinkers: The Urbanization of an Itinerant People* (1977), Gmelch discusses the historical origins of "tinkers", mentioning that nomadic craftsmen were in existence from the fifth century, and dismisses the idea that Irish Travellers appeared on the roads due to the Great Famine of 1845-48, as the starving peasantry could not have supported them.[152]

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[149] Sinéad Ní Shúinéar, "Apocrypha to Canon: Inventing Irish Traveller History", *History Ireland* 12.4 (2004), 16
[150] Patricia McCarthy, "The Sub-Culture of Poverty Reconsidered", *Irish Travellers: Culture and Ethnicity*, 128
[151] Ibid.
[152] Gmelch, *The Irish Tinkers*, 10

Instead, Gmelch appears to suggest that nomadism, rather than being a cultural form in its own right, is a condition caused by problems of a "social and economic nature".[153] He also posits that personal problems, such as "illegitimacy or alcoholism" may have caused people to take to the road, which has "always provided an alternative to settled life for those who needed one."[154] This reasoning suggests that Irish Travellers are simply settled people who 'drop-out' of society for various reasons. Some of these reasons, including alcoholism, make it seem as though Travellers are entirely at fault for their lifestyle and living conditions.

Gmelch also suggests that Irish Traveller culture only fully coalesced with the introduction of tents around 1870, when an Irish Traveller "borrowed" the idea from a group of English Gypsies. Before this time, he asserts, Irish Travellers "had no shelter of their own" and sought refuge in hay barns and houses, or slept in hedgerows.[155] Ní Shúinéar points out that tents have been long in use in Ireland, as "bent branches covered in skins, reeds, sods of earth, tarpaulin or sheets of plastic have been sheltering Irish people for at least 9,000 years, as the post-holes of nearly circular mobile dwellings at Mount Sandel, Co. Derry, attest."[156] She also attacks the idea of Irish Travellers welcoming alcoholics, 'fallen women', and evicted peasants, as this "expresses the notion that Travellers are essentially an anti-culture of drop-outs who embrace their fellow drop-outs—a bourgeois fantasy of running away with the tinkers as a variant on running away with the circus."[157] Providing another explanation for the origins of Irish Travellers, Ní Shúinéar (1994) argues that ancient Celtic society was

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[153] Ibid., 8
[154] Ibid., 11
[155] Ibid., 25-26
[156] Ní Shúinéar, "Apocrypha to Canon", *History Ireland*, 17
[157] Ibid., 18

characteristically "a restless nomadic or semi-nomadic people", and it is probable that peasants would not have been able to produce the "vast legacy of stunningly wrought metalwork" which has emerged from bogs and gravesites throughout Ireland.[158] Instead, indigenous nomadic craftsmen, specialising in weapons, jewellery and tools, would have produced these wares. As the Celts became less nomadic, Ireland still only had very small concentrations of settlements up until the fifth century, yet archaeological "finds" dating from this period continue to be discovered. Ní Shúinéar concludes that nomadic craftspeople would have continued to circulate through remote Irish farmsteads with their families at this time, trading items for food. Under later Viking influence, more nomadic craftsmen would have established their places of work in the emerging towns and villages, but the need still remained for seasonal trading demands such as "harvesting, mending, horse trading" and "entertainment at fairs" which would be provided by the ancestors of modern Irish Travellers.[159]

Although many academics, including Ní Shúinéar, Mac Laughlin and Hayes, have criticised the 'drop-out' Irish Traveller origin theory, it still remains the most pervasive and influential model of explanation. New research has continued into Irish Traveller history and origins, including genealogical research by Edinburgh University, and Traveller family interviews by Ní Shúinéar. The University of Limerick also facilitated the teaching of an undergraduate and a postgraduate module on the history of Irish Travellers in 2005. [160] However, it is possible that Irish Traveller origins may

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[158] Sinéad Ní Shúinéar, "Irish Travellers and the Origins Question" in *Irish Travellers, Culture and Ethnicity*, 71
[159] Ibid., 72
[160] University of Limerick, "HEA Traveller Initiative", *University of Limerick website*. Accessed June 2, 2013.

never be dated definitively, as there are limits to what conventional historical sources can reveal about marginal groups. Bhreatnach points out that locating Travellers in archival records is an "arduous" task, due to the way wandering groups were recorded.[161]

> Travellers are difficult to distinguish from the large numbers of mobile people, variously termed tradesmen, beggars, ballad-singers, boccoughs, etc. Since record-keepers were not immediately concerned with the differences between individual vagrants and nomadic family units, historians may not find anything other than oblique references to people who would be identified as Travellers today.[162]

Irish Traveller Responses to Origin Theories

Historical origins are often used to create cultural legitimacy for social groups, but in the case of Irish Travellers the debate surrounding their origins, and promotion of the 'drop-out', theory has created a situation where the authenticity of Traveller identity is open to question. Many Traveller memoirs not only refute the 'drop-out' origin narrative, but show awareness of the processes involved in stripping them of their cultural authenticity. For example, an old Traveller in Sean Maher's *The Road to God Knows Where* refers to "the days of long ago" as a time when "the people of the road

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<http://www2.ul.ie/web/WWW/Faculties/Arts,_Humanities_%26_Social_Sciences/History/Research_Centres_and_Activities/HEA_Traveller_Initiative>

[161] Bhreatnach, *Becoming Conspicuous*, 3

[162] Aoife Bhreatnach, "Traveller (Non-) History [with Reply]", *History Ireland* , 13. 1 (2005), 13

were an example and a heritage to be proud of. Today, alas, we are treated and looked upon as ignorant savages."[163] The same character also clearly negates the 'drop-out' theory favoured by the Irish government and mainstream society when he states: "Make no mistake, son, we on the road are descended not from the famine era or the Cromwellian era but from the days of the kings of Ireland and their clans."[164] He reinforces the ancient origins of Irish Travellers by mentioning the hand-made tents made from "wattles" stuck into the ground, dating them from "pre-Christian times."[165]

In *Traveller*, Nan Joyce gives some credence to the colonial origins of Irish Travellers, but as a Traveller activist she is clearly is aware of the need to assert an earlier explanation. She also raises the problem of a lack of official history, due to a reliance on orality:

> Some of my ancestors went on the road in the Famine but more of them have been travelling for hundreds of years – we're not drop-outs like some people think. The Travellers have been in Ireland since St Patrick's time, there's a lot of history behind them though there's not much written down – it's what you get from your grandfather and what he got from his grandfather.[166]

Pecker Dunne also discusses the various possibilities of how Travellers came to exist in *Parley-Poet and Chanter*. He shows awareness of Gmelch's study when he mentions that some people believe Travellers "left their houses and started travelling. They left

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[163] Maher, *The Road to God Knows Where*, 112
[164] Ibid., 105
[165] Ibid.
[166] Joyce, *Traveller*, 1

old shacks at the side of the road because they couldn't make a living any more."[167] Dunne also recounts the familiar "landlords and evictions" and "famine" theories, before going into greater detail about Gaelic culture, stating that "Travelling was a normal part of life then".[168] He emphasises that there have "always" been Travellers in Ireland: "We have been here for centuries – we sure have!"[169]

José Lanters, in her 2008 study *The 'Tinkers' in Irish Literature*, explains that in a further effort to establish their cultural authenticity, Travellers "sometimes endow themselves with respectable ancestors by casting important cultural and historical figures into the role of Travellers".[170] Pecker Dunne does this in a general way, by saying that "if you go back and read the old stories you will find Travelling people mentioned all the time."[171] Sean Maher also does this several times, as he suggests that "our Blessed Lord himself was a traveller", that "the Irish monks of long ago" were also Travellers, as was "St. Patrick himself".[172] The literary figures of Shakespeare, Chaucer and Bunyan are also raised as possible examples of Travellers.[173] In a culture which places emphasis on orality and lacks official written history of its own, this can be seen as an attempt by Maher to align Irish Travellers with great storytellers and therefore provide stronger cultural legitimacy. Lanters highlights the fact that these origin theories stretch "the parameters of what a Traveller is" and that they conflict with "the narrower ethnic definition put forward today by Traveller organizations".[174] In the context of the debate surrounding Traveller origins, it is perhaps unsurprising that

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[167] Dunne, *Parley-Poet and Chanter* , 37
[168] Ibid., 37-38
[169] Ibid.
[170] Lanters, *The 'Tinkers' in Irish Literature*, 192
[171] Dunne, *Parley-Poet and Chanter*, 37
[172] Maher, *The Road to God Knows Where*, 64, 82, 106
[173] Ibid., 100
[174] Lanters, *The 'Tinkers' in Irish Literature*, 193

Traveller activists attempt to promote a single, clear alternative to the 'drop-out' theory. However, one Irish Traveller activist decided to do the opposite.

Johnny Connors' song "Gum Shellac" is an example of an Irish Traveller playing with the multiplicity of Traveller origin theories, by contrasting the details of contemporary Traveller life with the possibilities of ancient Traveller origins. (A full version of the song is included in Appendix 6.6.) In the booklet that accompanies *From Puck to Appleby*, Jim Carroll and Pat Mackenzie explain what "Gum shellac" actually means:

> Gum shellac is a paste formed by chewing bread, a technique used by unscrupulous tinsmiths to supposedly repair leaks in pots and pans. When polished, it gives the appearance of a proper repair but, if the vessel is filled with water, the paste quickly disintegrates, giving the perpetrator of the trick just enough time to escape with his payment.[175]

By referencing an old Traveller scam in his song, Connors could be celebrating the longevity of Traveller culture, and the ability of Travellers to 'out-smart' settled people. Whatever the reason for its composition, the song makes up a nonsensical 'history' for Irish Travellers that is filled with irreverent humour. The first verse is a statement of authenticity and self-definition:

> We are the travelling people

[175] Carroll and Mackenzie, *From Puck to Appleby*, inlay notes, 8

Like the Picts or Beaker Folk,

The men in Whitehall thinks we're parasites

But tinker is the word.

With our gum shellac alay ra lo,

Move us on you boyoes.[176]

Connors compares Travellers to two ancient cultures, both of which are considered authentic in established narratives of European history. By doing this, he asserts the authenticity of Traveller culture. As a Traveller activist, Connors would have been aware of the government position on Irish Travellers, as "parasites" living off mainstream society, with no culture of their own. He offers "tinker" as an alternative label, which again recalls the historic origins of Travellers, as the word "tinker" appears in many guises in official documents from the twelfth century onwards. It also displays a sense of pride in his identity. The line "move us on you boyoes" could either be a challenge, as Connors was involved in various disputes over Traveller accommodation in Birmingham, or a description of the typical response to Travellers by the authorities.

Three of the verses in this song describe a variety of jobs that Travellers have supposedly undertaken. The second verse states boldly: "All the jobs in the world we have done/From making Pharaoh's coffins/To building Birmingham".[177] This line plays with the idea that Gypsies were thought to originally derive from "Little Egypt", and also acknowledges the Irish Travellers who worked alongside the many Irish

[176] Ibid., 7
[177] Ibid.

immigrants and other men who made up the building industry as Birmingham was expanding. The seventh verse makes an obscure reference to making "cannon guns in Hungary", which is possibly an allusion to the bronze cannon used in the siege of Constantinople in the fifteenth century by the Ottoman Empire.[178] By mentioning this, Connors implies that Travellers have origins which date much farther back than Cromwellian times. The eighth verse celebrates the musical traditions of Travellers, stating that "We can sing a song or dance a reel/No matter where we roam."[179] Connors then adds that Travellers "have learned the Emperor Nero/How to play the pipes/Way back in the days of Rome."[180] Connors was the grandnephew of the celebrated Uilleann piper and singer Johnny Doran, and is perhaps showcasing his pedigree and historical knowledge of bagpipes.

Connors shows pride in his Traveller identity and family by giving details about his wife and children. In the fourth verse, Connors explains that his wife supports her family in the traditional Traveller way: "She gets her basket on her arm/And mooches the hills for me."[181] In plain terms, to "mooch" is to beg, but it also describes a more complex relationship between Travellers and settled people when trading goods. In another verse, Connors makes reference to his twenty-year marriage and his large family: "Nineteen children we have got/Ah sure, one is hardly walking/When there's another one in the cot."[182] Although Irish Travellers value large families, this is probably an embellishment for comic effect. If so, it would fit in with the general irreverent style of the song. Despite its instances of absurdity, "Gum Shellac" has some

[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid., 8
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid.

serious, if playful, points to make about Irish Traveller origins, culture and tradition. By blending different periods of history together in the same verse, and placing Travellers in a range of foreign regions and famous conflicts, Connors draw attention to the implausibility of tracing an 'authentic' origin narrative for Irish Travellers. In doing so, he is responding to the many settled researchers and folklorists who have speculated about Traveller origins. As the next section will show, Scottish academics can also be accused of debating Traveller origins, or representing them in a way that is unhelpful and inaccurate.

Scottish Tinkers: Custodians of Ancient Culture

> Today the classic tinkers of Scotland have all but vanished. There's a breed of folk who call themselves Travellers who turn up for the berry-picking and others ape the old time Gypsies when it suits them, to extract money from the public. But the tinkers who sat by road, loch, and burn mending tin pans have gone and with them the colourful ballads which told of their colourful mysterious ways.[183]

It is perhaps inevitable that an article entitled "Scotlands' Colorful Tinkers" written for *The Highlander* (1994), a magazine produced for a Scottish readership in America, would portray a nostalgic view of Scottish Travellers. The magazine consists of commentaries on aspects of Scottish history, famous figures of the past and Scottish

[183] Raymond Lamont-Brown, "Scotland's Colorful Tinkers", *The Highlander* 32(1994), 42

legends: content that depicts Scotland as an ancient, romantic kingdom. The assumption by Raymond Lamont-Brown that Traveller ballads have disappeared alongside his "classic tinkers" is also a romantic fallacy. Traveller oral culture, in the shape of stories and songs, formed a central part of the Scottish Folk Revival of the 1960s, and is performed widely to this day, by Travellers and non-Traveller singers and storytellers alike. Yet, the underlying message of the article, that contemporary Scottish Travellers have no cultural authenticity, as they are different from an earlier, superior race, resembles Jack Straw's comments about Gypsies cited at the beginning of this chapter. Separating the "classic tinkers" from "a breed of folk who call themselves Travellers" also creates a division comparable to the notion of 'true' Gypsies and other lesser nomads. The origins of Scottish Travellers have long been open to speculation, and are complicated by the population being composed of several different groups, typically defined according to geographical location. Furthermore, there is a history of intermarriage between Scottish Travellers, Gypsies, and settled Scottish people.

The three main Scottish nomadic groups are generally described as Highland Travellers, Lowland Travellers and Border Gypsies. However, the exact terminology used by Scottish Travellers and Gypsies to define themselves is also variable. The Scottish Traveller Education Programme (STEP) website uses the term "Scottish Gypsy/Traveller", because different families choose to identify themselves in various ways, for example, as "Gypsy", "Traveller" or "Gypsy/Traveller."[184] This is again influenced geographically, since "families with strong Highland connections tend to regard themselves as Travellers, whereas families from the Lowland and Border areas

[184] Scottish Traveller Education Programme, "Travelling Communities in Scotland", STEP website. Accessed June 3, 2014. <http://www.step.education.ed.ac.uk/travelling-communities-in-scotland/>

often regard themselves as Gypsies."[185] Some of the families living on the lower borders of Scotland also have strong familial links to English Gypsies. These differences are reflected in the language used by Traveller families, as folklorist Timothy Neat explains in his collection of interviews with Scottish Travellers, *The Summer Walkers*. Neat states that most Travellers in the southern half of Scotland "have a fair knowledge of the Gypsy Cant", meaning Romani language.[186] For Highland Travellers, this "is largely replaced by the *Beurla Reagaird*", or Scottish Traveller Cant.[187] According to Neat, the Beurla Reagaird has similarities to Irish Traveller Cant, but "only exists within Gaelic speaking groups and in symbiotic relationship with Gaelic."[188] This is in contrast to Irish Travellers, who may have no knowledge of Irish, but still use Cant, which the linguist Kuno Meyer believed to have developed from ancient Irish in the nineteenth century. For this section, the term "Scottish Traveller" refers to Scottish nomadic groups who do not identify themselves as European Roma, Showmen (families who have a tradition of working on travelling fairs) or New Travellers. Where Travellers emphasise their links to certain Scottish areas or self-identify as "Gypsy", this is also indicated.

One possible origin theory about Scottish Travellers characterises them as the descendants of families who became uprooted during the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, following the Battle of Culloden and the Highland Clearances. An unnamed Scottish woman, recorded for Ewan MacColl's *The Travelling People*, dates Traveller origins back to this period. She says that "the real tinkers" appeared after the Jacobite

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[185] Ibid.
[186] Neat, *The Summer Walkers*, 226
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.

uprisings at Culloden and Glencoe, as Scottish people fled from persecution by the English and moved into the lowlands of Scotland. These families began to live in dugouts and caves, and "they became nomads of the road." She lists typical Scottish Traveller names, "McPhee, Stewart, McKenzie", defining Travellers as "remnants of the clans of long ago." [189] This is similar to the 'drop-out' theory used to explain the emergence of Irish Travellers and gives the impression that Scottish Travellers are the descendants of displaced settled people, rather than being traditionally nomadic. Some researchers may have helped to promote this theory by also emphasising the 'Scottish-ness' of Travellers. For example, Timothy Neat draws attention to the "great clan names" used by Travellers.[190] He also comments that, while Gypsies feel that they are a "caste above" other Travellers, Scottish Travellers "identify themselves, not with the European Gypsies, but with the Highland clans." [191] In doing so, he possibly creates an over-simplistic divide between Gypsies and Scottish Travellers, suggesting that the two groups are disparate units, with Travellers being more closely linked to settled Scottish people. Neat suggests that the fanciful tales of royal descent or "family romance" held by some Highland Travellers might have helped to inspire this theory. [192]

Jess Smith, a Scottish Traveller storyteller and writer, reverses this 'drop-out' theory in *Way of the Wanderers*, suggesting that Cairds, or ancient craftsmen, were the ancestors of Travellers. Cairds were distinct groups of people, hired to work for the Scottish clans. The Highland Clearances caused the dissolution of many clans, leaving

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[189] MacColl, Parker and Seeger "Don't I wish the old times would come back again." *The Travelling People*
[190] Neat, *The Summer Walkers*, viii
[191] Ibid., 221
[192] Neat, *The Summer Walkers*, 223

cairds without masters to seek shelter among the surviving clans.[193] Smith's origin theory emphasises the mixing together of Traveller and settled Scottish people, with nomads enriching the local populations instead of leaving them behind. This might explain the attachment some Travellers have to the Highlands and account for the use of "great clan" surnames. However, Smith also acknowledges her possible Gypsy genealogy, suggesting that Gypsies who came to Scotland were brought by the Knights Templars from the Middle East, before dispersing throughout the British Isles.[194]

Donald Whyte, whilst devoting the majority of his book *Scottish Gypsies and other Travellers* to the origins of Gypsies and their movements in Scotland, states that certain Gypsy families would have mixed with indigenous Travellers. He also questions "the whereabouts of descendants of all the Gypsy tribes who inhabited the country north of the firths of Forth and Clyde", inferring that they must have married into local Traveller families.[195] He cites evidence that northern tinkers are generally described as "Ceardannan" or "Black Tinkers", referring to their skin colour. Since all hues of skin colour can be represented in Gypsy populations, his suggestion is hugely speculative. More convincing evidence of marriage between Gypsies and indigenous Scottish Travellers (and other groups besides) can be provided by Travellers themselves, as Eddie Davies describes himself in *The Summer Walkers*, as "half Highland Traveller, quarter Irish Traveller, one eighth English Gypsy and one eighth Welsh ram".[196]

Scottish Travellers have, over several hundred years, been represented in literature and scholarship as a mixed race of nomads, with close ties to Scotland and its

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[193] Smith, *Way of the Wanderers*, 141-142
[194] Ibid., 153
[195] Whyte, *Scottish Gypsies and other Travellers*, 63
[196] Neat, *The Summer Walkers*, 20

ancient past. These ideas have been strongly influenced by Walter Scott's 1815 novel *Guy Mannering, or, The Astrologer*. The novel is described by Deborah Epstein Nord as "the single most important literary influence on the nineteenth-century fascination with Gypsies and their role in the cultural imagination."[197] Scott's novel enjoyed huge popularity upon publication, placing his representations of Scottish Travellers firmly in the minds of Scottish people. Nord points out that the novel's narrative went on to be "recycled by historians" as a convincing account of real Scottish Travellers, and also inspired other novelists and poets to feature Gypsy kidnappings and heroines in their own literary creations.[198] Nord also draws attention to the use of Traveller identity as a conduit for national pride, explaining that Scott's nomads "occupy an iconic place in the collective cultural memory of the Scottish people and seem, at times, to stand in for the prized national past that Scott, as an antiquarian, was committed to retrieving."[199] In the novel, protagonist Harry Bertram is aided by a Scottish Traveller, Meg Merrilies, in reclaiming his identity and inheritance after being kidnapped and taken overseas by smugglers at an early age. The character of Merrilies is therefore associated with "an ancient and dimly remembered history, a memory of origin", not only for Bertram, but also for Scottish readers.[200] According to Nord, in the year previous to writing *Guy Mannering*, Scott had become aware of the effects of the Highland Clearances during a tour of northern Scotland. His ambivalence about the consequences of displacing so many families and disrupting their way of life was translated into "a question about the

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[197] Nord, 25
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid.

Scottish Gypsies' place both in society and history."[201] Scott therefore associated Travellers with the ancient past, and used them to symbolise a lost Gaelic culture of Scottish clans, which ended during the Highland Clearances. Although Nord praises Scott for creating depictions of Travellers which are not homogenous and static, but which adapt to the conditions and changing political landscapes around them, he does this by inserting them into the narrative of the Clearances, an aspect of history "that did not necessarily involve them".[202] Although the Travellers in *Guy Mannering* are meant to represent an ancient past, Scott might have been chiefly responsible for creating the Scottish Traveller 'drop-out' origin theory. The novel also features stereotypical tropes of Gypsy curses and kidnapping, even if, by the end of the novel, it is revealed that the Merrilies family are innocent of child-stealing.

Scott's characterisation of Merrilies is dramatic and striking, and is reputedly based on an actual Scottish Border Gypsy, Jean Gordon, as the author explains in his 1829 introduction to *Guy Mannering*. Scott's Merrilies embodies some aspects of the literary 'true' Gypsy, as she is described several times in the novel as an ancient "sibyl", or mystic fortune-teller.[203] Scott also suggests exotic Indian ancestry in the resemblance she holds to the "strange figures" that Bertram has seen in "Indian pagodas" during his time in the Indian army.[204] The first time the reader is introduced to Merrilies, she is described as follows:

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[201] Ibid., 27
[202] Ibid., 42
[203] Scott, *Guy Mannering*, 126
[204] Ibid., 260

> She was full six feet high, 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. Her dark elf locks shot out like the snakes of the gorgon between an old fashioned bonnet called a bongrace, 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.[205]

Merrilies has "dark elf locks" and a "wild roll" to her eye, which suggests that she is somewhat elemental or uninhibited. Her "affected insanity" implies craftiness, or a hidden intelligence. She is, however, also a hybrid character: Scottish and "Indian", masculine yet female. She has a "strong and weather beaten" face and stands as tall as a man in her feminine petticoats. Scott uses this hybrid quality to reflect the mixed heritage of Scottish Travellers and, since they are being used to symbolise Gaelic Scotland, the Scottish people. However, he also reinforces their "mingled" nature by creating a 'historical' account of Scottish Travellers at the beginning of chapter seven, which represents them as gradually losing their "national character of Egyptians" by marrying into the families of settled Highland people.[206] According to Scott, some families remained nomadic, learning crafts such as horn-spoon making and metal-working, but their numbers became reduced, as did the "dreadful evil" they produced through drunkenness and rioting.[207] Nord contrasts Scott's version of Scottish Traveller history with that of other historians, who portray Gypsies as a timeless, insular

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[205] Ibid., 71
[206] Ibid., 105-106
[207] Ibid., 107

people.[208] Yet, Scott still manages to render them mystical and marginal, using them chiefly to symbolise Scotland's complex past and the mixed heritage of its people. A parallel can be drawn here to the Irish Revivalist's use of Irish Travellers. In addition, although Scott's 'historical' descriptions of Scottish Travellers underline their adaptability through developing new means of survival, some of the phrases he uses are hardly progressive. Although Scott acknowledges the laws brought in to criminalise Gypsies in Scotland and the severity of punishments meted out, for example, he still refers to Travellers as "banditti" or thieves, who bring "occasional alarm and constant vexation" to settled people.[209]

Another example of Scottish Gypsies or Travellers being inserted into a Scottish historical context appears in a very popular Scottish ballad. There are multiple versions of the song in existence, but the two sung most often are "The Raggle Taggle Gypsies" and "Johnny Faa, the Gypsy Laddie" (Full versions of the songs are included in Appendix 6.7 and 6.8.) The two songs involve an aristocratic lady running off with a handsome Gypsy and his companions, but the latter names "Lord Cassilis" as the wronged man. The lady's husband, after finding her missing, pursues the lovers on horseback and confronts them. In one version of the song, the lady escapes with her Gypsy, but in "The Gypsy Laddie", they are apprehended. The lady is confined to her room by her husband, and in the last verse all the Gypsies are hung for kidnapping:

They were fifteen valiant men,

Black but very bonny;

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[208] Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, 31
[209] Scott, *Guy Mannering*, 107

> And they lost all their lives for one,
> The Earl of Cassilis' lady.[210]

Walter Simson, in *A History of the Gipsies* (1866), makes a clear link between the ballad and the real historical figure of the Earl of Cassilis:

> Tradition states that John Faa, the leader of a band of Gipsies, seizing the opportunity of the Earl of Cassilis' absence, on a deputation to the Assembly of divines at Westminster, in 1643, to ratify the solemn league and covenant, carried off the lady. The Earl was considered a sullen and ill-tempered man, and perhaps not a very agreeable companion to his lady.[211]

Simson finds the idea of an aristocrat falling in love with a lowly Gypsy improbable, even if her husband was "ill-tempered", since "it cannot be imagined, that the seducer would be a poor, wretched, beggarly Tinkler, such as many of the tribe are at this day."[212] However, if the Gypsy in question resembled one of the "Lords and Earls of Little Egypt", perhaps a relative of John Faw of 1540, the whole episode becomes more persuasive for Simson, as he believes Faw to have been very rich. He romanticises Faw by describing him as a "Gipsy Rajah" and provides him with admirable qualities: "If a handsome person, elegant apparel, a lively disposition, much mirth and glee, and a constant boasting of extraordinary prowess, would in any way contribute to make an impression on the heart of the frail countess, these qualities, I am disposed to think,

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[210] Smith, *Way of the Wanderers*, 190
[211] Simson, *A History of the Gipsies*, 241
[212] Ibid., 108

would not be wanting in the 'Gipsy Laddie'."[213] Despite Simson's reasoning, no records of a John Faa or Faw who kidnapped a distinguished lady have yet been found.

Jess Smith believes the song is also based on fact, but that Gypsies were used as a scapegoat to excuse Lady Cassilis' secret love affair. In *Way of the Wanderers*, Smith recounts the story behind the song differently, with Lady Cassilis involved in a "long and tempestuous" love affair with a merchant called Sir John Fall before her marriage to the Earl.[214] According to Smith, a short time after she was married, Lady Cassilis eloped with Fall, but they were pursued by her husband and Fall fled. To explain her actions, Lady Cassilis told her husband that she had been kidnapped by Gypsies, and a number of Gypsies were subsequently rounded up from the local area and punished. Jess Smith takes this version of the story seriously, emphasising that "fifteen Gypsies died on the scaffold for Lady Cassilis's lie. Yet again we see the Gypsy as scapegoat, blamed and hung for another's act."[215] Again, however, although plenty of Gypsies were put to death in Scotland for various crimes, and some of these men were named John Faa or Faw, there is no proof that these were the real events behind "The Gypsy Laddie".

Christine A. Cartwright (1998) explains the popularity of "The Gypsy Laddie" in terms of the "cultural function" behind the song's narrative.[216] She argues that the song reflects the stereotypes and criminal behaviours which were associated with Gypsies at the time, including abduction, promiscuity, the use of magic, and theft.

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[213] Ibid.
[214] Smith, *Way of the Wanderers*, 190
[215] Ibid., 191
[216] Christine A. Cartwright, "Johnny Faa and Black Jack Davey; Cultural Values and Change in Scots and American Balladry", *Gypsies: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, ed. Diane Tong (New York and London: Taylor & Francis Group, 1998), 320

Therefore, the song of "a white woman abducted by Gypsies (sometimes robbed, sometimes bedded, and invariably placed under a spell) must have evoked a powerful complex of cultural anxieties and concerns".[217] Cartwright also suggests that the song may have reflected gender-based tensions within the mainstream Scottish population. Eighteenth-century Scotland, as with any sea-faring nation, had an economic necessity that the men were willing and able to "encounter and resist the delights of foreign ports".[218] Scottish men were able to enjoy the rum and exotic women overseas, as long as they had a home to come back to. The Gypsy, who represented an exotic temptation to Scottish wives, was therefore a potentially threatening figure. Cartwright maintains that "surely one of the great currents of narrative tension in the ballad is this inversion of the right order" as the husband desperately attempts to restore the stability of his household, and take back his wife from her Gypsy lover.[219] A final explanation for the popularity of "The Gypsy Laddie" is the depiction of Scottishness in the song, at a time of encroaching Anglicization.

> The narrative of a Scottish noblewomen shedding her silks, donning a plaidie, and setting her bare feet in the Clyde for the sake of her old true love, whose name was evocative of an older and more Scottish Scotland, was tremendously moving and powerful in the days when Edinburgh spoke more French than Scots.[220]

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[217] Ibid., 321
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid., 323

In this context, Gypsies, instead of representing a threatening and exotic invasion, are used to signify an older, more authentic Scotland. As the next section will discuss, the use of Gypsies to symbolise Scottishness is also a recurrent theme in the work of folklorists.

Travellers as Symbols of Scottishness

In *The Tinkler-Gypsies*, McCormick uses a hyphenated title to define Scottish Travellers, reflecting his view that they are a "composite breed" of indigenous nomads and Gypsies.[221] In his study, McCormick simultaneously supports some GLS views of the 'true' Gypsy, by emphasising that Scottish Travellers are too impure of blood to be described as Gypsies, whilst also recognising the cultural value of Scottish Travellers as a mixed Celtic race.[222] Taking inspiration from David MacRitchie's *Scottish Gypsies under the Stewarts* (1894), he argues that Scottish Travellers are likely to be derived from ancient Picts and "broken men" from the Scottish clans.[223] McCormick recognises that Scottish Travellers seldom marry "out of their own caste", and therefore reasons that they are in fact closer to the "ancient tribes" of Britain than individuals from the "ancient Romany families" who had married settled English people.[224] McCormick consequently argues that Scottish Travellers, who are usually regarded as racially and culturally inferior to Gypsies, are valuable to scholarship because of their ancient ancestry. This focus on cultural antiquity has persisted into modern research about Scottish Travellers. While it has helped to create origin theories aside from those purely

[221] McCormick, *The Tinkler-Gypsies*, 389
[222] Ibid., 397
[223] Ibid., 410
[224] Ibid., 416-17

involving the Highland Clearances, an emphasis on past origins is not entirely helpful to contemporary Scottish Travellers.

According to Scottish Traveller and academic Willie Reid, there are now three main theories which account for the existence of Scottish Travellers.[225] Firstly, Scottish Travellers are regarded by some researchers as an indigenous nomadic people with ancient origins. Timothy Neat, in his introduction to *The Summer Walkers* (1996), describes them in this manner: "They are indigenous, Gaelic-speaking Scots, who, to this day, remain heirs of a vital and ancient culture of great historic and artistic importance to Scotland and the world beyond." [226] Secondly, the "Indian theory" regards Scottish Travellers as more recent immigrants who came to Scotland, with exotic Indian ancestry. [227] This theory relies on evidence collected by linguists in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and the fact that the first clear reference to Gypsies was made in the records of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland in 1505.[228] Thirdly, a fusionist theory puts forward the idea that intermarriage occurred between indigenous and immigrant nomadic peoples from the sixteenth century onwards.[229] Reid points out that, regardless how the emergence of Scottish Travellers is accounted for, all origin theories tend to define them as a once-respected group that has descended the social scale over time. Folklore researcher Hamish Henderson, in *Alias McAlias* (1992), also ascribes to this idea, when he states that Scottish Travellers have fallen from a place that was "quite high in the social scale, ricocheted down it with the passing of the

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[225] Reid, "Scottish Gypsies/Travellers and the Folklorists", *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity*, 31
[226] Neat, *The Summer Walkers*, vii
[227] Reid, "Scottish Gypsies/Travellers and the Folklorists", *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity*, 31
[228] MacRitchie, *Scottish Gypsies under the Stewarts*, 29
[229] Reid, "Scottish Gypsies/Travellers and the Folklorists", *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity*, 32

centuries."[230] As cairds or metal workers in Celtic times, Travellers would have been "exceptionally valuable members of society."[231] He suggests that the Travellers' use of Cant among themselves created social segregation, as it "cut them off from the ordinary clansmen".[232] Proponents of the "Indian theory", such as MacRitchie, hold that Gypsies were once welcome at the royal court, before their descent to the status of social outcasts. MacRitchie's research uncovered records that Gypsies danced before the King of Scotland at Holyrood court in 1530, and performed plays for the wealthy Roslin family in the mid-sixteenth century.[233] All of these origin theories depict Scottish Travellers as holding more favourable social positions in the past, before being reduced to the position of outlaws. It is as though the apex of their culture occurred hundreds of years previously.

Contemporary Scottish Travellers have also been cast as living an anachronistic lifestyle, as though, in the effort to conserve their culture, they have stagnated while settled culture has advanced. Donald Braid points out that a 1918 report on Scottish Travellers by the Departmental Committee on Tinkers in Scotland characterised them as "an immigrant race representing a stage of human development different from that current in the society into which they intruded".[234] Scottish Traveller researchers have also attempted to explain the persistence of nomadism by emphasising cultural conservatism. For example, Farnham Rehfisch, in *Gypsies, Tinkers and Other Travellers* (1975), states that Scottish Travellers "maintained themselves primarily by

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[230] Hamish Henderson, *Alias McAlias: The Collected Essays of Hamish Henderson* (Edinburgh: Polygon Press, 1992), 174
[231] Ibid.
[232] Ibid.
[233] MacRitchie, *Scottish Gypsies under the Stewarts*, 25 and 56
[234] Donald Braid, "The Construction of Identity Through Narrative: Folklore and the Travelling People of Scotland", *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity*, 42

holding tight to values and attitudes which are often in conflict with those of mass society."[235] If they had not done so, Rehfisch maintains, they would have merged into mainstream Scottish society. Neat, writing on the subject of Scottish Traveller origins in 1992, also concludes that they are "a group whose social forms have direct links with the pre-historic period and, perhaps, the Palaeolithic period".[236] Neat's description makes Traveller culture almost seem primeval due to its dependence on oral forms such as storytelling and singing.

The championing of Scottish Traveller storytelling and ballad singing by folklorists has brought Traveller culture to the attention of settled people in the UK and beyond. However, the representation of Travellers as custodians of an ancient culture can be unhelpful as it does not suggest how those cultural forms might be used. Donald Braid explains why this might occur:

> Folklore is often associated with that which is old, with tradition as conservation of the past. In this sense Travellers might be viewed as uncreative vessels of tradition, without the capacity to change what has been passed onto them. In temporal terms, if Travellers possess folklore they must maintain direct connections with the past and therefore they must not be living in the same temporal reality as the rest of us. They survive anachronistically in the modern world.[237]

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[235] Rehfisch, *Gypsies, Tinkers and Other Travellers*, 283
[236] Neat, *The Summer Walkers*, 223
[237] Braid, *Scottish Traveller Tales*, 43

It is unlikely that the song collectors and folklorists who interviewed Scottish Travellers such as Duncan Williamson and Jeannie Robertson, intended their research to create an unfavourable representation of their subjects. In a personal communication with Willie Reid, Hamish Henderson remarked that he envisaged his research not as "antiquarianism" but as a way of "looking at a culture that exists in the present day."[238] However, some aspects of his research, which ponder how the musical performance of Travellers might "reflect the life of primitive hunter tribesmen" suggest otherwise.[239] Emphasising the ancient roots of Traveller culture, even in the attempt to underline its historical importance, runs the risk of portraying Travellers as static carriers of culture, immune to the influences of modern life. It also obscures the practical issues facing contemporary Travellers and their concerns about changes to their culture. Depicting Travellers as static vessels of culture also vastly underplays their skills as tradition bearers, who constantly seek out new material to add to their repertoire, and are able to reinterpret established songs or stories for new audiences. Chapter two of this thesis discussed the oral transmission of culture, and how Scottish Traveller Duncan Williamson felt the presence of a "chain of voices", or the person who taught him each song and story, standing behind him as he performed them. In this way, Williamson was able to acknowledge his ancestors and reinterpret their material for the present and into the future.

Reid proposes another reason why research on Scottish Traveller culture has sought out its most ancient forms. Interest in Traveller culture was prompted by the Folk Revival in Scotland during the 1950s, when Edinburgh University founded the

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[238] Reid, "Scottish Gypsies/Travellers and the Folklorists", *Romani Culture and Gypsy Identity*, 33
[239] Henderson, *Alias McAlias*, 102

School of Scottish Studies. Reid reflects that the folklorists were not interested in Traveller songs and stories as an expression of Traveller identity, but saw them instead as a way of reclaiming a lost Scottish identity and ancient culture. He states that the oral tradition found among Scottish Travellers "represented an ancient oral form that was thought to be 'authentically Scottish'" and which predated the Anglicization of Scottish Society prompted by the 1707 Act of Union with England.[240] The discovery of Traveller oral culture can be seen as a positive event for some Traveller individuals, since it produced a number of 'stars' from the community, such as Duncan Williamson and Jeannie Robertson, who appeared on national radio and television programmes. It also brought attention to the community itself, providing what Reid describes as a "degree of respectability and social admiration" for Travellers, as previously their culture had received scant recognition.[241]

However, Travellers were also subject to a process of stereotyping, caused by the preconceptions of the researchers who studied them and their quest to find the remnants of an ancient Scottish culture. Reid believes that the folklorists "reshaped and remoulded" Travellers and their culture, emphasising "nationalistic characteristics that denied any Gypsiness (otherness) in our character."[242] By obscuring the differences between Traveller culture and mainstream Scottish identity, Traveller ballads and singers could be absorbed into a larger cultural revival. As the researchers of the GLS had done before them, the Scottish folklorists also sought out Travellers that best fit their idealised 'true' Gypsy model:

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[240] Ibid., 35
[241] Ibid.
[242] Ibid., 36

> A Traveller that was housed, informed and educated was rejected: only those who wandered with tents and were non-literate were accepted as 'true' Travellers. This stereotype seems ingrained upon the Scottish psyche. We must bear in mind that the folk researchers' focus was on the primitive and they only had a few Gypsy/Traveller informants. From these few they built up a distorted picture of Traveller/Gypsy life.[243]

Reid finds fault with the methodology of the researchers, who created a "culture of nostalgia" around Scottish Travellers, depicting them as carriers of "a culture that had its day, a culture that was fast disappearing."[244] However, unlike the GLS researchers, who searched for evidence of 'Indian' exoticism in the Gypsies they studied, the Scottish folklorists mined Traveller culture for symbols of Scottishness. Reid maintains that Scottish Traveller oral culture should be respected for what it truly is: an expression of the distinctiveness that has enabled Travellers to pursue a nomadic lifestyle. He describes Traveller oral culture as "an oracle that has carried us this far and cradled our distinctiveness throughout the ages" and urges Travellers to reclaim their songs and stories as an essential component of their own identity.[245]

This chapter has discussed the development of ideas surrounding the concept of the 'true' Gypsy, and the associated theory of Acton's scapegoat mechanism, where

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[243] Ibid.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid., 38

contemporary Gypsies and Travellers are denigrated for not living up to the 'exotic' fantasies constructed about them by settled people. For Gypsies, Irish Travellers and Scottish Travellers, nostalgia appears to have played a major part in the definition of what is deemed to be 'authentic' nomadic culture by mainstream society, as a range of academics, writers, and folklorists have attempted to represent both Irish Traveller and Scottish Traveller culture as relics of a forgotten past. Highlighting the antiquity of some aspects of Traveller culture can be a positive development, as this process can resist established and erroneous origin narratives. For example, Kuno Meyer's identification of a number of ancient Irish words in Cant or Shelta suggests that the language may have derived from pre-Cromwellian times. However, Meyer did not believe that Irish Travellers had the literacy or education to create Cant or Shelta, and instead assumed that they had inherited the language from settled people over a period of time. This case serves to underline the fact that the interpretation and representation of Gypsy and Traveller history is influenced by the attitudes and motivations of settled researchers. Gypsies and Travellers and their culture have also been used symbolically, as Romantic escapist figures, or to represent Scotland's ancient past. Representations of 'true' Gypsies from a past golden age can be used to criticise the lifestyles of contemporary Gypsies and Travellers, and also opens them up to accusations of cultural redundancy.

Stereotypical representations have sometimes proved useful for some Irish and Scottish Travellers. In her memoir, Nan Joyce describes an occasion where she donned a headscarf and large hooped earrings in order to appear more 'exotic' or authentically Gypsy, and in doing so was able to attract more trade from settled people. Willie

MacPhee and the Stewart family also performed regularly in tartan kilts and other items of Scottish regalia to emphasise their Scottish identity. Although such behaviour may have increased the popularity and success of certain Traveller musicians or traders, it does nothing to further the accurate representation of contemporary Travellers and their culture.

The process of stereotyping and judging appears to have no end, as the scapegoat mechanism has also been attached to New Travellers in recent years. Ní Shúinéar comments that she was intrigued by the contents of a British documentary, where local residents claimed that "they had no objection to 'genuine Romanies' (nothing new there), *nor* to 'Irish Tinkers' (a first!), but only to New Age Travellers."[246] This is reminiscent of the manner in which some UK councils attempted to label all the Gypsies in their locality as mere "tinkers", rather than 'true' Gypsies, for which they would be happy to provide the necessary accommodation. The arrival of Roma in the UK and Ireland has also prompted the re-emergence of negative newspaper and television coverage, focussing on stories linking Gypsies to criminality. For all the criticism the GLS writers attracted for their promotion of Gypsy subtypes and the hierarchy of the 'true' Gypsy, it would appear that, over two centuries later, mainstream society is still categorising and judging Gypsies and Travellers in a damaging way.

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[246] Ní Shúinéar, "Why do Gaujos hate Gypsies so much, anyway?", *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity*, 26 (original emphasis)

Conclusion

"Music in the Glen", the title of this thesis, was inspired by a reel of the same name which is often performed by traditional Irish musicians, including Travellers. As is typical of many traditional Irish tunes, "Music in the Glen" is known by a number of other names, including "Down on the Hollow Low Land", and "Ceol Sa Ghleann" in the Irish language. The multiple names ascribed to the same reel can be seen as a reflection of how music is interpreted and remembered in different ways by different musicians. Similarly, a Traveller singer may perform the same song as a non-Traveller, but will reinterpret the lyrics from their own cultural standpoint. The phrase "music in the glen" also connotes images of musicians playing outdoors, framed against a wild landscape. These images resemble some of the more romantic stereotypes surrounding Gypsies and Travellers, including notions of freedom, a residence in the countryside, and a 'wild' style of piping like Johnny Doran's, which was thought to have been influenced by his nomadic lifestyle.

One stereotype that will often accompany the 'true' Gypsy is the flamboyant Gypsy fiddle player. By exploring the memoirs of Irish and Scottish Travellers, many of which depict the lives of musicians and singers, it is possible that this thesis risks establishing a similar stereotype, that all Irish and Scottish Travellers are talented musicians. This is not the case; rather, many of the individuals who have published memoirs were able to do so because of their musical talents, which led settled folklorists and song collectors to seek to contact them. This is particularly true for Scottish Traveller biographies and autobiographies, since Duncan Williamson, Belle

Stewart, Sheila Stewart, Elizabeth Stewart, Willie MacPhee and Jeannie Robertson all gained wider recognition outside their own families and communities through the School of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh University.

What is more, Traveller musicians may sometimes use their musical abilities to distance themselves from their own communities. Alen MacWeeney discovered that some Traveller musicians assert an identity which distances them from other Travellers. This behaviour has a parallel in Roma culture. Visiting a village in Romania, Margaret Beissinger observed a separation of identity between professional Roma musicians or *lautari* and other Roma. The musicians tended to view themselves as an elite, a separate class from their Roma neighbours, and closer in culture to sedentary Romanians. In turn, many Romanians viewed the *lautari* with more respect than other Roma. Beissinger observed that the construction of a 'separate' identity was a valuable social and economic tool for the musicians:

> Romani musicians play with the boundaries of ethnicity and class because in doing so they are enabled to elevate themselves, thereby gaining prestige and economic security. They are agents in the making of cultural difference as they seek both to blur as well as to clarify the boundaries between themselves and other groups in society. Through their discourse on ethnicity, class, culture, and politics, Romani musicians manipulate boundaries between themselves and

> others in order to associate themselves with the socially powerful, disassociate themselves from the powerless, and enhance their market niche and status.[1]

By distancing themselves from the stereotypes attributed to Roma, the *lautari* could interact with sedentary Romanians more easily, and gain employment at weddings, baptisms, village celebrations and local restaurants. However, this could only be achieved at the expense of denying aspects of their wider Roma identity. Beissinger also noted that some of the *lautari* individuals she interviewed reinforced the negative stereotypes surrounding Roma, describing them as "uncivilised" and "illiterate".[2] Yet, in other ways, the *lautari* were able to exploit their 'otherness', as they played 'Gypsy' music, and their connections to Roma culture allowed them to stand out from other musicians.

Some Traveller musicians appear to have enjoyed a higher status than other Travellers among settled communities, due to their musical talents. However, a key difference between professional Irish and Scottish Traveller musicians and the *lautari* is their engagement in varied modes of work. This combination of work and music, explored in Chapter Three, enables Traveller musicians to represent aspects of their culture, as they are still immersed in issues common to other Travellers. Their skills and status as musicians also give them a means of communication with settled society. In this way, songs can communicate concerns about Traveller evictions, discrimination and perceived changes in the relationship between Travellers and settled people. The

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[1] Margaret H. Beissinger, "Occupation and Ethnicity: Constructing Identity among Professional Romani (Gypsy) Musicians in Romania", *Slavic Review* 60. 1 (2001), 26
[2] Ibid., 38

traditional Traveller economy is represented in songs about tin-smithing, fruit-picking, and rag or scrap collection. Yet, it is interesting to note that Travellers have increasingly moved away from these occupations, and there are as yet no songs about Travellers working as barristers, health care workers, or academics in Traveller song collections or memoirs. Although Traveller songs about work help to remind settled people that Travellers were once an essential part of the rural workforce and economy, they possibly do little to dispel modern stereotypes of idleness and welfare dependence. In this context, publications by organisations including the Irish Traveller Movement promote the modern face of the Traveller economy. The *Inspiring Traveller Men* booklet provides examples of Traveller men in a variety of roles, including health care workers, a subeditor for *Travellers' Voice* magazine, a community development manager, an actor and writer, an Emergency First Responder and a trainee Garda. Some of the men in the booklet pursue traditional Traveller crafts and sports, including tin-smithing, miniature wagon building and boxing, while others are involved in community roles, working to represent the rights of Irish Travellers and address issues including mental health. Where Traveller musicians and their songs once provided one of the few ways in which Traveller rights could be brought into the open, more Travellers are now able to voice their concerns via community organisations.

Chapter Four explored the ways in which songs and stories are used by some Travellers to pass on knowledge and instil cultural traits that are essential to a nomadic existence. Duncan Williamson's animal tales and Jack stories reflect the sophistication and skill contained in the process of storytelling. Alongside the pride many Travellers hold in their oral culture, parents also recognise the importance of literacy and

education for their children, despite the fear of assimilation that accompanies mainstream education. This increasing engagement with literacy is reflected in the growing body of Traveller memoir writing. For some Travellers, including Duncan Williamson, who produced his memoir and a series of children's books with his settled academic wife, the tensions created by a shift of culture towards literacy cause them to question their identity. Conversely, fellow Scottish Traveller Jess Smith, in publishing a book about Scottish Gypsy and Traveller history, *Way of the Wanderers*, has begun to address the omission of Travellers in the history of Scotland. Her book combines oral history with written accounts of Gypsies and Travellers by settled people, and suggests a possible format for honouring Traveller orality in the future. The internet has the potential to present Traveller history and culture in the most accessible way for both Travellers and non-Travellers alike. An online archive of research into Traveller culture, including the historical interaction of Travellers and settled communities, could be combined with sound and video clips of Traveller interviews, songs and stories. In this way, sedentary research and views of Travellers could be balanced and responded to by Traveller opinions and experiences. Some organisations have already started to create their own version of this type of interface, including the *Traveller Heritage* website by Navan Travellers' Workshop. Researchers, such as Sinéad Ní Shúinéar, have engaged in the production of Traveller oral histories, and some of her work is included on this website. However, a large amount of material, now accessible in the various online folksong collections, could be combined into a larger project, making it easier for those less knowledgeable about individual singers and storytellers to learn about Traveller culture. This would require an investment of time and money,

something that sedentary society in the UK and Ireland is often loath to provide to Travellers. In a climate of austerity, with numerous funding cuts to Traveller education and community services, the creation of a Traveller cultural archive seems very far off.

Newspapers and national news programmes are still the chief platforms through which settled people learn about Travellers. As shown in Chapter Five, despite the existence of outlines on how to report on issues surrounding Travellers, including the Code of Conduct by the National Union of Journalists and the Code of Practise by the Press Complaints Commission, Travellers continue to be represented negatively in the press, with stories about 'invasions' of caravans, dirt and criminality outnumbering more positive articles. Reality shows featuring Travellers, including *Big Brother* and *The Voice of Ireland*, have increased the representation of Travellers on mainstream television and provided positive examples of their skills and talents. However, other programmes, including *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings*, have arguably created new stereotypes which revolve around heavy make-up, ostentatious wedding dresses and the denigration of women through the fictional practise of 'grabbing'. Negative representations of Travellers by the media have been challenged through Traveller organisations in Ireland and the UK, prompting investigations by the Advertising Standards Agency, Traveller publications such as the *Travellers' Times*, and also by individual settled journalists.

Negative coverage of Travellers in the mainstream media is not easy to resolve, but part of the answer may lie in better representation of Traveller culture. Ewan MacColl's ground-breaking 'radio ballad' *The Travelling People* brought the voices and songs of Travellers into the homes and consciousness of settled people in the

1960s. Since then, radio has continued to provide an important medium through which Travellers can be represented in a progressive way. In 2014, *Pavee Paths*, a series of radio interviews by Margaret Scully for Today.fm, explored contemporary aspects of Traveller culture.[3] Over eight programmes, a selection of Irish Travellers discussed their roles as musicians, Olympic medallists, academics and actors, highlighting the range of roles and opportunities undertaken by Travellers in Ireland today.

Where Traveller music is featured in the mainstream press and television, representations are usually more positive, one example being the series *A Gypsy Life For Me*, which follows Traveller and Gypsy 'mentors' as they select musicians for a talent show. The inclusion of a Cant song by Jack Delaney in an episode of the Irish drama series *Love/Hate* (2014) was a seminal moment in the portrayal of Traveller culture on mainstream television. The decision by the creator of the series to seek the guidance of Travellers in creating dialogue, and to employ Traveller actors and crew, provides a positive example of how Travellers could be represented in future drama productions. However, there are also talented Traveller playwrights, authors, and artists who deserve greater recognition in settled society. Rosaleen McDonagh, a Traveller academic, activist, writer and actor, has written several plays and published articles which address aspects of Traveller identity, and explore issues of discrimination, sexuality, disability and feminism. Her play *The Babydoll Project* received a Metro Eireann Multi-Cultural Award (MAMA) award in 2003, and she was also shortlisted

[3] Margaret Scully, "Pavee Paths", *Margaret Scully website*. May 6, 2014. <http://margaretscully.com/?page_id=3649>

for the P.J. O'Connor radio play Awards in 2010.[4] McDonagh is currently working on several drama projects, including *Protegee,* which is inspired by Colum McCann's novel *Zoli*, based on the Roma poet Papusza, and a feature-length production, *Unseen*, in development with RTÉ.[5]

The work of artist, writer and poet Juanita Casey also deserves further attention. For most of her life, Casey believed that she was born to an Irish Traveller mother and Gypsy father, and she was adopted into a privileged settled family in Hampshire. Only in her seventies did Casey learn that her parents may not have been nomadic. Casey experienced a varied life, and she spent time living on a farm, a trawler-boat and travelling in a barrel-top wagon, before moving to Ireland. Casey developed an interest in Gypsy songs, and in 1954 Ralph Vaughan Williams recorded her version of "Raggle Taggle Gypsy" whilst she was living among Gypsies in the New Forest.[6] Casey's novel *The Horse of Selene*, published in 1971, brought her success and critical acclaim. Gordon Henderson interviewed Casey for the *Irish Journal of Literature* in 1972, and featured a selection of her work, "A Grab-bag of Juanita Casey" in a subsequent volume.[7] *The Horse of Selene*, set on the fictional island of Aranchilla in the west of Ireland, explores themes of freedom and islander identity, emphasising the fluidity and itinerancy of the population. This contrasts against Revival conceptions of the islands of Aran and Achill as places of pilgrimage, embodying ancient Irish culture and

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[4] Kaite O Reilly, "20 questions… Rosaleen McDonagh", *kaiteoreilly website*. September 17, 2013. <http://kaiteoreilly.wordpress.com/2013/09/17/20-questions-rosaleen-mcdonagh/>

[5] Ibid.

[6] Juanita Berlin, "A-Down to a valley a Gipsy came", *Ralph Vaughan Williams Manuscript Collection,* British Library, 1954. *Vaughan Williams Memorial Library website*. Accessed December 13, 2014. <http://www.vwml.org/record/RVW2/12/4/3>

[7] Gordon Henderson, "An Interview with Juanita Casey", *Journal of Irish Literature* (Sept. 1972), 41-45; Juanita Casey, "A Grab-bag of Juanita Casey", *Journal of Irish Literature*, X. 2 (May 1981)

untouched by modern development. Mary Burke describes Casey as "the most critically attended to of all writers who currently identify as Traveller", and states that she is apparently "gradually being enfolded into the Irish literary canon."[8] However, interest in Casey appears to have waned over the past thirty years. Her work, together with some of the more literary Traveller autobiographies such as Sean Maher's *The Road to God Knows Where*, provide an important alternative voice which challenges the established notion of Ireland as a unified and homogenous society.

The nostalgia Travellers feel for their lost traditions and nomadism is often expressed in their songs. The fact that Travellers and settled musicians compose these types of song also illustrates that individuals in both groups believe that their relationship has changed for the worse in contemporary times. However, as Chapter Six discussed, songs including 'Pops' Johnny Connor's "Battle of Brownhills", show that the past was not always rosy and that tragedies have occurred during evictions. Jimmy Williamson's "The Good Old Days" also demonstrates that Travellers are aware of the nostalgia surrounding their culture. It is possible that memoir writing has become so popular among Scottish and Irish Travellers because it allows them to immerse themselves in childhood nostalgia. This may also be the reason why settled people are drawn to read the autobiographies of Travellers. Compared to modern representations, Traveller memoirs depict a life punctuated by the familiar images of tents, horses and barrel-top wagons. These traditional elements of Traveller culture are what many settled people believe to embody the 'true' Gypsy or nomad.

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[8] Burke, *'Tinkers'*, 214

Chapter Seven explored how pervasive the idea of the 'true' Gypsy became in representations of Gypsies and Travellers, and how it is still influential in settled peoples' perceptions today. Less stereotypical representations of Travellers, in the form of songs, memoirs, publications by Traveller organisations and community campaigns, all play a part in debunking the idea of the 'true' Gypsy and "scapegoat mechanism" that has developed from it. However, the sheer volume of material discussed in the chapter illustrates the enormity of the challenge. Like the many writers who contributed to Said's concept of the Orient, Travellers and their culture are competing against hundreds of years of nostalgia, misrepresentation and suspicion. Discussions by the settled community about Traveller accommodation and discrimination still prompt questions over ethnic authenticity and origin theories. As long as there is a withholding of ethnic recognition for Travellers, this situation will only continue. In Ireland, Irish Travellers are not yet recognised by law as a separate ethnic group. This reduces the legal options available to Irish Travellers when attempting to improve their living conditions, such as applying for planning permission. It also allows their culture to be viewed as less authentic than other minority groups. However, even with the recognition of ethnic identity, it is inevitable that the old stereotypes will still affect Gypsy and Irish and Scottish Traveller involvement in mainstream society for a long time to come.

John Szwed, a musician and researcher in social anthropology and folk music, has outlined the connection between song and culture:

> If we are to understand folksongs, if we are to make sense of their use by a people, there must be a concerted effort to discover the ethnographic reality of a song: that is, we must try to understand the native conception of reality that lies behind a song, motivates it, and relates the verbal content of the song to the content of other areas of a culture.[9]

By exploring the significance of music to Irish and Scottish Travellers, this thesis has shown the complexity and heterogeneity of Traveller culture, and explored its interactions with mainstream UK and Irish culture. The collection of songs under discussion is in no way exhaustive, but provides a voice for nomadic groups whose history and culture have been greatly occluded within sedentary society. Traveller culture needs to be promoted as valuable to Travellers and settled people, and the contribution of Travellers to wider Irish and British society should be acknowledged. Song collectors and musicians were among the first members of settled society to recognise the worth of Traveller culture, and continue to show their appreciation through their own music. In 2012, the musician and song-collector Sam Lee recorded *Ground of Its Own*, a Mercury-Music-Prize-nominated album of songs sourced from Gypsy, Irish Traveller and Scottish Traveller communities in Ireland and the UK.[10] Lee is proud of his association with Scottish Traveller singer and storyteller Stanley Robertson, and acknowledges his influence in his song repertoire and performances. Lynched, an Irish folk group, also recorded several English Gypsy and Irish Traveller

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[9] John Szwed, "Paul E. Hall: A Newfoundland Song-Maker and Community of Song," *Folksongs and Their Makers*, by Henry Glassie, Edward D. Ives, and John Szwed (Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1970), 150

[10] Sam Lee, *Ground of Its Own* (The Nest Collective 2012)

songs on their 2014 album *Cold Old Fire*.[11] Irish and Scottish Travellers, including Jack Delaney and Jimmy Williamson have also continued to create new music and songs.

James Porter and Herschel Gower have argued that "stories and ballads are cognitive maps to traveller history" [sic].[12] Traveller songs are significant because they represent the viewpoints of a group of individuals whose traditions and involvement in history have been continuously occluded, debated and stereotyped. As a body of work, Traveller songs make up one segment of folk music, which provides an ephemeral voice to populations within society which have previously been underrepresented in official historical accounts.

[11] Lynched, *Cold Old Fire* (Lynched Music, 2014)
[12] Porter and Gower, *Jeannie Robertson*, 14

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Appendix One

Traveller Songs Featuring Work

1.1 Willie MacPhee's Song

Scottish Traveller Willie MacPhee wrote this song to celebrate his economic flexibility and his ability to become "maister o mony's a trade". The lyrics and musical notation for the song appear in MacPhee's biography, *Last of the Tinsmiths*, written by Sheila Douglas. Douglas met MacPhee in the 1960s and recorded several of his stories and songs for part of her doctoral research. "Willie MacPhee's Song" is included in Douglas' field recordings, which are stored in the Sound Archive in the School of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh University. MacPhee can also be heard performing a different song, entitled "Jamie Foyers", on the album *Ballads from Perthshire Field Recordings of the 1950s* by the School of Scottish Studies Archives. "Willie MacPhee's Song" lists many of the jobs and services Travellers would perform for settled people, but also draws attention to the hardships caused by the lack of Traveller accommodation, and persecution by the police. MacPhee's reference to building a "rocket" may have been influenced by the English Gypsy Jasper Smith, who was also a singer and one of the founder members of the Gypsy Council. Smith apparently built a twenty-five foot cardboard rocket outside his caravan site as a protest against his family's eviction, suggesting that the only place they would be allowed to camp would be on the moon.

It was in nineteen ten that I first saw day-licht,
In a hoose wi a roof and a fireside bricht.
My mither and faither warked hard on the fairm,
And they did as they could for tae keep me frae harm.

One day when the crops were aa planted and hoed
Ma dad took the notion tae gang on the road
We travelled through Scotland and Ireland as well
And that was my schoolin the truth for tae tell.

On the road a guid livin's no easily made
So I became maister o mony's a trade:
Tinsmithin an pipin an fairmwork tae
And ony ither job that I fund for tae dae.

I'm a dab hand at makkin the baskets an creels
Or playin pipe mairches an strathspeys an reels
I can mend an auld engine or cure a lame horse
And I like best tae camp, amang heather and gorse.

But times aye get harder an when the work's done
The polis arrive and they're movin us on.
O ye cannae camp here and ye cannae camp there

Sune the wan place that's left'll be up in the air.

So I'll tak a rocket an gang tae the mune
I'll find a guid campsite an never come doun.
When you hear ma pipes playing clear, loud and high
Ye'll ken Willie MacPhee's in his hame in the sky.

1.2 The Old Soldering Bolt

Written by Scottish Traveller Duncan Williamson, this song or poem appears in his autobiography, *The Horsieman: Memoirs of a Traveller 1928-58*. There are no known recordings of Williamson performing "The Old Soldering Bolt", but many of his more well-known songs and stories are included in the two-volume CD collection *Travellers' Tales: Songs, Stories and Ballads from Scottish Travellers* by Mike Yates. "The Old Soldering Bolt" contains details about the craft of tin-smithing, including two of the many items which Travellers made: a skillet frying pan, and a "toaster" for holding bread over an open fire. Scots dialect words also feature in the song: a "cruisie" is a small paraffin lamp, and "but and ben" is a Scottish two-roomed cottage. Tin-smithing is now a minority skill among Travellers, who have adapted their skills to earn money in different ways, but as the song shows, the tin-smith is still an important symbol of Traveller culture and tradition.

O I was a piece of copper
As shiny as a star

A lovely piece of copper

Cut from a copper bar.

I was taken and battered

Battered and hammered and rolled

And made by the hands of an old tinkerman

Into a soldering bolt.

O he was a fine old tinsmith

He knew all the tricks of the trade

He knew how to solder a skillet

And how a toaster was made.

O happy were the days I spent

With my head shiny with tin

And handsome was the little bag

He always kept me in.

I remember the happy days I had

With a cruisie burning overhead

While beside me sat the good old wife

A-baking oatmeal bread.

Then as we wandered the old cart roads

After doing a job or two

From a little hole in his bag

I tumbled and fell through.

Now here I lie upon the grass
I am getting green with mould
My handle's getting rusty
I am no more the colour of gold.
Will ever I see another fire
Or mend another pot?
Or must I lie here forever
Among the grass to rot?

But I hope someday in the future
I will be found again
And hung in a place of honour
In somebody's but and ben.

1.3 The Rambling Candyman

Performed by Irish Traveller "Rich" Johnny Connors in the early 1970s, this song is included in the song collection *From Puck to Appleby: Songs of the Irish Travellers* by Jim Carroll and Pat Mackenzie. Sharon Gmelch also included the song lyrics and musical notation to "The Rambling Candyman" in her publication *Tinkers and Travellers*. Rag and scrap collecting could be a profitable business, and is still pursued by a number of contemporary Travellers. In the notes to their recording, Carroll and

Mackenzie remark that Connors appeared to have based his song on an earlier version, entitled "The Travelling Candyman", which was collected by Seamus Ennis in 1954 from Jennie Davison of County Antrim, Ireland.

> The day that I left Ireland, sure things were very slack;
> I rambled over to Glasgow and I'm wishing to get back.
> I was gathering old pot metal and more times bones and rags;
> Sure all the little different things I put into different bags.
> To see all the little kiddies with their bones stuck in their hands
> And enquiring for Johnny Connors, he's a rambling candy man.
>
> An old man come to me one day, thought I was rather green,
> Down in the corner of his sack there were bricks you could plainly see.
> Sure I said, "Old man, take up your sack, sure I'm not in the game.
> You can't handle bricks or mortar to any rambling candy man."

1.4 The Travelling Candyman

This song is an earlier version of "The Rambling Candyman" and is attributed to Pat O' Flanagan. The lyrics and musical notation for the song are included in Peter Kennedy's songbook *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, which is a transcription of the original 1954 recording sung by Jennie Davison and collected by Seamus Ennis. The same recording is reproduced on Kennedy's album *The Roving Journeyman: Songs of the Travellers*, which also contains a selection of other field recordings he used to compile

a chapter of his book on Traveller and Gypsy songs. In "The Travelling Candyman", a chorus is used to open the song, and is repeated after each of the verses, giving the song a more traditional song structure. In this version of the song, a woman gets the better of the candyman, and she punches him when he does not assent to her demands.

(Chorus)

For I take in old iron

I take in old bones and rags

And all other different kinds of stuff

And I put them in separate bags.

For I have travelled this country o'er

And I'm known by everyone

My name is Pat O Flanagan

I'm a travelling candyman.

For I'm sailed over from Belfast

The work it was very slack

And when I landed in Glasgow

I was wishing to get back.

I searched for work but no work could I find

So I struck on another plan

I came to the conclusion that

I would be a candyman.

(Repeat Chorus)

A woman came up the other day

And she said she had lost her frock

Said she: My good man, come and tumble it out

For I know it is in your stock.

Says I: My good woman, your frock is not here

And no more of your lip I will stand

Bedad, she up with her ug-e-ly fists

And she nailed the candyman.

(Repeat Chorus)

1.5 Glen Isla

In this song, Scottish Traveller Belle Stewart reflects on the hard conditions her family sometimes endured, in order to make enough money to survive. Rag collecting in the Scottish Highlands could be a very cold, grim experience. No public recording of the song exists, for the reasons explained in Ewan MacColl's study of the Stewart family, *Till Doomsday in the Afternoon*. Songs like "Glen Isla", which include specific references to family members, appear to have been written by Stewart only to be sung at private occasions. The nostalgia and melancholy contained in this song also contrasts strongly with the more celebratory "Berry Fields of Blair", which was performed for many different audiences. "Glen Isla" also appears in Belle Stewart's memoir, *Queen Amang the Heather*, which was written by her daughter, Sheila. The song contains

many Scots dialect and Scottish Traveller Cant words, which are possible to interpret with the help of a glossary at the front of the book. Some examples are: "shielin", which is a small hut, and "mallin promise", a type of raspberry bush. "Blaw" is a Scots word for oatmeal, and a "wee puckle" is a small amount of something. To "trachle" is to struggle, hence "trachled" means "struggled." To "crack" is to talk and have a good time, like the Irish "craic."

Keen blaws the wind roond the nooks o the shielin,
His auld mallin promise are covered wi sna,
Hoo changed fae the times since we went up Glen Isla,
Lookin for rags or a wee taste o blaw.

We went up by Forter, or maybe the Linns,
Lookin for rags or a wee puckle skins,
Naebody kent on what we had to bear,
The hardships and cauld till we got back to Blair.

But me and my mother we aye trachled through,
And we aye got the price o a wee taste o brew,
And Donald and Jimmy, they aye did their share
And that was the reason we never left Blair.

Times they have changed, but we cannae help that,

And money's a nicht when we sit doon tae crack,

We think on wir mither wha noo is awa,

But it's grand tae hae memories that we can reca.

1.6 Calling Card

Belle Stewart's "calling cards" were not sung, but were posted through the letter boxes of an area of houses, and members of the family would call back two hours later to collect any items offered to them. In her autobiography *A Traveller's Life*, Sheila Stewart remembers these cards as providing an alternative to door-to-door hawking, and they proved to be a great success. The Stewart family's "calling cards" were based on a traditional method of drumming up business, known as a hawker's cry or street cry, used by many street traders including Gypsies and Travellers. Mike Yates recorded and transcribed several cries from Gypsy lavender sellers in his songbook *Traveller's Joy*. One example of a street cry, "Sweet Blooming Lavender", by English Gypsy Janet Penfold, is included in Peter Kennedy's compilations *The Roving Journeyman: Songs of the Travellers*, and *I'm a Romany Rai: Songs Sung by English Gypsies and Traditional Singers*. Peter Kennedy also transcribed an impressively long street cry of forty-six lines, which he collected from English Gypsy Solomon Smith, in *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*. The same lines appear in Dominic Reeve's memoir *Smoke in the Lanes*, fashioned into a "calling card" by a Gypsy trader.

Dear madam, I'm calling your district today,

When you pick up my card please don't throw it away,

Just you sit down and read it, you never can tell,

You may have some old junk that you want to sell.

Perhaps an old mattress, or maybe some brass,

For old stuff like that is far better in cash,

You may have some jewellery that you no longer like,

Or a second-hand car, or your husband's old bike.

Your old rags and woollens are of no further use,

I am sure they are far better oot o' the hoose,

And your old cast-off clothing, your ain or your man's,

Your old iron pots, or your brass jelly pans.

They are the things that I'm after, tae mention a few,

So get up and get busy, gie the hoose a guid do,

And you'll no be sorry when I call to collect,

I'm the first honest dealer that you've ever met.

1.7 The Berry Fields o Blair

Belle Stewart's song describes the variety of people who came to Blairgowrie in Scotland every year to pick the strawberries and raspberries. Lyrics to the song appear in both memoirs *Queen Amang the Heather* and *A Travellers' Life*. Belle Stewart only began to write songs quite late in her life, and composed "The Berry Fields o Blair" at

Hogmanay in 1947. The song proved so popular that she was asked to create a new song for the same occasion every year. Sheila Stewart describes the berry-picking as a great social event, "the highlight of each year", where Travellers and settled people from throughout Scotland would meet up and work in the fields. There would be a musical concert held by Travellers every Saturday night, and berry-picking gave Traveller families a chance to meet and spend some time together. "The Berry Fields o Blair" is one of the best-known Scottish Traveller songs, and the lyrics and musical notation for the song appear in the *Romano Drom Songbook* by Denise Stanley, and Peter Kennedy's *Folk Songs of Britain and Ireland*. Recordings of Belle Stewart performing "The Berry Fields o Blair" have been included on many different compilations, including *There is A Man Upon the Farm: Working Men and Women in Song* recorded from various artists. The song is also included on Belle Stewart's album *Queen Among the Heather* and the Stewart Family's *The Stewarts of Blair*. A recording of Belle Stewart singing "The Berryfields of Blair" collected in 1955 by Maurice Fleming for the School of Scottish Studies can be accessed from the *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist O Riches* website.

When berry time comes roond each year,
Blair's population swelling,
There's every kind o picker there
And every kind o dwellin.
There's tents and huts and caravans,
There's bothies and their bivvies

And shelters made wi tattie-bags

And dug-outs made wi divvies.

There's corner-boys fae Glesgae,

Kettle-boilers fae Laochee,

There's miners fae the pits o Fife,

Mill-workers fae Dundee

And fisherfolk fae Peterheid

And tramps fae everywhere

Aa lookin fir a livin aff

The berry fields o Blair.

There's travellers fae the Western Isles,

Fae Arran, Mull and Skye;

Fae Harris, Lewis and Kyles o Bute,

They come their luck to try.

Fae Inverness and Aberdeen,

Fae Stornoway and Wick

Aa flock to Blair at the berry time,

The straws and rasps to pick.

There's some wha earn a pound or twa,

Some cannae earn their keep,

There's some wid pick fae morn till nicht,

And some wid raither sleep.

There's some wha has tae pick or stairve,

And some wha dinnae care

There's comedy and tragedy

Played on the fields o Blair.

There's families pickin for one purse,

And some wha pick alane,

There's men wha share and share alike

Wi wives wha's no their aine.

There's gladness and there's sadness tae,

There's happy herts and sare,

For there's some wha bless and some wha curse

The berry fields o Blair.

Before I put my pen awa,

It's this I would like to say:

You'll travel far afore you'll meet

A kinder lot than they;

For I've mixed wi them in field and pub

And while I've breath to spare,

I'll bless the hand that lead me tae

The berry fields o Blair.

1.8 Wexford Town

Written by Pecker Dunne, this autobiographical song discusses Dunne's musical heritage and how he learned to earn a living through his music. Dunne also addresses further themes in "Wexford Town", including his relationship with his father, and the mixed feelings he held about his home town, due to the prejudice of some settled people who lived there. The song lyrics are included in his autobiography, *Parley-Poet and Chanter*, which was first published with an accompanying CD. "Wexford Town" is one of Dunne's best-known songs, and is included on his albums *The Very Best of Pecker Dunne*, and *Real*.

My family lived in Wexford town,
Stopped travelling and settled down.
Though me father kept a horse and car,
Oh, we lived within a town.
The people there misunderstood,
Oh, they did not know our ways,
So with horse and car back on the road,
I began my travelling days.

My father was called the Fiddler Dunne,
And I'm a fiddler too,

Although I often felt his fist,

He taught me all he knew.

I know I'll never be as good,

And yet I feel no shame.

For the other things my father taught,

I am proud to bear his name.

He taught me pride and how to live

Though the road is hard and long

And how a man will never starve

With a banjo, fiddle or song,

And how to fight for what I own,

And what I feel is right

And how to camp beside a ditch,

On a stormy winter's night.

O times were good, and times were bad,

And people cruel and kind.

But what I learned of people then,

Has stayed within my mind.

I'll honour friends with all my heart,

Do for them all I can,

But I've learnt to go the road again,

When they spurn a Travelling man.

O Wexford is a town I like,
But the travelling man is scorned,
And a man must feel affection for
The town where he was reared.
I know one day that I'll go back,
When my travelling days are done,
And people will begin to wonder
What happened to the Pecker Dunne?

1.9 The Last of the Travelling People

In this song, Pecker Dunne mentions how he earned money by busking in pubs. He also played at GAA games and in the streets of many towns in Ireland. The title of the song reflects Dunne's concerns about changes to Traveller culture, and suggests that he thinks the next generation may not be able to enjoy the same traditional lifestyle as he did. Therefore, Dunne feels that he is the "last" of his line. The melody is taken from a traditional Irish song, known as the "Limerick Rake", but Dunne's lyrics appear to have been inspired by another version, which uses the same melody to create a worker's song for truck-drivers: "Champion at Keepin' 'em Rolling", arranged by Ewan MacColl. The first verses of "Champion at Keepin' 'em Rolling" and "Last of the Travelling People" are almost identical, including the line "I'm well known to Blondie and Mary". Dunne obviously found many similarities between his own life as a

Travelling musician and that of a truck driver, and some Travellers have diversified into the haulage business, notably the Uilleann piper Felix Doran. The lyrics for the song "The Last of the Travelling People" are discussed in Dunne's autobiography, and a performance of the song is included on the accompanying CD. The song also appears on the album *The Very Best of Pecker Dunne*. The lyrics and musical notation for "Champion at Keepin' 'em Rolling" are included in *The Essential Ewan MacColl Songbook* and a performance of the song by The Dubliners is included on their album *The Best of the Original Dubliners*.

I'm an old timer, I've travelled the road,
I sit in me wagon and lumber me load,
A hotel is me jungle, the cab's me abode,
I'm well known to Blondie and Mary.

Oh, me name it is Paddy, I'm called Pecker Dunne,
My cry, it is "All for all, one for one",
I walk the road, but I never run
I'm the last of the Travelling people.

With me banjo and fiddle I yarn in song,
I'll sing to all people who do me no wrong.
But if others despise me I'll just move along,
I know I'll find friends in the morning.

Arra, money is money and friends they are friends,
But drinking with them is where all money ends,
For it isn't on money, it's on them I depend
When times and the guards are against me.

From Belfast to Wexford, from Clare to Tralee,
A town with a pub is a living for me.
I haven't a home, but by God I am free
I'm the last of the Travelling people.

Oh, the road isn't easy but it's what I choose,
I'm not always a winner, but I'll never lose,
I've the pride of me race and the last of the few
And I live like my father taught me.

Now I'm on the road again travelling still,
Summer and winter keep travelling I will,
For the road it is long and I know it will kill
The last of the Travelling people.

Appendix Two

Traveller Family Songs

2.1 Cash the Piper

The lyrics of this song about the famous Travelling piper John Cash appear in Captain O'Neill's *Irish Minstrels and Musicians*. There does not appear to be any recorded performances of the song, or musical notation, in existence. Although the people mentioned in the song are unknown, and the song gives few details about the piper, the fact that a song was written about Cash demonstrates that his skills were held in high regard.

My name is "Cash the Piper,"
And I'm seen at race and fair;
I'm known to all the jolly souls
From Wicklow to Kildare;
I've played at dance and wedding
From Bray to Clonegal,
But the cream of entertainment
Was at "Mick the Dalty's" ball.

I received a special order
To attend at eight o'clock;
I took the train to Rathdrum,

Then walked to Glendalough.

The boys around the neighborhood

Assembled one and all,

Saying, "You're welcome, 'Cash the Piper,'

To "Mick the Dalty's" ball.

And when I entered I beheld

A table brimming o'er

With beef and bread and bacon,

And stout and punch galore;

We all sat down and ate our fill,

Like cattle in a stall,

For "eat and drink"- it was the word

At "Mick the Dalty's" ball.

The feast being o'er, the cloth removed,

I played a dashing reel,

When one young lady on the floor

Displayed a toe and heel,

With "Will the Dalty", "Will the gaum",

For such I must him call;

He slapped his flat foot on the floor

At "Mick the Dalty's" ball.

The family names were "Jim" and "Will",

With "Andy" and old "Mick";

The guests were "Tom" and "Paddy" too,

And Martin, Hugh, and "Dick",

There was Mary, Kate, and Nancy,

With one they did not call -

All danced before me on the floor,

At "Mick the Dalty's" ball.

And when the dance was over,

The dancers all sat down;

In tumblers, tins and teacups,

The punch went steaming round,

While rough and ready Hugh struck up,

And sang the "Ould Plaid Shawl",

Which brought three cheers with laughter loud

At "Mick the Dalty's" ball.

The longest night must have its dawn,

The sweetest pleasures end,

The jolliest crowd must part at last,

And home their footsteps bend,

So when loud upon our revels rang

The cock's loud morning call,

We all shook hands and took our leave

Of "Mick the Dalty's" ball.

2.2 In Memory of Johnny Doran

Composed by Traveller piper Finbar Furey, this poem is included in the section on Johnny Doran in *Free Spirits: Irish Travellers and Irish Traditional Music*. Johnny Doran and his brother Felix were great-grandsons of John Cash, and Johnny in particular was a hugely influential Uilleann piper. Only one recording of Johnny Doran's playing was ever made, at the Irish Folklore Commission in 1947. This acetate recording was released on CD as *The Master Pipers Volume 1*. There are as yet no recordings of Furey reciting "In Memory of Johnny Doran", but Oliver O'Connell, one of the authors of *Free Spirits*, often recites Furey's poem before performing his own tribute to the Dorans, "The Doran Song."

The Piper Sleeps beneath the shrouds of Winter

His travelling way of life now almost gone,

His pipes of peace are resting, journey's over

His legacy of music living on

Cold death has kissed, the piper's breath was frozen

On dreams of yesterday's cruel ice crawls

The purest tones supreme to piping mysteries

Held tight now in the grip of nature's claws.

No more he'll stray the lanes from Clare to Dublin

No more he'll pipe the fairs of rural towns

Or sit the milestone, tuning pipes for Clancy

His travelling style of music far beyond

Green tented wattles are no match for Winter

Would muggy straw warm a roadside bed?

Sweet sweet the pipes, and the hand and the heart that willed them

From a travelling man with no equal must be said.

2.3 The Doran Song

Oliver O'Connell, a settled Uilleann piper who is heavily influenced by Johnny and Felix Doran, wrote this song to celebrate their lives and their music. The lyrics to the song are included in the book *Free Spirits: Irish Travellers and Irish Traditional Music*. A video recording of O'Connell performing "The Doran Song" at the Cobblestone in Dublin was included in an episode of *Coppers and Brass*, a series of programmes on Irish traditional music produced by Dublin Community Television. At the end of the song, O'Connell performs the tune "The Lark in the Morning", a popular piece of music among Irish Traveller pipers.

Oh the first time that I heard them play, at the Milltown Malbay fair

With their horses and their Uilleann pipes, the Dorans came to Clare

We watched them playing on the street, on a cold September day

The crowds had gathered round to hear, the Travelling Dorans play.

Johnny Doran was a Travelling man, who roamed from town to town
From Killenaule to Donegal and from Clare to County Down
He played those pipes, the master's touch, we'll see his likes no more
The Doran boys though now long gone, are part of our folklore.
We listen to their favourite tunes, as they stood outside the door
"Rakish Paddy" and the "Lark", and the "Bucks of Oranmore"
The pipers drones and the chanters tones, so haunting and so true
When Felix Doran played those pipes, he played for me and you.

The Doran sound is all around, just listen to the roar
When Paddy Keenan takes the stage, and he plays the Ballintore
Or Finbar's "Lonesome Boatman", or the way he sings a song
The Keenans, Fureys and the Dunnes, the legacy lives on.
I remember now of days gone by, and of times long long ago,
From the Ballylongford races, to the fairs at Ballinasloe
They stood on cold October streets, proud fathers and their sons
Listening to the music of the Dorans and the Dunnes.

The streets and lanes they are empty now, the pipers they are gone
No more we'll hear the "Primrose Lass", or the haunting "Slievenamon"
The winters cold, it had taken hold, when Doran said goodbye
But we still hear the music of the black haired piping boy

We will never see their likes again, those Travelling Doran boys.

2.4 Song for Donald and Andy

Belle Stewart wrote this song to express her feelings about the death of her two brothers. Although "Song for Donald and Andy" was written in the form of a song, Stewart never performed it in public due to the personal nature of its content. Stewart felt that writing the song was painful for her, and it is possible that she did not even sing it for her immediate family. Certain lines in the song, which describe how Stewart missed her brother Andy the most, even though she was closer to Donald, and suggest that she is grieving more than her brothers' widows, may have also been too emotional for the family to hear. Lyrics for the song are included in the publications *Till Doomsday in the Afternoon* and *Queen Amang the Heather*.

'Twas on a cold December nicht when fruits and flooers were gone,
My brother Andy left me tae be with his brother Dan,
The sorrow they have left behind is more than tongue can tell,
I was their only sister and I dearly loved them well.

When I sit and think of days gone by, it makes my heart full sair,
When I think aboot the happy times the three o us had in Blair,
O, I ken I have my bairns, and I have my man and aa,
But never in this wide, wide world were there brothers like you twa.

O, Donald dear I miss ye, for you were sae dear to me,
We loved each other dearly, and we always did agree,
But me and Andy aye fell ooot, we were an affa twa,
O please forgive me, Donald, but I miss him maist o aa.

Noo, Jeannie has a gie sere heart, and so does Mary tae,
When they sit and think aboot the things the baith o you did say
And of course there is their bairns, it's hard on them an aa,
But me my life is empty, since I parted wi you twa.

But I hope that God will ease the pain, as weeks and months go by,
For whenever I am by myself my e'en are never dry,
O I ken I'm no the only yin, for you all feel it tae,
But its grand to ken we'll meet again, on our good Lord's judgement day.

2.6 Down that Road

A recording of Tommy McCarthy performing this song, written by his grandfather, is included on his album *Round Top Wagon*. Lyrics to "Down that Road" are taken from McCarthy's website, where he explains that the song was his mother's favourite. When many young members of the McCarthy family left Ireland to work in England, McCarthy's grandfather wrote the song to express how he missed them. The song also contains references to traditional Traveller culture, including dealing and singing.

Oh down that road we will go

Of long long ago

Oh sweet Molly, you and I

Down by the fireside we'll sit

And we'll reminisce

And we'll talk of the days long gone by

God be with the old ones

Oh they're all dead and gone

Lonesome here am I

When I think of the days

That we sported and played

It might be Kilrush or Spancill Hill

All the long we would deal

And gaily we'd sing

For a spit on our hand twas our bond

God be with them old days

Will I e'er see them o'er

For down them roads I will go once again

Oh the young ones are all gone

Across the ocean wide

But my homeland I cannot leave

For every road that I go

As I travel along

For a travelling man am I

Every valley every glen

Every dell I knows well

For the highway it is my home

For down them roads I will go

Of long long ago

For a travelling man am I

Oh Molly my dear

I will see them once again

Oh before my days are o'er

And down them roads we will go

Of long long ago

Oh sweet Molly, you and I

2.7 Felix and Johnny Doran

This song, written by Tommy McCarthy and Ron Kavana, celebrates Traveller pipers Johnny and Felix Doran, and appears on Tommy McCarthy's album *Round Top Wagon*. The song describes how the Dorans would travel around Ireland, playing at

markets and fairs, and gathering crowds of onlookers. The fourth verse lists other Irish Traveller families with Uilleann piping traditions, including the Rooneys, the Fureys, the Keenans and the Dunnes. The Cashes and the Doherty family were also pipers, although the Doherty's most well-known member is the fiddler John Doherty. The lyrics below have been transcribed from McCarthy's recording. On the album, the song "Felix and Johnny Doran" is followed by a "Johnny Doran Set", which is a combination of two of the piper's favourite tunes: "The Bunch of Keys" and "Rakish Paddy". Michael 'Blackie' O'Connor, a settled Uilleann piper influenced by the Dorans, performs these pieces with several other traditional Irish musicians.

Celebrate and spare a thought tonight
For the short but precious lives
Of those masters of the Uilleann pipes,
Felix and Johnny Doran,
Felix and Johnny Doran.

At the matches and markets, the races and fairs
From Armagh to Wexford and the sweet county Clare,
Their music was loved, how crowds gathered and stared
At Felix and Johnny Doran,
At Felix and Johnny Doran.

Those who witnessed their genius were mesmerised,

Their masterful piping could all hypnotise.

We're here to pay tribute from all the world wide

To Felix and Johnny Doran,

To Felix and Johnny Doran.

Us Travellers are proud of our musical songs:

The Rooneys, the Fureys, the Keenans and Dunnes,

The Cashes and Dohertys too though they're gone,

Like Felix and Johnny Doran,

Like Felix and Johnny Doran.

It's many a year since they both passed away

But the Doran tradition will never decay.

So here's to their memories and the music they made,

Felix and Johnny Doran,

Felix and Johnny Doran.

2.8 The Pat Rainey Song

Irish folk singer Fergus Russell apparently composed this song in his sleep after attending the launch of the Rainey's 1956 field recording on CD, *The Raineys*. The lyrics and musical notation to "The Pat Rainey Song" are included in a chapter dedicated to the Raineys in *Free Spirits: Irish Travellers and Irish Traditional Music*. Russell has performed his song widely around Ireland, often at singing circles and

sessions which celebrate Traveller music. A recording of Russell performing "The Pat Rainey Song" is included on his album *Landless and Free*.

Pat Rainey's me name I'm a travelling man.
I'll mend your auld pots, I'll make you a can,
I'm prince among nomads, the king of me clan.
Fol dol lol lol dol dol day

I travel the roads with me ass and me dog,
There's game in the fields, there's turf in the bog.
I sing like a lark as along do we jog:
Fol dol lol lol dol dol day

I camps by the river I catches a fish,
I always have plenty to put in me dish.
Me brogues I can mend and me clothes I can stich.
Fol dol lol lol dol dol day

I gathers me pipes, I heads for the town,
I finds a good pitch and I sets meself down,
I squeeze on the bellows. The throng gather round.
Fol dol lol lol dol dol day

I plays "Misses McCloud" and the "The Wind in the Gap",

It pleases the crowd, they dance and they clap,

And many bright shillings they put in me cap.

Fol dol lol lol dol dol day

I'm fond of a glass for I think it no crime,

I sit in the Shebeen 'mid comrades sublime.

I'll dance 'til the dawn cos I'm not a slave to time.

Fol dol lol lol dol dol day

The housewife each night she slips down from the farm.

Her husband is cold but I am quite warm,

And here in me tent, sure, she'll come to no harm.

Fol dol lol lol dol dol day

When winter comes on, for fear of the damp

I'll whistle me dog, down the road we will tramp,

And the housewife will sigh, when she sees we've broke camp.

Fol dol lol lol dol dol day

When springtime it blossoms, I'll pass by this way,

I'll boil up my billy, I'll make me some tay,

And I'll check if the *buffer* has one on the way.

Fol dol lol lol dol dol day

Pat Rainey's me name I'm a travelling man.

I'll mend your auld pots, I'll make you a can,

I'm prince among nomads, the king of me clan.

Fol dol lol lol dol dol day

Appendix Three

Oral Culture and Education

3.1 The Highwayman Outwitted

This traditional song, which appears in *The Romano Drom Songbook*, contains an amusing storyline, where a young girl escapes from three thieves, taking one of their horses and all their stolen money. The song is known by many alternative titles, including "There was an Old Farmer of Chester", which uses the first line of the song as a title. However, different singers have substituted other locations for "Chester", such as "Cheshire" or "Sheffield", so that the song can be tailored to the local area. For example, a version of "The Highwayman Outwitted" appears in Jeremy Sandford's songbook *Songs from the Roadside* with the first line: "There was a rich farmer in Sheffield." In the version of the song below, taken from Denise Stanley's *The Romano Drom Songbook*, the girl is twice described as acting "like a man" to emphasise her boldness and strength of character. Many Travellers would regard being quick-witted and independent as important attributes to encourage in their children. A recording of the song, entitled "The Farmer of Chester" and performed by English Gypsy Joe Jones, is included on Mike Yates' collection *Songs of the Open Road: Gypsies, Travellers and Country Singers*. A slightly different version of the song, entitled "There Was a Rich Farmer at Sheffield" and sung by English Gypsy Wisdom 'Wiggy' Smith, appears on the collection *My Father's the King of the Gypsies: Music of English and Welsh Travellers and Gypsies* by various artists.

There was an old farmer of Chester
To market his daughter did go
She was thinking nobody would harm her
For she'd been that way thousands before.

She met with three daylighted robbers
And three links they did hold to her breast
You'll deliver your clothes and your money
Or else you shall die in distress.

They stripped the poor damsel stark naked
And they gave her the bridle to hold
And there she stood shivering and shaking
Much perished to death by the cold.

She slipped her right foot in the stirrup
She mounted the horse like a man
Over hedges and ditches she galloped:
Come catch me, bold rogues, if you can.

Well she rode to the gates of the father
She shouted, her voice like a man
"Dear father I've been in great danger,

But the rogues didn't do me no harm."

She took the grey mare to the stable
And white sheets she spread on the floor;
She counted her money twice over
She'd five hundred pounds, if not more.

3.2 The Outlandish Knight

Another traditional song which is popular among Travellers and features the theme of a self-reliant young woman is "The Outlandish Knight." It is one of the oldest surviving ballads and most widely-performed songs in European folk music. In this song, a girl is tempted away from her family by the promise of marriage to a knight. The knight plans to steal her family's gold and horses, before killing her in the same manner as six previous women. The girl overpowers the knight and he is drowned. Tom Munnelly collected a version of the song, entitled "The North Strand", from Irish Traveller Jim Cassidy in County Cavan. The lyrics and musical notation appear in a special edition of the *Folk Music Journal*, and have been reproduced below. Munnelly notes that the first half of the song is sung twice, and that "Polly" is both the name of the girl and the parrot. A slightly different and shorter version of the song, performed by Bill Cassidy, appears as "Pretty Polly" on the CD collection *Songs of the Irish Travellers*. Jim Carroll notes that, although he collected Bill Cassidy's song in London, the two Cassidy men were possibly brothers.

Oh, a pretty young boy from the North Strand came,

An' he come on his own, down to me.

For he promised he'd bring me down by the North Strand,

And there he would marry me.

"Oh you get some of your mammy's field (fee)

More of your daddy's gold,

And get two o' the best horses that stands in the stables

Where there are thirty-three."

Oh, she got some of her mammy's field,

More of her Mammy's gold;

And got two of the best horses he had in the stable

Where there were thirty-three.

Oh, she got up on a milk white steed,

And she leaded the dapple grey.

For she rode along down to the North Strand

(T') was three long hours before day.

"Get down, get down, pretty Polly," he says,

Oh, "Get down, get down," says he.

For 'tis six little girls I have drownded here

An' you'll be, the seventh, shall be."

Oh, "Your silks an' your satins you must take them off,
Please deliver them up unto me.
For I think they are too rich an' too grand
To roll in the bright rocky sea."

"If my silks an' my satins, I must take them off,
Will you please turn your back to me?
For I think you're too rough of a blackguard," she said,
"A naked young woman to see."

He turned his back down for the North Strand
For to watch all the waves flowin' by,
For she cotch (caught) him round by the middle so grand
And thrun him right into the deep.

Oh, He swam low and he swum high,
Until he swum to the sea shore:
"One hoult (hold) of your hand pretty Polly," he said
"On me sentence, I'll make you my bride."

Oh, "Stop where you are, my false hearted man.

Stop where you are," says she,

"For 'tis six little girls that you drowned here,

And you'll be the seventh shall be,"

Oh, she got up on her milk white steed,

And she leaded the dapple grey,

For she rode along to her father's hall door,

It was three long hours before day.

"Oh, Hold your tongue pretty Polly," she said,

"For don't tell any tales on me."

"What ails you? What ails you?" the father he cried,

"Why are you speaking 'fore day?"

"It's no laughin' matter," the parrot she cried,

For 'tis no laughin' matter for me.

For the cats they are up in the window so high,

I'm afeared they'll fall down upon me."

"Well turned your tale, purty Polly," she said

Oh, "well turned your tale for me,

For I'll have your cage of the glitter of gold,

An' your dure of the grand ivory."

3.3 Big Jimmy Drummond

In his overview of British Gypsy songs in Romani language, *Now Shoon the Romano Gillie*, Tim Coughlan believes that the English version of "Big Jimmy Drummond" is based on a song in Romani, which now only survives in the form of a single verse. The version of the song which appears in Peter Kennedy's *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, entitled "The Choring Song", also contains Cant words, but they are words common to English Gypsy and Scottish Traveller Cant, as Kennedy illustrates in his glossary. Therefore, the origins of the song remain unclear. In some versions of the song recorded from Scottish Travellers, the majority of the lines are sung in English, with a final Cant verse. An example of this is Jeannie Robertson's performance of "Big Jimmie Drummond", and the lyrics and musical notation to her song are included in *Jeannie Robertson: Emergent Singer, Transformative Voice* by James Porter and Herschel Gower. Jeannie Robertson believed that the song referred to a real person, a distant relative of her granny, who composed it in jail. A recording of Robertson singing "Big Jimmie Drummond" can be accessed on the *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist O Riches* website. Other versions of the song use Cant words in every verse, including Willie MacPhee's rendition, documented by Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger in their songbook *Travellers' Songs from England and Scotland*. The version of the song below is by Elizabeth Stewart, and is the most complete example. The lyrics and musical notation to "Big Jimmy Drummond" are included in *Up Yon Wide and Lonely Glen*, an account of Stewart's life and musical repertoire. There appears to be no recording available of Stewart singing "Big Jimmy Drummond", but her double album *Binnorrie* contains many other traditional ballads and songs of her own composition. Stewart

strongly believed that settled people should not be taught Cant, and therefore her lyrics have been left untranslated, as they appear in her book.

Oh my name it is big Jimmy Drummond
And my name I will never deny
I hiv moolied the ghannies in dizens
And there wis naebody there for tae tell
'Till a scaldie gadgie did shop me
Pretended tae be my friend
It wis him that telt the hornies aboot me
And from then on my freedom did end.

Aye my name it is big Jimmy Drummond
I'm a man yese aa ken sae well
I wis quickly handcuffed and shackled
And led tae poor auld Danl's jail
Last nicht I lay in a cauld granzie
Last nicht I lay in a cauld jail
Wi my mort and my knishins aa scattered
And I dinna ken whaur they may be.

For I quickly did change my colours
When I had one round o twelve months in jail

Aye, I quickly alter my colours
When I wis led tae poor auld Danl's jail
An if I ever do go a-chorin
I'll be sure tae be gaen by myself
For I'll moolie the ghannies in dizens
And there'll be naebody there for tae tell.

But it's nae mair I'll gang a-chorin
For I swear tae my God that's above
And whenever the hornies they bing on me
There'll be naebody tae snatch but myself
Oh my name it is Big Jimmy Drummond
And my name I will niver deny
I hiv moolied the ghannies in dizens
And there wis niver onyone there for tae tell.

3.4 The Little Beggarman

In his semi-autobiographical novel, *The Road to God Knows Where*, Sean Maher described how he was encouraged to perform his own songs in a school singing lesson. One of the songs he chose was "The Little Beggarman" and Maher's version of the song used many words of Irish Traveller Cant. Upon being questioned about the meaning of the song, Maher chose to appear ignorant rather than reveal his Traveller ancestry, to avoid being bullied by the other pupils. "The Little Beggarman" is a very

popular song among Irish folksingers and many other versions of the song exist, but they are usually entirely in English. Peter Kennedy, who included the lyrics and musical notation for the song in *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, states that "The Little Beggarman" is sung to the tune of a song in the Irish language, entitled "The Red-haired Boy" and also resembles a Scottish ballad known as "Gilderoy". Although Maher's song uses the same tune and describes begging, the content of the song is very different to the non-Traveller version, as it does not follow the traditional narrative, and contains many references to Traveller culture, including tents, fires and horses. Many different singers have recorded "The Little Beggarman", including Irish Traveller Paddy Doran, who sings the traditional English version of the song, on the CD *Songs of the Travelling People* by various artists.

I don't give a damn, for gaiging is the best,
For when a feen is corrped, sure he has a little rest.
Sure he's got a little molly and he's got a little beor,
And it's off on the tober with his molly and his beor.

By night around the glimmer, when the gallias are 'n lee,
You can see him dance a merry step a' there for you and me.
He doesn't have to worry and he doesn't have to care,
So long as he's got a sark for his old grey mare.

(English Version)

I don't give a damn, for begging is the best,

For when a man is tired, sure he has a little rest.

Sure, he's got a little tent and he's got a little woman,

And it's off on the road with his tent and his woman.

By night around the fire, when the children are in bed,

You can see him dance a merry step for either you or me,

He doesn't have to worry and he doesn't have to care,

So long as he's a field for his old grey mare.

3.5 Living on the Edge of Your Town

Written by Paddy Houlihan, a settled individual who worked with Travellers in Ennis, County Clare, "Living on the Edge of your Town" was recorded by Irish Traveller musicians The Fureys for their album *Claddagh Road*. The song draws attention to the changes in the relationship between Travellers and settled people, after industrialisation made many jobs and services provided by Travellers obsolete. The lyrics also highlight the fact that history books make no mention of Traveller culture. Lyrics and musical notation for "Living on the Edge of your Town" are included in Jeremy Sandford's *Songs from the Roadside*.

The books you read at school

Do not mention me,

Because I am the Invisible Man

In this country's history.

But I knew the farmer,

I traded him a mare,

I picked his beet and shaped his tins,

And I was welcome there,

I was welcome there.

No more call for my trade,

Everything is plastic made,

No more travelling around,

I'm living on the edge of your town.

I'm living on the edge of your town.

I see the way you feel

Reflected in your eyes;

One hard look is all that it took

To make me realise

That you are afraid of me

Though you don't know my name.

But if something's done by anyone

I must take the blame.

I must take the blame.

No more smiles at the gate

Working for a bite to ate

No more travelling around.

I'm living on the edge of your town.

I'm living on the edge of your town.

(The first, second and third verses are repeated)

Appendix Four

Traveller Responses to Mainstream Media

4.1 The Gypsy's Answer

This song functions as a response to the many negative stereotypes attached to Gypsies and Travellers, and puts their 'threat' to the settled community into context. Written by Ewan MacColl, the musical notation and lyrics are included in his *Essential Songbook*. "The Gypsy's Answer" uses the same melody as a much older traditional Scottish folk song, known as "Willie's Lyke Wake". MacColl performs "The Gypsy's Answer" in his radio-ballad, *The Travelling People*. Jeremy Sandford also included the lyrics and musical notation "The Gypsy's Answer" as sung by English Gypsy Ezekiel Warner in *Songs from the Roadside*. In Warner's version of the song, the third line of the first verse is changed to: "But who laid the blight on each meadow and strand", which better fits the stereotype of Gypsy camps destroying picturesque areas. The third line of the last verse is also different, as it reads: "But who judges and condemns for his own ends?" This alternative line highlights the unfair advantage settled people have over Gypsies and Travellers.

They say we leave litter and mess up the land,
We're the dirty travelling people.
But who laid the blight on each mill and factory site?
Was it us-or the Gorgio people?

They say we're a menace to the health of the land,

The unhealthy travelling people.

But who poisoned the air and the rivers everywhere?

Is it us-or the Gorgio people?

They say we're dishonest, not worthy of trust,

The thieving travelling people.

But who kills for gain, who robs banks and holds up trains?

Is it us-or the Gorgio people?

They say we are quarrelsome, given to blows,

The violent travelling people.

But who starts the wars, breaks the first of human laws?

Is it us-or the Gorgio people?

They say we are backward, retarded and dull,

The ignorant travelling people.

But who judges and condemns those who're different to them?

Why you do-the Gorgio people.

4.2 The Hawker's Lament

Duncan Williamson's song simultaneously raises the issue of Traveller accommodation in Scotland and highlights the role that many Scottish Travellers and Gypsies played in the Second World War as soldiers. The 'freedom' Traveller soldiers fought to defend did not guarantee them the 'freedom' to live a traditional lifestyle after the war. "The Hawker's Lament" appears in Williamson's autobiography *The Horsieman*, and Mike Yates's songbook *Travellers' Joy*. Yates' publication has an accompanying CD which includes a recording of Williamson performing the song. A further recording of Williamson singing "The Hawker's Lament" can be found on the second volume of Yates' *Travellers' Tales* CD collection.

Oh come all you hawkers, you men of the road
You hawkers who wander around.
My story it is sad, it will sadden your heart,
For they are closing our camping grounds down.

Though we fought for our country and we fought for our king,
And sons gave their life for this land.
It's out there in Dunkirk, it's many that fell
With their blood mixed up with the sand.

But what did we fight for why did they die?

Just for freedom to wander around.

But where can we wander? We have no place to go.

For they've closed all our camping grounds down.

'Oh' they say, 'You're not wanted, just keep moving on',

Though it be rain or be snow.

But where can you move to when you move along?

For you have nowhere to go.

So come listen to me, boys, if another war it comes;

Just you keep moving around.

You have nothing to fight for, you have no house nor home,

And they've closed all your camping grounds down.

But maybe someday when you're gone from this world,

And you're buried deep in the ground.

Will God make you welcome, will he give you a home?

Or will he tell you to keep moving on?

4.3 The Deserter

British Gypsies and Travellers fought alongside settled soldiers in the British army, and their names appear in enrolment records and on medal rolls for both World Wars and earlier conflicts. Janet Keet-Black provides further details about the lives of several

Gypsy soldiers in her book *Gypsies of Britain*. Enrolment officers had to make a special effort to enrol Gypsies and Travellers, since they worked irregular hours and often could not read recruiting posters. Nevertheless, many signed up, and their expertise with horses, among other Traveller-related skills, provided a valuable asset to the British army. In *Songs from the Roadside*, Jeremy Sandford includes a transcription of the lyrics and musical notation of Wiggy Smith's version of "The Deserter". This recording also appears on Mike Yate's collection *Songs of the Open Road*. Sandford explains that Gypsy and Traveller soldiers often found life in the army difficult, as they were subjected to discrimination, and often could not read or write. This meant that it was difficult for Gypsy and Traveller soldiers to stay in contact with their family, or find them easily if they were granted leave. However, the song also draws attention to the contrast between sedentary culture's idea of 'freedom' or 'liberty', and the erosion of the 'freedom' available to Gypsies and Travellers. In the song, it makes little difference to the Gypsy soldier whether he is fighting for a queen or a king, since he will still face discrimination after the war.

I was once young and foolish, like many who is here;
I been fond of night rambling and I am fond of my beer.
Sure if I had my own home and my sweet liberty,
I would do no more soldiering, neither by land nor by sea.

Sure, the first time I deserted and I thought myself free,
I was quickly followed after and brought back by speed.

I was quickly followed after and brought back by speed,

And put in the Queen's guardroom, with heavy irons put on me.

You take off the heavy irons, and you let him go free,

For he'd make a brave soldier for his King and country.

You take off the heavy irons, and you let him go free,

For he'd make a brave soldier for his Queen and country.

Sure if I had my own home and my sweet liberty,

I would do no more soldiering, neither by land nor by sea.

4.4 Son Davit

When Hamish Henderson 'discovered' Jeannie Robertson in 1953, this ballad caused a sensation amongst scholars, as it had been thought to have been completely lost from the oral tradition for well over a hundred years. The song was therefore known as Jeannie Robertson's "piece de resistance" and was her most requested tune. The words and melody of the song are still regarded by many singers and collectors as particularly impressive, as the narrative is developed entirely through dialogue. The song was also deeply personal to Robertson, as her life, and the events surrounding her son Jeemsie's death, became embodied in the song. The song, known by a variety of titles including "Henry" and "Edward", has been recorded from Scottish Travellers, Irish Travellers, English Gypsies and a number of settled singers. A performance of "Son Davit" by Robertson is included on her CD *The Queen Among the Heather*. A further recording of

the song, entitled "Who Put the Blood?" was performed by Irish Traveller John Reilly and this recording appears on his album *The Bonny Green Tree*. Mike Yates recorded another version of the song from English Gypsy Danny Brazil in Gloucester in 1979, called "The Two Turtle Doves", and the musical notation and lyrics appear in Mike Yates's *Travellers' Joy*.

"O what's the blood that's on your sword,
My son David, O son David?
What's the blood it's on your sword?
Come promise, tell me true."

"O that's the blood of my grey mair,
Hey lady mother, ho lady mother;
That's the blood of my grey mair,
Because it widnae rule by me."

"O that blood it is owre clear,
My son David, O son David;
That blood it is owre clear,
Come promise, tell me true."

"O that's the blood of my grey hound,
Hey lady mother, ho lady mother;

That's the blood of my grey hound,

Because it widnae rule by me."

"O that blood it is owre clear,

My son David, O son David;

That blood it is owre clear,

Come promise, tell me true."

"O that's the blood of my huntin' haak,

Hey lady mother, ho lady mother;

That's the blood of my huntin' haak,

Because it widnae rule by me."

"O that blood it is owre clear,

My son David, O son David;

That blood it is owre clear,

Come promise, tell me true."

"O that's the blood of my brother John,

Hey lady mother, ho lady mother;

That's the blood of my brother John,

Because he drew his sword tae me.

"I'm gaun awa' in a bottomless boat,

In a bottomless boat, in a bottomless boat,

But I'm gaun awa' in a bottomless boat,

And I'll ne'er return again."

"O whan will you come back again

My son David, O son David?

Whan will you come back again?

Come promise, tell me true."

"When the sun and the moon meets in yon glen,

Hey lady mother, ho lady mother;

When the sun and the moon meets in yon glen,

For I'll return again."

4.5 Lashún Gátna/Lashún Gália

Irish Traveller Jack Delaney explains that the title of his song can either be expressed as "Lashún Gátna" or "Lashún Gália", depending on which dialect of Traveller language a person uses. In English, the title translates as "Beautiful Child." Delaney has written and performed several songs, in English, Cant, and a mixture of both, which comment on aspects of Traveller culture and identity. This song came to national attention in Ireland when it was used in the opening scenes of episode four, series five, of the drama *Love/Hate*. A recording of Delaney's performance appears on the *An Sionnach Fionn*

website, alongside an English version of the song lyrics. The Cant lyrics below were supplied by Delaney (who retains copyright) with kind permission.

Muíl gréd'i m' lí sturt tómán grágs,
grágs anásha and sturt Grasano.
A' mun'iest lí stésh lim a' skai,
but shédóg's gréd'I'd muíl ar mishlo.

Minkér gradum mun'iest niok for muíl,
rák gohcil glóch muíl needs to brasi.
Sturt helums to nid'as suerk'in for their d'íls,
súpla inochs shelk'd stésh muílsha gréd'I'd.

Sturt Váli Tóm ni'das súni and glóri,
krish Minkér suerkans ar tóbers and grágs.
And sik gréd'i sugu and sik gori garéad,
To a gresko suerk'in resounding tád.

Nid'esh muíl stál'd tómán sturt helum awárt,
but Váli Tóm anásha stésh muílsha has.
Lashúlest though, the glíets and skais,
Nid'esh grober anáshin to brasi bilsags.

Though a Minkér muíl nid'esh lospo achíver,

but tribli a' Gálión aga muílsha to mishli.

And muíl grásta arák niuk tán dríper,

for gochil the lashúl inochs m' súni.

Milk a' Mikérs táral stésh the Minkérs tásp'd,

sik erpa wid stésh nid'esh achíver arák.

My d'íl táral stésh gochil inochs atap,

na be getúl súblín for no midal is d'arp.

Rák krish gloóch wid sturt suercan munia,

get getúls mishli past lim a' d'ílsha.

Nid'esh mishli to koldrum: grober aga d'ílsha,

skop lurks and súni m' lashún Gália.

(English version)

I have made my bed in many places,

Places here and in England,

The best rest was the side of the river,

But the Guards made me move on.

The life of a Tinker is the best for me,

And like every man I need to eat,

So in towns to people singing for them,

And a couple of things sold – these I have done.

In Dublin town people look on and listen,

To old Tinker songs on roads and streets,

And some make fun and some give money,

To a voice singing resounding strong.

I have not stayed long in one place,

But in Dublin town indeed I have,

Most beautiful though are mountains and rivers,

But there is not work here to feed mouths.

Though a Tinker I am never married have I,

But the family of God I had to go with,

And I am satisfied like a full bottle,

For all the beautiful things that I see.

Some Tinkers think that the Tinkers are dead,

Some others say it will never be the same,

But I am saying that everything is alive,

Don't be afraid young lad for no Devil is true.

Like an old man said in a song of goodness,

Let your worries go past the side of you,

But don't go to sleep though there is work to do,

Open your eyes and see my beautiful child.

Appendix Five

Nostalgic Songs

5.1 Campfire in the Dark

Written by Paddy Houlihan, a settled individual who worked with Travellers in Ennis, County Clare, "Campfire in the Dark" was recorded by Irish Traveller musicians The Fureys for their album *Winds of Change*. It has since been recorded by other Travellers, one example being Johnny Keenan for the *Navan Travellers Workshop* website. A transcription of the lyrics and musical notation is also included in Jeremy Sandford's *Songs from the Roadside*. "Campfire in the Dark" addresses the changes in Traveller culture that have resulted from many families moving into houses, due to a lack of more appropriate accommodation. The fifth verses illustrates that, although many Travellers are living in houses alongside settled people, they are still treated differently, and sometimes refused entry into public places.

My Father rises early and makes a cup of tea
He lights the kitchen stove and then he calls me
His days are often empty, nothing much to do
So he tells me stories of the Travelling life he knew.

In the evening they would meet in lonely country lanes
A field away you'd hear a collie bark
And they'd pass the time away with talk about the day

Standing round the campfire in the dark

Standing round the campfire in the dark.

My Mother likes the house, the hot water and the rooms.

It's warm in the winter and she's handy with a broom

Sometimes she makes colcannon, more often griddle bread

For there's a hunger deep inside her for a life that's nearly dead.

In the evening she would lift the black pot from the coals

"A bit to ate" she always would remark

There'd be vessels left to clean while children could be seen

Playing round the campfire in the dark.

We go down to the pool hall and chat up the beors

Sometimes at a disco we can't get past the doors

We're still tinkers to them, it's thrown at our ears

We're still strangers after all these years.

I think about my own life and the way it will be

An escort van, a bit of dealin, a wife and family.

Thursday I collect the dole, maybe pitch and toss.

On the site I think about the Travellers ways we've lost.

And I wish that I could rise

And wash the sleep out of my eyes

Listening to the sweet song of the lark

And I wish I could be in that campfire company

With the sound of horses moving in the dark

With the sound of horses moving in the dark.

5.2 The Thirty-Foot Trailer

Ewan MacColl wrote and recorded this song for an episode of his "Radio Ballads" series, entitled *The Travelling People*. The lyrics reproduced here are taken from *The Essential Ewan MacColl Songbook*, which also includes musical notation for the song. Jeremy Sandford also included the lyrics and notation in *Songs from the Roadside*, and states that MacColl's song is adapted from an original Gypsy version. The song is well regarded by many Traveller singers, and has been recorded by Pecker Dunne for his album *Real*, where it appears under the title: "The Life of a Traveller". "The Thirty-Foot Trailer" focuses on the modern changes to Traveller culture and how legislation has made it almost impossible to live a traditional lifestyle. The last two lines of the song describe out the dilemma of many Travellers perfectly: It is illegal to camp on unauthorized land, yet the lack of official accommodation forces Travellers to do so.

The old ways are changing, you cannot deny

The day of the Traveller is over;

There's nowhere to go and there's nowhere to bide,

So farewell to the life of the rover.

(Chorus)

Farewell to the tent and the old caravan,

To the tinker, the Gypsy, the Travelling man

And farewell to the thirty-foot trailer.

Farewell to the Cant and the Romany tongue,

Farewell to the Romany talking,

The buying and selling, the old fortune telling,

The knock on the door and the hawking.

(Repeat Chorus)

Farewell to the besoms of heather and broom,

Farewell to the creel and the basket,

For the folks of today they would far sooner pay

For a thing that's been made out of plastic.

(Repeat Chorus)

The old ways are passing and soon will be gone,

For progress is aye a big factor.

It's sent to afflict us and when they evict us,

They'll tow us away with a tractor.

(Repeat Chorus)

Farewell to the pony, the cob, and the mare

Where the reins and the harness are idle;

You don't need a strap when you're breaking up scrap

So farewell to the bit and the bridle.

(Repeat Chorus)

Farewell to the fields where we've sweated and toiled

At pulling and shoving and lifting,

They'll soon have machines and the Travelling queens

And their menfolk had better be shifting.

(Repeat Chorus)

You've got to move fast to keep up with the times

For these days a man cannot dander;

It's a bylaw to say you must be on your way

And another to say you can't wander.

5.3 Slow Going Easy

Jimmy Williamson, son of Scottish Traveller Duncan Williamson, wrote this song to address the changes he saw in Traveller culture over the passage of time. Donald Braid included the lyrics and musical notation of "Slow Going Easy" in his study *Scottish Traveller Tales*. The song contrasts aspects of Traveller culture in the past to the experiences of Travellers today. Although the song is nostalgic, it also contains an underlying theme of independence and self-awareness about how life has improved for Travellers, and which aspects of their culture are the most enduring. A recording of Williamson performing "Slow Going Easy" appears on his album *Jimmy Williamson: Born Tae the Road*.

(Chorus)

Gone are the days of the slow going easy.
Life is much faster now, we understand.
We don't want to catch up, live the life of the gorgio,
Just be free living, free moving Travelling men.

Our ways have changed since horse was the master,
And we didn't worship that god we call oil.
I know it's improved things, but it goes a lot faster.
We don't want to earn wages with good honest toil.

(Repeat Chorus)

Campfires are the places where stories remember,

Are told to the listener, the old and the young.

Our deeds and our glories will ne'er be forgotten

When songs are still lilted in our mother tongue.

(Repeat Chorus)

But the smoke seldom rises over new camping places,

Stories only remembered in some greying head.

Who will remember when the old have forgotten?

When no one remembers, tradition is dead.

(Repeat Chorus)

Yes, be free living, free moving Travelling men.

5.4 The Good Old Days

"The Good Old Days" is another song written by Jimmy Williamson, and the lyrics and musical notation are also included in Donald Braid's *Scottish Traveller Tales*. The song displays sarcasm about Traveller nostalgia, and how some individuals choose to forget the hardships they and their families experienced in the past. Although some aspects of Traveller life might seem to have been easier for previous generations, Williamson draws attention to the dire poverty his family suffered. A recording of Williamson performing "The Good Old Days" is included on his album *Born Tae the Road*.

We were rich if we'd a horse and cairt to help us wi' our load,

To pile our bits and pieces on as we walked the weary road.

We never had many claes that fit and nae shoes upon our feet.

And it wasnae very often that we had enough to eat.

(Chorus)

Oh, I remember,

Yes, I remember,

Oh, I remember,

Those were the good old days.

Mother'd go fae door to door and earn whate'er she could.

But it wasna very easy for to feed a hungry brood.

Faither'd always dae his share but looking back it seems

The life that we are living now could only be lived in dreams.

(Repeat Chorus)

We never had much worldly goods, we could only carry few,

A blanket for to mak our bed, a pot, a cup or two,

A kettle for to mak our tea, a cover for our tent.

And often with tis on our backs, on the road we went.

(Repeat Chorus)

We were rich if we'd a horse and cairt to help us wi' our load,

To pile our bits and pieces on as we walked the weary road.

We never had many claes that fit and nae shoes upon our feet.

And it wasnae very often that we had enough to eat.

(Repeat Chorus)

5.5 The Travellers' Campaign

In his songbook of socialist ballads, *Songs of Struggle and Protest*, John McDonnell credits Irish Traveller Joe Donohue with writing "The Travellers' Campaign" to document the events surrounding the eviction of Travellers from an unofficial halting site in Ballyfermot, Dublin, in 1963. For political purposes, a makeshift school was erected on the Ballyfermot site to protest against the Commission on Itinerancy's settlement policy. Although McDonnell includes the lyrics and musical notation to "The Travellers' Campaign", he does not provide details about any recordings, but instead states that the song was printed as a broadsheet and sold in Dublin. The lyrics are set to the melody of a popular traditional Irish ballad, "The Rocks of Bawn". The same events are chronicled in Liam Weldon's song "The Blue Tar Road", the lyrics of which are included in the book *Irish Travellers: Tinkers No More* by Alen MacWeeney.

Oh come all ye loyal Travellers and listen to my song,

Although these words are sorrowful I will not keep you long.

Sure it was in dear old Dublin as the snow came falling down.

When the guards and corporation scabs came to burn our wagons down.

Oh it was in old Ballyfermot these brave Travellers made their stand,
Against those so-called Irishmen who were like the Black and Tans,
They attacked our camp one morning just at the dawn of day,
Oh! What a terrible shock they got my boys when they saw the old IRA.

Now Peader O'Donnell he stood up, that great man from Donegal,
And they saw the anger in his eyes they fled aye, one and all.
Those students too, God bless them, they did answer to our call,
Saying, "We will come and camp with you, and with you we will fall".

Now our slogans they were printed, oh! How plainly they could be seen
As we marched through dear old Dublin beneath our flag of green.
T'bould Connors and the Cashes and the Galvins were there too
Not forgetting Ginger O'Rourke and their leader Joe Donohue.

Oh we heard of great St. Patrick, and all he did for the Irish race,
Now I only wonder if he forgot to banish all the snakes.
We pray to St. Columbus, he founded Amerikay,
And, please God, all in his own good time he'll find the Travellers a place to stay.

5.6 The Battle Of Brownhills

Jim Carroll was alerted to this song by "Pop's" Johnny Connors after hearing him singing on a BBC radio broadcast. Connors was a Traveller activist and became Vice Chairman of the National Gypsy Council in the late 1960s. Connors was protesting about the circumstances surrounding the death of three children during a site eviction in Birmingham on November 1967. The children were Connors' cousins, and he wrote the song to commemorate the tragedy in his family and to express his frustration at the repeated evictions of Travellers in Walsall. The lyrics below are reproduced from a message by Carroll on the Mudcat Café website, a forum for the discussion of folk music. A slightly different version of the song, with musical notation, appears in the *Romano Drom Songbook* entitled "The Ballad of Brownhills". Jeremy Sandford also quotes the lyrics to two verses of the song in *Songs from the Roadside*. The words to "The Battle of Brownhills" are closely related to "The Traveller's Campaign", but the musical notation shows that the two songs are sung to different melodies. Although the events detailed in "The Traveller's Campaign" occurred in 1964, and the eviction in Brownhills in 1967, it is difficult to discern which song was composed first. The lyrics to "The Ballad of Brownhills" which are included in the *Romano Drom Songbook* by Denise Stanley create further confusion, since they appear to blend together lines from both songs. A recording of Connors singing "The Battle of Brownhills" is included on an audio cassette, *Songs from the Roadside: Gypsy Songs Sung in the West Midlands* which was produced by Sandford to accompany his songbook, but copies of this release are very difficult to obtain. Two influential people are mentioned in the song: Gratton

Puxon, who was a campaigner for Traveller rights, and Roy Parkinson, then Chairman of Midlands National Council for Civil Liberties.

Come all me loyal Travellers and listen to my song,
It's about th'oul brave Travellers they bravely made their stand
When the police and those Midland security scamps come to break our trailers down.

Sure it was in old Brownhills me boys, our brave Travellers made their stand,
Against those so-called gentlemen, they were more like Hitler's mob,
They attacked our camp one October Sunday morning all at the dawn of day,
What a terrible shock they got me lads, when they heard what I had to say.

Now Gratton Puxon was there too, that great man from London Town,
They saw the anger all in his eyes, he did answer them one and all.
The students too, may God bless them, they did answer to my call,
And said, "Johnny, we will camp with you, and with yous we will fall".

Now the Connors's and th'ould Cash's, Murphys, Doran's, and Doherty's and Hanrahan's were there too,
And not forgetting Roy Parkinson, and the bold brothers O'Donald.

In Walsall town one evening, the balance of the day

When squad-car loads of those licensed thugs came to tow our trailers away,
Three little sisters asleep in bed, asleep in bed they lay,
May our lord have mercy on their innocent souls; they died in that 'viction that day.

At the graveyard in Bilston we laid them in their grave,
Our hearts were filled with sorrow, our brave heads bowed with shame,
It is the wicked and cruel law of Walsall Town that we have to blame.

So we've heard of glorious St. Patrick, and all he did for our Irish race,
But I only wonder if he forgot to banish all the snakes.
We will pray to Chris or Columbus (Christopher Columbus?) sure he found Americay,
And please God all in their own good time:
(Spoken) Human minded people will find the travelling people a place to stay and education for their children.

Appendix Six

Traveller Origins

6.1 The Gypsy Gentleman

This traditional song, which may have originated from the music hall tradition, is regarded as a type of nursery rhyme by many Travellers, and exists in many different versions. Here, the Romani rai is a figure of ridicule. This version of the song is widely known and is taken from the second edition of Denise Stanley's *The Romano Drom Songbook*. The Romani language words can be translated as: "Look here, child, Father's gone to sell a good horse." A slightly different version of the song appears in *Songs from the Roadside*, featuring a verse with the memorable couplet: "I'll sing you a song/'Fore the gavvers gell me on", meaning, "before the police move me on". A version of the song, entitled "The Romany Rye" appears on the undated CD collection *Romany Rye*, recorded by Gordon Boswell for the Gordon Boswell Romany Museum. Another version of the song, recorded with the title "I'm a Romany Rai" is sung by English Gypsy Phoebe Smith, and is included on Peter Kennedy's collection *I'm a Romany Rai: Songs Sung by English Gypsies and Traditional Singers*.

I'm the Romani rai,

I'm a true didikai,

I build my castles beneath the blue sky.

I live in a tent and I don't pay no rent,

And that's why they call me the Romani rai.

Kakka chavvi, dik akai,

Father's gone to sell a mush a kushti grai,

And that's why they call him the Romani rai.

I'm the Romani rai,

Just an old didikai.

My home is a mansion beneath the blue sky.

I was born in a ditch, that's why I'll never grow rich,

And that's why they call me the Romani rai.

6.2 I'm No Romany Rye

This version of the song appears in *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, and Peter Kennedy recorded the song in 1962, from John Smith, a Gypsy in Birmingham. A "bender" is a tent made from hazel rods and tarpaulin. "Mort" means child, while "fully blown" means "of full blood", or a Gypsy of supposed pure heritage. Didikai were thought to be of mixed heritage and therefore inferior to Gypsies. It is interesting, therefore, that the singer emphasises that he proud of being "a real didikai". Kennedy's recording of this song was collected on behalf of the BBC Sound Archive and is not generally available.

I'm no Romany Rye, I'm a real didikai

I bide in a bender beneath the blue sky

In a van or tent where I don't pay no rent

That's why the locals calls me a Romany Rye

And I'm thinking of getting married
With a mort or two of my own
And move all over England like the ones fully blown.

6.3 I'm a Romany Rye

Another version of the song, once again from the *Folksongs of Britain and Ireland*, derives from a Gypsy called Fred Wood, who told Peter Kennedy that his mother used to sing it when she went out "hawking" or selling items door-to-door. The last three lines appear to bear this out, as they effectively turn the song into a hawker's cry. Kennedy's recording of this song was collected on behalf of the BBC Sound Archive and is not generally available. For recordings of street or hawker's cries, see appendix 1.6.

I want no gilted mansion.
I want no gilded hall
O, give to me the open sky
And the song of the lark that is flying high
I'm a Romany, everyone knows
And that's good enough for me

I would travel all round this country

With a heart that's ever willing

And I will cry

Why you can buy

Three pots for a shilling.

6.4 Appleby Fair

Sung by Irish Traveller "Rich" Johnny Connors, this song was recorded by Jim Carroll and Pat Mackenzie in the early 1970s and appears on the collection *From Puck to Appleby: Songs of the Irish Travellers in England*. Sharon Gmelch also includes the song lyrics and musical notation to "Appleby Fair" in her book *Tinkers and Travellers*. Several Gypsy dialect words are used in the song. "Diddys" and "dealers" are types of Traveller and "scran" is Romani slang for food. A "greasy-heel" and a "bog-spavine" are problems found in horses. "Knacker-prices" are the cost of horses sold for slaughter and "grai" means horse in Romani language. The song lyrics appear to be based on the poem "Appleby Fair" written in 1954 by Harold Taylor.

'Tis in Appleby top you will find an old fair,

Which it brings all those Travellers yes, year after year.

You'll see all those dealers, both diddys and liars,

Sat cooking their scran around smoky wood fires.

They'll have piebalds and skewbalds and flea-bitten greys,

Like most of their own, sure, they've seen better days,

With a greasy-heel here, and a bog spavine there,
We'll take knacker-prices for those at the fair.

Sure you all know Bob Ferris, and young Billy Bruff,
Sure, they've all had it off and they sold some good stuff,
Between wibbling and wobbling, and speaking of grai,
Sure, we will be thinking of Appleby Fair.

But you all know Dan Mannion, he's a man who is game,
Sure, he kept trotting horses which have brought him great fame,
In company with Chick, which he smokes the cigar,
And he speaks of his daughter who drives a posh car.

6.5 The Gypsy is a Gentleman

Written and recorded by Ewan MacColl for his Radio Ballad, *The Travelling People*, this song pokes fun at various Gypsy stereotypes and the self-titled "Romany Rye" Gypsylorists. The lyrics and musical notation, with transcriptions of some of the interview excerpts used in the programme, are included in MacColl's *The Essential Ewan MacColl Songbook.*

O, the gypsy is a gentleman,
And he always knows his place,
He never troubles anyone

And rarely shows his face,

He knows the ways of nature,

He's reticent and shy

And never pesters Gorgios

To sell or yet to buy.

(Chorus)

And the wind is on the heath,

And the heath is far away,

From towns and private property

Where decent people stay.

O, the gypsy is a gentleman

He's happy and content,

He doesn't live in Dorset

Or in Hampshire or in Kent.

His sun is always shining,

His sky is always blue,

He's wise and proud and courteous,

He's loyal, brave and true.

(Repeat Chorus)

O, the gypsy is a gentleman

And he always tips his hat,

His face is weather-beaten

And he wears a red cravat.

He wanders through the forest

Adding to his gypsy lore,

Or he's leafing through Lavengro

And he's never, ever poor.

(Repeat Chorus)

O, the gypsy is a gentleman

Give credit where it's due,

He never parks his caravan

Where it can spoil the view.

And if you find a pony

Grazing in your garden plot,

Don't blame the noble gypsy,

But that awful tinker lot.

(Repeat Chorus)

O, the gypsy is a gentleman,

He keeps well out of sight,

His caravan is picturesque,

It's colourful and bright.

He's full of ancient wisdom and

Of wit he has great store

Not like those thieving Diddies

Who come knocking on the door.

(Repeat Chorus)

O, the gypsy is a gentleman,

And he plays the violin,

And tinkers and hedge-mumpers,

They are not of his kin.

When you smell the smell of woodsmoke

And the hedgehog in the pot,

You'll find him carving objects d'art,

.... not like that other lot!

(Repeat Chorus)

6.6 Gum Shellac

This song, created and performed by "Pop's" Johnny Connors, contains a satirical history of Irish Travellers. It appears on the recording *From Puck to Appleby by* Jim Carroll and Par Mackenzie, and also in Jeremy Sanford's collection of interviews with Travelling people, *Gypsies*. Carroll also reproduced the lyrics and musical notation to the song in his article "Irish Travellers Around London" for the *Folk Music Journal*. As an Irish Traveller activist, Connors created a song which is entertaining but also makes

some important points about Traveller identity. By addressing historical events out of their established sequence, Connors arguably accentuates the sense of historical depth in the song. A "dowdled verse" is where the singer makes noises to fit the melody without using words, as a type of musical interlude.

We are the travelling people like the Picts or Beaker Folk,
The men in Whitehall thinks we're parasites but tinker is the word.
With our gum shellac alay ra lo, move us on you boyoes.

All the jobs in the world we have done,
From making Pharaoh's coffins to building Birmingham.
With our gum shellac ala lay sha la, wallop it out you heroes.

We have mended pots and kettles and buckets for Lord Cornwall,
But before we'd leave his house me lads, we would mind his woman and all.
With our gum shellac alay ra la, wallop it out me hero.

Well I have a little woman and a mother she is to be,
She gets her basket on her arm, and mooches the hills for me.
With our gum shellac alay ra la, wallop it out me hero.

(Dowdled verse)

We fought the Romans, the Spanish and the Danes,

We fought against the dirty Black and Tans and knocked Cromwell to his knees.

With our gum shellac alay ra la, wallop it out me heroes.

Well, we're married these twenty years, nineteen children we have got.

Ah sure, one is hardly walking when there's another one in the cot.

Over our gum shellac alay ra lo, get out of that you boyoes.

We have made cannon guns in Hungary, bronze cannons in the years B.C.

We fought and died for Ireland to make sure that she was free.

With a gum shellac ala lay sha la, wallop it out me heroes.

We can sing a song or dance a reel no matter where we roam,

We have learned the Emperor Nero how to play the pipes way back in the days of Rome.

With our gum shellac ala lay sha la, whack it if you can me boyoes.

6.7 Johnny Faa, The Gypsy Laddie

This traditional song is perhaps the most well-known folk song to feature Gypsies, and it appears in many different versions. This Scottish version of the song mentions Lord and Lady Cassilis, who were actual Scottish aristocrats, leading many folklorists and Travellers alike to believe that the song is based on a true story. However, there is no record of Lady Cassilis experiencing Gypsy abduction. This version of the song reflects

some of the stereotypes associated with Gypsies, as they are characterised as casting a spell or "glamourie" over the lady, and she hands over her "gold ring" and other valuables. However, the song is also sympathetic to the Gypsies' viewpoint, as it contrasts the freedom and protection promised to Lady Cassilis with her husband's vow to confine her. The last verse of the song leaves the listener with the image of several Gypsies sentenced to hang for the crime of kidnapping. Jess Smith includes the lyrics to "The Gypsy Laddie" in her publication *Way of the Wanderers*, which traces the origins of Scottish Travellers and Gypsies and also includes stories and autobiographical material. A recording of Jeannie Robertson singing "The Gypsy Laddies" is included on her album *Songs of a Scots Tinker Lady* and on her CD, *The Great Scots Traditional Ballad Singer*.

The gypsies they came to my Lord Cassilis' yett,
And O but they sang bonnie;
They sang sae sweet and sae complete
That down came our fair lady.

She came tripping down the stair
And all her maids before her;
As soon as they sawn her weel-far'd face,
They coost their glamourie ower her.

She gave to them the good wheat bread,

And they gave her the ginger;

But she gave them a far better thing,

The gold ring off her finger.

'Will ye go wi' me, my hinny and my heart,

Will ye go wi' me, ma dearie;

And I will swear by the staff of my spear

That my lord shall nae mair come near thee.'

'Gar take from me my silk mantel,

And bring to me a plaidie;

For I will travel the world ower

Along with the gypsie laddie.

I could sail the seas wi' my Jockie Faa,

I would sail the seas wi' my dearie.

I could sail the seas wi' my Jockie Faa,

And with pleasure could drown wi' my dearie.'

They wandered high, they wandered low,

They wandered late and early;

Until they cae' to an auld tenant's barn,

And by this time she was weary.

'Last night I lay in a well-made bed

And my noble Lord beside me;

And now I must lie in an auld tenant's barn

And the black crew glowering ower me.'

'O hold yer tongue my hinny and my heart,

O hold yer tongue, my dearie;

For I will swear by the moon and the stars

That thy lord shall nae mair come near thee.'

They wandered high, they wandered low,

They wandered late and early;

Until they came to that wan water,

And by this time she was weary.

'Aften have I rode that wan water

With my Lord Cassillis beside me;

And now I must set in my white feet an' wade,

And carry the Gypsy laddie.'

By and by came home this noble lord,

And asking for his lady;

The one did cry, the other did reply,

'She's gone with the Gypsy laddie.'

'Go saddle to me the black.' he says,

'The brown rides never so speedie;

And I will neither eat nor drink

Till I bring home my lady.'

He wandered high, he wandered low,

He wandered late and early;

Until he came to that wan water,

And there he spied his lady.

'O will thou go home, my hinny and my heart,

O will thou go home, my dearie;

And I'll close thee tae your room,

Where no man shall come near thee.'

'I will not go home, my hinny and my heart,

I will not go home my dearie;

I have brewn good beer; I will drink of the same,

And my lord shall nae mair come near me.

But I will swear by the moon and the stars,

And the sun that shines sae clearly;

That I am as free as the gypsy gang

As the hour my mother did bear me.'

They were fifteen valiant men,

Black but very bonny;

And they lost all their lives for one,

The Earl of Cassillis' lady.

6.8 The Raggle-Taggle Gypsy

The following version of "The Gypsy Laddie" is performed more often by European and American folk singers, and by Irish Travellers, than the Scottish variety. Irish Traveller John Reilly can be heard singing the song on his album *The Bonny Green Tree Songs of an Irish Traveller*. Although the exact lyrics to the song vary between singers, "The Raggle-Taggle Gypsy" contains less Gypsy stereotypes than "The Gypsy Laddie", and the lady appears to have made a conscious choice to elope with her lover, giving up her comfortable life for one of romance and adventure. The line "I'd rather have a kiss of the yellow gypsy's lips/Than all the cash and money-o" is the only real indication of the Gypsy's characterisation as exotic. Numerous other versions of the song exist, including a version known as "Black Jack Davy", which completely removes any references to Gypsies, and appears instead to promote the American pioneer lifestyle.

There were three auld gypsies came to our hall door.
They came brave and boldly-o.
And one sang high and the other sang low
And the other sang a raggle taggle gypsy-o.

It was upstairs, downstairs the lady went,
Put on her suit of leather-o,
And it was the cry all around her door;
"She's away with the raggle taggle gypsy-o"

It was late that night when the lord came in,
Enquiring for his lady-o,
And the servant girl's reply to him was;
"She's away with the raggle taggle gypsy-o"

"Then saddle for me my milk-white steed
Me big horse is not speedy-o
And I will ride and I'll seek me bride,
She's away with the raggle taggle gypsy-o"

He rode east and he rode west
He rode north and south also,

And when he rode to the wide open field

It was there that he spied his lady-o.

"Arra, why did you leave your house and your land,

Why did you leave your money-o?

Why did you leave your only wedded lord

All for the raggle taggle gypsy-o?"

"Yerra what do I care for me house and me land?

What do I care for money-o?

What do I care for me only wedded lord?

I'm away with the raggle taggle gypsy-o"

"It was there last night you'd a goose feather bed,

Blankets drawn so comely-o.

But tonight you lie in a wide open field

In the arms of the raggle taggle gypsy-o"

"Yerra, what do I care for me goose feather bed?

Yerra, what do I care for blankets-o?

What do I care for me only wedded lord?

I'm away with the raggle taggle gypsy-o"

"Oh, for you rode east when I rode west,

You rode high and I rode low.

I'd rather have a kiss of the yellow gypsy's lips

Than all the cash and money-o"