

La gitanilla in France: From Page to Stage

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FORMER FRENCH PRESIDENT Nicholas Sarkozy made headlines before his election, while serving as interior minister, with his characterization of the rioters burning cars in the suburbs of Paris in 2005. In response to a woman who shouted down from the window of a housing block, “Enough of this *racaille*,” Sarkozy shot back: “Vous en avez assez de cette bande de *racaille*? Eh bien on va vous en débarrasser”—roughly translated, “You’ve had enough of this scum? Then we’re going to get rid of them for you.” His words provoked a vigorous polemic in the French and European press around the word *racaille*, translated variously as “scum,” “rabble,” or “hoodlum.” Just as American rappers have appropriated the word “nigga” in lyrics and popular culture, so the very groups derisively termed *racaille* have sometimes appropriated that word in France. But it has also been used by the Far Right press to characterize immigrants, particularly Muslims and the Roma, or “gypsies.” After his election, Sarkozy, whom the French sometimes refer to as Sarko, continued his “zero tolerance” policies by ordering the expulsion from France of illegal Roma and other itinerant immigrants and the dismantling of their encampments. Though the new Socialist government of François Hollande promised to end Sarkozy’s policies, viewed as racist, expulsion and the dismantling of the camps continue. With this recent history in mind I turn to the seventeenth-century translation and appropriation of Cervantes’s novella *La gitanilla* in early-modern France.

“LA PRECIOSA DE FRANCE”

“Liance est la *Preciosa* de France: après la belle Egyptienne de Cervantes, je ne pense pas qu’on en ayt veû une plus aimable,” writes the witty memoirist, gossip, and moralist Tallemant des Réaux in his *Historiettes*, which offer portraits and scandalous anecdotes of the rich, famous, and literary of seventeenth-century France.¹ Liance was a beautiful gypsy, fabled for her dancing, who bewitched the captain of the prince de Conti’s guards. Although she led a life Tallemant describes as “libertine,” “personne ne luy a jamais touché le bout du doigt” (no one had ever laid a finger on her). Tallemant’s naming of Liance “la *Preciosa* de France” sometime in midcentury suggests just how well known Cervantes’s story was in early-modern France—Cervantes’s novella, as translated into French, may well have shaped Liance’s reputation, or at least its written afterlife.

Both the *Quixote* and the *Novelas exemplares* were widely read in seventeenth-century France, a historical moment, we should remember, of complicated, sometimes-fraught, Franco-Hispanic relations. The period during which Cervantes’s novels and novellas were published and translated into French was one of heightened political and cultural exchange. Even before the several royal marriages (that of Louis XIII to Anne of Austria, daughter of Philip III of Spain; of Louis’s sister Elizabeth to Anne’s brother, Philip IV; and of Louis XIV to Maria Theresa, daughter of Philip IV) fostered cultural exchange as well as keen mercantile, religious, and military rivalries, there seems to have been a vogue for things Spanish among the French elite.² Spain was briefly at peace with England and France in the first decade of the seventeenth century and in 1609 had signed the Twelve Years’ Truce with the United Provinces. Though in retrospect Spain’s wealth and global empire may have been in decline, they inspired both envy and emulation on the Continent—and certainly in France, where the Habsburgs’ patronage of the arts commanded prestige. Spanish was frequently taught in seventeenth-century France, perhaps in part as a result of its long association with empire, as witnessed by the famous phrase in the dedication to Queen Isabella in the humanist Antonio Nebrija’s *Gramática castellana*: “siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio” (language was always the companion of empire).³

Famously, we learn something of Cervantes’s reputation in France from the censor Marquez Torres’s approbation of the second part of the *Quixote*; he recounts that at a diplomatic meeting to negotiate one of the French-Spanish matrimonial matches, the French expounded upon the esteem in which France and her neighbors held Cervantes’s work: the *Quixote*, the *Galatea*, which they could practically quote by heart, and the novellas. Though some French readers read Cervantes in Spanish, for the most part he was read in translation, and those translations were often the source of Cervantes’s reputation not only in France but elsewhere in Europe as well,

¹ Tallemant des Réaux, *Historiettes*, ed. Antoine Adam (Paris: Gallimard/Pléiade, 1961), 2, 623. “Liance is the *Preciosa* of France: other than Cervantes’s beautiful gypsy girl herself, I don’t think anyone has seen one so appealing.” All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

² On hispanism in France, see Alexandre Cioranescu, *Le masque et le visage: Du baroque espagnol au classicisme français* (Geneva: Droz, 1983); and Jean-Frédéric Schaub, *La France espagnole: Les racines hispaniques de l’absolutisme français* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2003).

³ On the study of Spanish in France, see Sabina Collet Sedola, “L’étude de l’espagnol en France à l’époque d’Anne d’Autriche,” in *L’âge d’or de l’influence espagnole: La France et l’Espagne à l’époque d’Anne d’Autriche*, ed. Charles Mazouer (Mont-de-Marsan: Editions InterUniversitaires, 1991). On language and this imperial topos, see Peter Burke, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20, 22.

where French was read much more widely than Spanish.⁴ Tallemant invokes that translation history when he dubs the gypsy Liance not only “Preciosa” but also “la belle Egyptienne de Cervantes,” the title of both the French translation of Cervantes’s *La gitanilla* and of a Baroque tragicomedy by Alexandre Hardy, one of the several adaptations of Cervantes on the seventeenth-century French stage.⁵

TRANSLATION/ADAPTATION

Cervantes famously writes in the preface to his novellas that his invention engendered them, his pen gave them birth, and they were growing up in the arms of the press (“y van creciendo en los brazos de la estampa”). Their print fortunes would seem to corroborate his claim.⁶ Published first in Madrid in 1613, they appeared in French translation immediately (the *privilege* is dated November 24, 1614): six by Vital d’Audiguier, a soldier and poet who translated not only Cervantes but a number of early-modern Spanish texts, and six more by the poet François de Rosset, who also translated part 2 of the *Quixote* as well as a number of Italian texts.⁷ The translations were printed by Jean Richer, best known for his newsbook volumes, the *Mercure françois*, concerned with French political events in the unstable period between the assassination of Henry IV in 1610 and Richelieu’s political hegemony in the late 1620s. George Hainsworth argues that Richer seems to have initially intended to publish only d’Audiguier’s six translated stories, which were completed near the end of 1614, but decided instead to publish all the *novelas* and so commissioned Rosset to translate the six additional tales.⁸ It is generally agreed that d’Audiguier’s translation takes considerably more liberties (and betrays the limits of his knowledge of Spanish) than does Rosset’s, which remains much closer to the Cervantine text. The translation seems to have had, as Hainsworth notes, “une fortune vraiment remarquable” (a truly remarkable impact) in Europe throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth; it was frequently reprinted and inspired in turn many Dutch, English, and German translations.⁹

Rosset translated the title of Cervantes’s *La gitanilla* as *La belle égyptienne*, and he begins his preface to the volume with those very words. Rosset’s translation of *La gitanilla* is also the lead story in the collection, as it is in the 1613 Madrid edition. In her 1931 study of the influence of Cervantes in France, Esther Crooks hazards that “the change in title from *La Gitanilla* to *La belle Egyptienne* in de Rosset’s translation of the *Novelas ejemplares* is due probably to the fact that the

⁴ “The language whose speakers made the strongest bid for European hegemony was of course French.” Burke, *Languages and Communities*, 85. On the competition among vernaculars, including a critique of the “triumphalist” model, see Burke’s chapter “Vernaculars in Competition,” 61–88. Burke points out that in 1600 “it has been calculated French was in the lead with about fourteen million speakers, followed by German with ten million, Italian with nine and a half million, Spanish with eight and a half million, English with six million” (82).

⁵ Hardy’s is only one of several dramatic adaptations of Cervantes’s story, which include a 1642 play of the same title by Sallebray. See George Hainsworth, *Les “Novelas ejemplares” de Cervantes en France au XVIIe siècle: Contribution à l’étude de la nouvelle en France* (Paris: Champion, 1933). Also on the French translations, see Andrée Mansau, “Les nouvelles exemplaires de Miguel de Cervantés traduites en langue française,” *Littératures classiques* 13 (1990): 109–20.

⁶ Miguel de Cervantes, *Novelas ejemplares*, ed. Harry Sieber (Madrid: Cátedra, 1986), 52.

⁷ On d’Audiguier’s subsequent translations of Cervantes and his theories of translation, see Ellen R. Welch, “Translating Authority: Cervantes’ *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* in French (1618),” *Translation and Literature* 19 (2010): 26–41.

⁸ Hainsworth, *Les “Novelas ejemplares” de Cervantes*, 59.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

French considered all gypsies ugly.”¹⁰ She is apparently calling attention to the addition of the adjective *belle* to the title, but she never makes clear that in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France, “gypsies” were routinely called Egyptians. Jacques Callot’s famous series of etchings known as *Les bohémiens*, for example, is referred to in a 1635 inventory of his property as *La vie des egyptiens*.

In the entry “Bohemiens” in Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*, we learn that “vagabonds qui font profession de dire la bonne aventure, à l’inspection des mains” (i.e., vagabonds who made a profession of fortune-telling) were called *bohemiens* and, in what seems almost an echo of Cervantes’s story, that their talents were singing, dancing, and stealing. The *Encyclopédie* cites the seventeenth-century lawyer and historian Estienne Pasquier as the source for the legend that they were chased out of Lower Egypt by the Saracens, that they claimed to be Christian penitents, and that they subsequently made their way to Rome, where they confessed to the pope. As penance they were required to roam—the French verb is *errer*, with its multiple resonances (to stray, to wander, to fail, to mistake, to commit a fault, to sin)—for seven years, without sleeping in a bed. (Other versions recount that they were condemned to wander for seven *centuries* for a host of other reasons, among them for refusing aid to the Holy Family during its flight to Egypt, advising Judas to betray Jesus, and forging the nails used in the Crucifixion.)¹¹ Subsequently, they were banished from France on pain of being condemned to the galleys. In fact, the peoples known as gypsies or Roma are descended from nomadic tribes of the Indus Valley in a diaspora that began around 1000 CE.¹² Some migrated to Egypt, others into what we now call the Balkans, including Bohemia, hence the label *bohémiens*.

The *Encyclopédie* entry also reports that “leurs femmes étaient laides” (their women were ugly), a phrase taken directly from Pasquier and that seems to record a French cultural commonplace, not shared in Spain, but repeated, as we have seen, by Crooks. Crooks also cites Honoré d’Urfé, author of the contemporaneous pastoral romance *L’Astrée*, who has a character claim, “Je suis noire, mais je suis belle” (I am black, but I am beautiful), perhaps echoing the Song of Songs, and she cites a couplet from a sonnet by one of d’Urfé’s contemporaries, the poet Tristan l’Hermite: “Beau Monstre de Nature, il est vray ton visage / Est noire au dernier point, mais beau parfaitement” (Beautiful Monster of Nature, it is true your face is as black as can be but, for all that, perfectly beautiful). Gypsies, or Egyptians, were sometimes said to be Ham’s descendants.¹³ In short, the title “La belle égyptienne” of both Rosset’s translation and of the play by the French Baroque playwright Alexandre Hardy would seem to have been understood in the French context as an oxymoron, a rhetorical figure and relation that Kim Hall has traced in *Things of Darkness*.¹⁴

¹⁰ Esther Crooks, *The Influence of Cervantes in France in the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1931), 146.

¹¹ See Edward J. Sullivan, “Jacques Callot’s *Les bohémiens*,” *Art Bulletin* 59 (1977): 220. On the various myths and stereotypes associated with gypsies in Europe, see Lou Charnon-Deutsch, *The Spanish Gypsy: The History of a European Obsession* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004); and David Mayall, *Gypsy Identities, 1500–2000: From Egipcians and Moon-Men to the Ethnic Romany* (New York: Routledge, 2004); in France, see François de Vaux de Foletier, *Les tsiganes dans l’ancienne France* (Paris: Connaissance du Monde, 1961).

¹² A. C. Woolner, “The Origin of the Gypsies in Europe,” *Journal of the Punjab Historical Society* 2 (1914): 118–37, cited in Sullivan, “Jacques Callot’s *Les bohémiens*,” 220.

¹³ See, e.g., Henri Cornelis Agrippa’s *Déclaration sur l’incertitude, vanité, et abus des sciences* (1530).

¹⁴ Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995). See also Sujata Iyengar, *Shades of Difference: Mythologies of Skin Color* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); and particularly her chapter on gypsies, “Artificial Negroes,” 173–99.

Though Cervantes emphasizes the little gypsy Preciosa's exceptional beauty repeatedly, he does not present it as paradoxical. In early-modern Spain, gypsies seem not necessarily to have been perceived as dark or marked phenotypically in any particular way.¹⁵ Instead, as Alison Weber argues, Cervantes plays with a different paradox, with the "supposedly incompatible character traits 'bold' and 'chaste.'"¹⁶

Rosset's choice to use *La belle égyptienne* as the title of his translation of *La gitanilla*, then, was meant to be a striking oxymoron that acknowledged a prevailing early-modern cultural prejudice. Though clearly intended for a non-Spanish-speaking market, Rosset's translation was dedicated to Louise de Lorraine de Guise, the princess of Conti, who, Rosset claims, understood Spanish "parfaitement" (perfectly). The princess was a woman of letters, patron, and author of a satiric portrait of the court of Henri IV modeled on popular romance. Rosset begins his dedication saying that *la belle égyptienne*, accompanied by the mistress of "l'amant liberal" (referring to Cervantes's novella *El amante liberal*), have just arrived in France, and he evokes Greek romance with its tempests and questing lovers in tracing the novellas' origins:

La belle Égyptienne, accompagnée de la sage Maîtresse de
l'Amant Liberal, & de quelques autres personnes, que la Fortune
a exercées par toutes sortes d'inconstances, & portées en divers
lieux, viennent d'arriver en France.

The beautiful Egyptian, accompanied by the wise mistress of the
Generous Lover and by a few other persons, whom Fortune tried
with all sorts of hardships and drove here, there, and everywhere,
has just arrived in France.

The princess of Conti may have been able to read Cervantes's tale in the original Spanish, but Rosset and his publisher were aiming at a broader market.

Rosset's choices in translating Cervantes raise issues that continue to dog translation studies today and that were forcefully articulated in the eighteenth century by Friedrich Schleiermacher, who famously observed that there are two ways for translators to address the challenge posed by cultural distance. One approach is for the translator to bring the author's linguistic and cultural world closer to the reader of the translation, what Martin Luther in his letter on translating called "Verdeutschung," or "Germanizing." Schleiermacher himself objected to such translation practices because he claimed that they distorted the text. He advocated a second path: the translator should bring the *reader* toward the text's distinctive linguistic and cultural world.¹⁷ Schleiermacher's question remains salient today; Sandra Berman and Michael Wood paraphrase it in the introduction to their collection *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*: "How much of the 'otherness' of the 'foreign' should the translator highlight? How much of the foreign should he mute or erase in order to make texts easier for the 'home' (target) audience to

¹⁵ Barbara Fuchs, personal communication.

¹⁶ Alison Weber, "Pentimento: The Parodic Text of 'La gitanilla,'" *Hispanic Review* 62 (1994): 59. On Cervantes's use of various discursive forms (legal, military, religious), see Robert ter Horst, "Une saison en enfer: *La gitanilla*," *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America* 5 (1982): 87–127.

¹⁷ Friedrich Schleiermacher, "On the Different Methods of Translating," trans. Susan Bernofsky, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, 2nd ed., ed. Lawrence Venuti (New York: Routledge, 2004).

assimilate?”¹⁸ Rosset, for example, preserves many Hispanic details and resonances: though some names are translated—Juan becomes Jean, for example, but Preciosa remains Preciosa—the characters keep their Spanish titles; the military order, Calatrava, remains the same, as does the story’s geographic trajectory, and Rosset employs the idiomatic Spanish term “Holà.” But he also wants to make his story legible for his French readers, and to do so he makes some minor changes that he evidently believed would further that aim. The “patios” of the palace in which Don Juan assures Preciosa and the old gypsy that his name and family are known become “corners,” doubloons become ducats, and so forth. Whereas in fleeing the advances of Carduche, Andrés in Cervantes goes to round up the gypsies’ donkeys in a corral, in Rosset donkeys would seem to transgress decorum: instead, Andrés goes to find his “malette,” or satchel. The old gypsy in Cervantes wears clogs; in Rosset they are “grands patins,” the felt pads or slippers worn inside French homes to protect and polish parquet. And there are differences that are more complex and require further analysis: for example, Rosset terms gypsies a “race,” whereas Cervantes terms them a “nación.” But Rosset preserves with care the emphasis in Cervantes’s tale on the freedom of gypsy life, its habits and customs, and on Preciosa’s “gaye liberté,” an emphasis almost entirely missing from Alexandre Hardy’s play based on Rosset’s translation, to which I now turn.¹⁹

Hardy, one of the most prolific French dramatists of all time (he claimed to have written some six hundred *poèmes dramatiques*, as he called them), wrote during most of his career for the “comédiens du roi” who performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, Paris’s main theater. Hardy oversaw the publication of only thirty-four of his plays, including *La belle égyptienne*, which appeared in the last volume of his published dramas in 1628 but which was apparently written and performed sometime in the early 1620s. Hardy routinely prefaced the print versions of his plays with an argument summarizing the action. *La belle égyptienne*’s argument begins like this:

L’Incomparable Cervantes entre ses nouvelles plus dignes de
remarque et d’admiration, rapporte que Constance fille du Senechal
de Seville fut en sa plus tendre jeunesse ravie par une vieille
Bohemienne, qui luy apprit les secrets du métier.²⁰

The Incomparable Cervantes, among his novellas most worthy of
attention and admiration, reports that Constance, the daughter of the
seneschal of Seville, was kidnapped at a very young age by an old
gypsy who taught her the secrets of her trade.

Hardy assumes, then, that his readers are already familiar with Cervantes’s reputation, and he prefaces the print version of his play with the dénouement of Cervantes’s story, the revelation of Preciosa’s identity. The play opens with a soliloquy by Don Jean that epitomizes Hardy’s style and

¹⁸ Sandra Berman and Michael Wood, eds., *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), borrowing from Schleiermacher, “On the Different Methods of Translating,” 5. See also Julie Candler Hayes, *Translation, Subjectivity, and Culture in France and England, 1600–1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

¹⁹ The arguments advanced, and nowhere to my knowledge contradicted, that Hardy’s play is based on Rosset’s translation, not on reading Cervantes’s story in Spanish, can be found in Hainsworth, *Les “Novelas exemplares” de Cervantes*, among others.

²⁰ Alexandre Hardy, *La belle égyptienne: Tragi-comédie*, ed. Bernadette Bearez Caravaggi (Paris: Schena-Nizet, 1983), 63. Caravaggi’s editorial concern seems to be to explain the anomalies in Hardy’s seventeenth-century French as compared to modern usage.

his approach to his Cervantine material.²¹ For dramatic purposes he compresses the action—Don Jean is already in love with Précieuse as the play opens, and he reveals his love in verse filled with Baroque hyperbole and mythological allusion. Don Jean harangues the powerful master of the gods, Love, to moderate his assault and confesses himself vanquished and Love's prisoner. He blazons Précieuse's beauty in exaggeratedly Petrarchan terms—her alabaster forehead, her starry eyes, her coral lips, her snowy bosom, her golden “tresses vagabondes,” which a smitten Zephyrus makes curl like waves. Her beauty has imprisoned him, but gold, he hopes, will free him since “telle sorte de gens pauvre se jette au lucre” (poor people like these will jump at cash). Such sententiae are another feature of Hardy's style, one he shares with a number of his contemporaries. Hardy's Don Jean, unlike Cervantes's character, assumes that Précieuse will be swayed by both his wealth and his position. Her “divine beauty” robs him of himself, and he offers his fortune to save her from the vagabond life of infamy she leads.

Précieuse, as in Cervantes's story, and even using his metaphor of the flower that fades when cut, insists that her love—Hardy's euphemism for Cervantes's *virginidad*—can be obtained only by marriage. Her insistence on marriage prompts the old gypsy in Hardy's play to exclaim that she is mad to make such demands, perhaps a nod to the presumed indecorum of their putative discrepant social statuses. But Don Jean immediately acquiesces: come what may, he will undergo the trials of Jason or Hercules to win her love. Throughout the play Don Jean bemoans his fate—he is “blackening” his reputation, committing parricide in agreeing to go among the gypsies and take part in their crimes. The French word he uses to name the gypsies is *canaille*, a word less derogatory than Sarkozy's *racaille* but of similar meaning. In various French allusions to Cervantes's tale, we find this emphasis on the gulf in status between the two lovers. Almost twenty years later, in a ballet entitled the *Libraire du Pont-Neuf, ou Les romans* (1644), in which all the characters are taken from the most popular books of the time, we find the characters of La belle égyptienne and Andrez, the name the gypsies bestow on Don Jean. In Hardy's play and in the ballet, Don Jean / Andrez laments, “je trahy ma naissance,” while at the same time declaring his love to Précieuse. Hardy's gypsy captain who inducts Don Jean into the crew begins his speech, “Aproche, Gentil-homme” (“Approach, sir,” or “Come forward, young gentleman”), thus stressing Don Jean's gentle status, perhaps even borrowing from Andrés Caballero's surname (caballero/knight) in Cervantes. Hardy borrows much from Cervantes's description of gypsy life but typically gilds it with classical comparison; for example, Mercury, the god of thieves, who stole Apollo's cattle, teaches them their vocation. What in Cervantes is their “gaye liberté” in Hardy are rather “gayes difficultez.”

Whereas in *La gitanilla*, as E. Michael Gerli argues, “the plots, characters, landscape and motifs of romance are ironically subverted through contrast,” in Hardy not only do the hyperbole and rhetoric of romance dominate but the ethical and moral ambiguity of Cervantes's dénouement is suppressed.²² If in Cervantes Preciosa gains a father and becomes, as Julio Rodríguez-Luis suggests, silent and obedient, requiring her father's permission to marry, Hardy goes even

²¹ On the Spanish novella and French Baroque theater, see Daniela Dalla Valle, “De la nouvelle espagnole à la tragi-comédie française: Deux nouvelles de Cervantès et cinq tragi-comédies de Hardy, Sallebray, Scudéry, Bouscal et L'Estoile,” in *L'âge d'or de l'influence espagnole*, ed. Mazouer, 303–14.

²² E. Michael Gerli, “Romance and Novel: Idealism and Irony in *La gitanilla*,” *Cervantes: Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America* 6 (1986): 38.

further.²³ Whereas in Cervantes “the interplay of idealism and irony . . . points to the disparities between literary norms” and what Gerli terms the “realities of experience” (but which we might rather term the conventions of realism), in Hardy the romance ending of coincidences is exaggerated. *Précieuse*’s father not only knows Don Jean’s family, they were once even comrades-in-arms. Not only is *Précieuse* of noble birth, but her birth surpasses Don Jean’s. Whereas Cervantes’s tale ends, not with the nuptials, which he dispenses with summarily, but with the writing of *Preciosa*’s story and a failure of poetic justice, Hardy’s play ends with the words of the Father/father who delays their marriage until Andrés’s father can arrive. Not only does Hardy observe rather than undermine the conventions of romance; he also emphasizes patriarchal power by giving the last speech of the play to *Précieuse*’s father, who speaks, not to his daughter, but directly to her fiancé, the aristocratic Don Jean:

Promis dés aujourd’hui, j’entends que l’on fiance,
 Certain que vôtre Pere approuvera l’accord,
 Qu’une semblable bru ne luy peut faire tort,
 Soit qu’à l’extraction, soit qu’aus biens on regarde,
 Averty d’un Courier la Nopce l’attendra,
 Et l’hommage requis à son grade rendra.

(ll. 1584–90)

Promised as of today, I agree to your engagement,
 Certain that your father will approve of the match.
 Such a daughter-in-law does him no wrong,
 Whether we weigh birth or wealth.
 Informed by a messenger, the nuptials will await him,
 And we will tender the honor requisite to his status.

Unlike Cervantes, Hardy sends the old gypsy back to her people and, in a final classicizing detail, orders songs to be sung in the temples and for the lovers to be crowned with myrtle: “Allons faire des chants les temples resonner, / Puis d’un Myrthe en public nos Amants couronner” (ll. 1605–6).

Many readers have observed that at the end of both Cervantes’s tale and Hardy’s play, *Preciosa*’s “gaye liberté” is curtailed. In a now somewhat outdated vocabulary, she is reduced to a wife, reinserted in hierarchical relations, circumscribed in the *domus*. If freedom is metaphORIZED as unobstructed movement, as it so often is, and opposed to constraint and bondage, then we must read the end of Hardy’s play, as some have Cervantes’s story, as a fall into unfreedom.²⁴ In being restored to her parents and bestowed in heterosexual marriage, *Preciosa* is presumed to lose many of the “freedoms” we associate with an unfettered subjectivity. And many of those losses are gendered: having found a father to whom she is now bound, she will move from father to husband and will finally become, now at her father’s wish, Don Jean’s wife.

²³ Julio Rodríguez-Luis, *Novedad y ejemplo de las “Novelas ejemplares” de Cervantes* (Madrid: Ediciones J. Porrúa-Turanzas, 1980), 1:138, reference in Gerli, “Romance and Novel,” 37.

²⁴ My discussion of freedom here is prompted by the work of my colleague James Kuzner, whose essay “Metaphysical Freedom,” forthcoming in *Modern Language Quarterly*, has stimulated my thinking with regard to *La gitana*.

Yet recent theoretical reflection on freedom raises questions with regard to our assumptions about “freedoms” and the rights’ claims or liberties that those “freedoms” are said to underwrite—our right to this or that, our putative “free will,” our right to come and go, to move freely, to marry or not. In Jean-Luc Nancy’s words, in focusing on rights’ claims, we “do not grasp the stakes of ‘freedom,’” for “they delimit necessary conditions of contemporary human life, without considering existence as such.”²⁵ Following Nancy, we might say that Hardy’s play speaks “about freedom” in representing the gypsies’ “gaye liberté,” whereas, perhaps, Cervantes’s novella “speaks of freedom,” of an existential freedom registered in its ironies and its swerve from the marriage plot. For at the end of Cervantes’s novella, he turns away from the marriage of Don Juan and Preciosa, which is the focus of Hardy’s last lines, and instead turns to what might be termed the “writing plot.” In Cervantes, the wedding festivities take place in a sentence; when news of the marriage reaches Don Juan’s father, he hastens to Murcia, thrilled that his son has made so illustrious a marriage. But Cervantes’s tale ends not with the marriage of Don Juan and Preciosa or, as in Hardy, with plans for its celebration. Instead, Cervantes ends with “los poetas de la ciudad” (the poets of the city) and “el famoso Licenciado Poço” (perhaps the minor poet Doctor Andrés del Pozo), who will celebrate the lovers’ story and Preciosa’s fabled beauty in verse. Her fame will endure as long as the centuries turn (“la fama di Preciosa mientras los siglos duraren”). And in a last sly irony, Cervantes reminds us yet again that he is the inventor of this tale. His narrator tells us in the final sentence that he forgot to say that the smitten, treacherous Carducha confessed her treachery but did not get her just deserts: “la clemencia” is the novella’s last word.²⁶ Cervantes’s ending enacts the experience of freedom, a freedom not bound to the banal marriage plot but to the thinking of writing and of thought itself.

Crooks closes her chapter on Cervantes’s influence on the French theater by claiming that the increasing desire to observe the unities, which never troubled Hardy, “brought a decrease in the usefulness of Cervantes’ *Novelas ejemplares* as models” for later French playwrights.²⁷ Yet the enduring lure of romance, especially in its ironized mode, belies her claim. Instead, romance, in Jameson’s formulation, morphs to fit changing codes, always undoing, eschewing resolution, postponing particular ends,²⁸ a literary strategy in which the gypsy Preciosa can morph not only into *la belle égyptienne* of Rosset’s translation and later Hardy’s play but also into Tallement’s *Liance*, the English *Spanish Gypsy*, and the many subjects of Dutch literature and art that Crooks details. But Preciosa also mutates into the characters of countless other genres, including ballet and opera, and most recently, the little gypsy girl has been the subject of a Grand Palais blockbuster exhibit that opened in Paris on September 26, 2013. As the online blurb describes it, “Chantée, filmée, versifiée, exaltée, cent fois déclarée morte et toujours renaissante, la ‘Bohème’ fait partie des mythes modernes” (Celebrated in song, in cinema, in verse, declared dead a

²⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 2.

²⁶ On the mention of Master Poço at the end of Cervantes’s tale and the plot of writing, see Ruth S. El Saffar, *Novel to Romance: A Study of Cervantes’s “Novelas ejemplares”* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 107–8.

²⁷ Crooks, *Influence of Cervantes in France*, 183.

²⁸ Fredric Jameson, “Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre,” *New Literary History* 7 (1975): 135–63. On the postponement of resolution, see Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979). For an overview, see Barbara Fuchs, *Romance* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

hundred times over, yet always reborn, the “Gypsy” is one of the enduring modern myths).²⁹ Cervantes’s *La gitanilla* may have become less “useful” to dramatists of the seventeenth-century French theater as the neoclassical unities came to dominate dramatic production, but the figure of the gypsy girl, beautiful and free, that his novella celebrated persists in the romanticized fiction of *la bohème*. It is ironic that at the very moment the French state is chasing the *racaille* from France, the Grand Palais exhibition purports to show the importance of these “nomads” to the construction of European identity. A

²⁹ See <http://www.grandpalais.fr/en/evenement/bohemes>.