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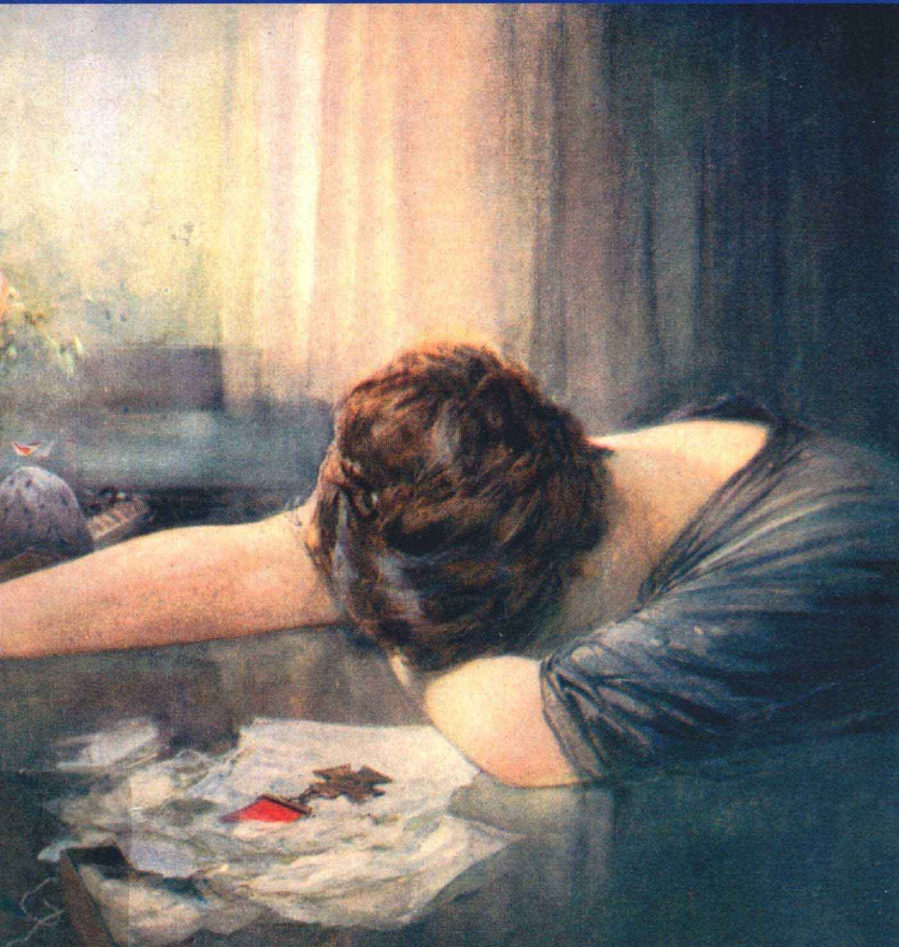
Daniel Deronda

GEORGE ELIOT



COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

DANIEL DERONDA

George Eliot

With an Introduction and Notes by
CAROLE JONES

WORDSWORTH CLASSICS

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DANIEL DERONDA

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Wordsworth Classics are inexpensive editions designed to appeal to the general reader and students. We commissioned teachers and specialists to write wide-ranging, jargon-free introductions and to provide notes that would assist the understanding of our readers rather than interpret the stories for them. In the same spirit, because the pleasures of reading are inseparable from the surprises, secrets and revelations that all narratives contain, we strongly advise you to enjoy this book before turning to the Introduction.

KEITH CARABINE
General Advisor
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INTRODUCTION

Daniel Deronda first appeared as a serial of eight instalments, published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* from February to September 1876. In 1873, when research for *Deronda* was well underway, George Eliot was at the pinnacle of her writing career. While her works had examined ever-wider social contexts beyond the rural or provincial, *Daniel Deronda* was different enough to perplex many readers. The principal themes are recognisable from earlier novels, but *Deronda*, Eliot's most heterogeneous and nearly-contemporary work, examines extreme moral issues, such as race, religion and imperialism, alongside more controversial analyses of social decay and gender inequality. Radically, the novel's devastating critique of a degenerate English society was achieved by way of an audacious comparison with Judaism. This provocative strategy, coupled with a complex double narrative concerning the characters Gwendolen Harleth and Daniel Deronda, compounded readers' reservations. Controversial in its own day, the novel has retained its power to challenge and perplex.

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As early instalments of *Deronda* appeared, sales exceeded those of *Middlemarch* and reviews were promising. Yet as early as April 1876 and the appearance of Book III, Eliot correctly predicted an unfavourable reaction to the novel's Jewish component (*GEJ*, p. 145; *GEL*, VI, 238),[1] and reviews became more critical (*CH*, pp. 360–447). By December, Eliot wrote: 'I have been made aware of the growing repugnance or else indifference towards the Jewish part of Deronda, and of some hostile as well as adverse reviewing' (*GEJ*, p. 146). Despite praise from the Anglo-Jewish community,[2] only the most perceptive critics, such as Edward Dowden, James Picciotto and R. E. Francillon, were aware that Eliot was presenting something new and challenging. *Deronda* was 'not another *Adam Bede* or *Middlemarch*' but different and superior, like a 'first novel, from a fresh hand and mind' (*CH*, p. 383). Later, Oscar Browning provided a comprehensive catalogue of contemporary *Deronda* criticisms (1890, pp. 143–4), notably that the eponymous hero was a 'bore' and a 'prig' and an absent and ineffective construction. The novel's imagery and language were also considered strained, with too much science, philosophy and religion usurping 'the place of art' (p. 143). Readers were also perplexed by, or resented the twin narratives with their complex intertextual links, and consequently began to 'trim the novel to suit their tastes' (*CH*, p. 32), rejecting 'Daniel' while praising 'Gwendolen' – a trend that has continued. For example, F. R. Leavis famously argued that Eliot, although generally too intelligent to offer herself dubious alternatives for the 'religious exaltation she craved', had allowed her immersion in imaginative art to lead her into 'daydream unrealities' (Leavis, p. 98), particularly the insincere self-indulgence of Zionism. Leavis suggested a shortened work, *Gwendolen Harleth*, composed solely of the 'good half' (p. 97) of the novel. Many critics, both before and since, have also argued for a separation of the two strands, yet the decision by many Jewish commentators to value only the 'Deronda' part (Werses, *passim*) throws doubt on these claims of objective, aesthetic analysis. Leavis's criticism also reduces the plurality of the work, partly by assuming knowledge of Eliot's intentions, and also by not reading beyond those intentions.

Daniel Deronda evolved between 1872 and 1876, during a period when George Eliot's personal and general disquiet was growing. Her long-time partner, the writer and polymath George Henry Lewes, had lost two of his sons, while both Eliot and Lewes experienced continuing ill-health.[3] Public events also caused Eliot to question her belief in gradual meliorism; for example, she followed the horrors of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–1 closely, asking herself: 'Am I doing anything that will add the weight of a sandgrain against the persistence of such evil?' (*GEJ*, p. 141). The pre-cursors to this conflict, together with the American Civil War and an uprising in Jamaica, all inform the background of *Daniel Deronda*, adding a dimension of colonial violence. Eliot's developing understanding of Darwin's work also caused her to accept man's lack of pre-eminence, while the chance nature of evolution by natural selection further compromised her belief in progress. Finally, alarm at an increasingly degenerate cosmopolitanism, coupled with a pessimism exacerbated by her reading in 1872–3, of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea* (1818) catalysed *Daniel Deronda* as a new 'experiment in life' (*GEL*, VI, 216).

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[1] For full details of this and other references, turn to the Bibliography at the end of this Introduction.

[2] See *GEL*, VI, 288–9, 294, 316–7, 320–1.

Eliot's works explore ways of living in increasingly cosmopolitan societies where the bonds of family and community are being eroded. She was also concerned to expose the iniquities suffered by all those classed as 'different', and to oppose oppression by encouraging the recognition and valuing of difference and promoting the growth of understanding and sympathy. *Daniel Deronda* explores nineteenth-century Judaism in order to oppose anti-Semitism, and examines the oppression and repression of nineteenth-century women in an increasingly imperialist, patriarchal English society. Eliot also considers the developing theory of organicism as part of a possible solution.[4] The development of all individual organisms (plant, animal *and* human) is always interdependent on others *and* on internal and external environments – so that no organism can survive in isolation. However, in organicist models of human society, paradoxical questions of individual rights versus social duty inevitably arise – some members in maintaining individuality may be selfish, while some are selfless and put others before themselves – but both approaches cause social imbalance. Eliot's novels weigh the relative claims of individual rights versus social responsibility in the hope of achieving balance, while the development of sympathy is necessary before 'difference' can be recognised, understood *and* an organicist balance achieved.

In *Middlemarch*, Eliot's acceptance of natural selection and the arbitrary nature of moral progress had shaped limited advances for her protagonists. However, by the time of writing *Daniel Deronda*, Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871) suggested that humans could modify evolution, for example by the establishment of ethical traditions. Eliot found a similar optimism in Judaistic ideology. Mordecai's reference to ' "the core of affection which binds a race" ' (*DD*, p. 439) is, however, not unique to Judaism; rather it is also organicist in nature and reflects the affections that unite families and communities. In the nineteenth century, the growth of nationalism was fuelled by its unifying possibilities in the face of community-breakdown, but Judaic nationalism had a particular appeal to Eliot because of these links with organicism and sympathy. In an 1876 letter to her friend Barbara Bodichon, she expressed her impatience with people who 'cut the book into scraps and talk of nothing in it but Gwendolen. I meant everything in the book to be related to everything else there' (*GEL*, VI, 290). This claim forms part of the large, underlying paradox of *Daniel Deronda*, where the search for an organicist and sympathetic way of life that values individuals and community, men and women, and all types of 'difference' is always dramatically undercut by the clash of the two stories and the two narrative voices.

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[3] See *GEL*, VII, 277; VI, pp. 13–14, n. 5.

[4] See Shuttleworth, 1984, for a full discussion of Eliot's investment in organic theory.

Sympathy

Despite all the critical debates concerning Eliot's works, her 'doctrine of sympathy' is generally agreed to be the main unifying force in her fiction, with works structured to explore her characters' growth to sympathy *and* to encourage a similar growth in the reader. An 1856 review of Wilhelm von Riehl's work revealed her belief that the artist's sympathetic role is sacred: 'Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-man' (Eliot 1992, pp. 263–4) – an early statement of her conviction that 'If Art does not enlarge men's sympathies it does nothing morally' (*GEL*, III, 111). In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot still aspired to expand her readers' sympathy, but the task was both more difficult and urgent.

George Eliot's conceptions of sympathy were derived from many sources. While it is beyond the scope of this Introduction to pursue this complex of influence, an understanding of Eliot's sympathy is essential to a reading of *Daniel Deronda* – partly because she views sympathy as essential for a balanced society, and partly because much that critics describe as sympathy is actually pity or altruism. Sympathy is the disposition to share in another's feelings to the extent of thinking and feeling in tune with their emotions. While this disposition may be innate in humans, even Auguste Comte – positivist philosopher and major influence on Eliot – conceded that it needed to be nurtured and exercised; which is what Eliot's novels attempt. Empathy, meanwhile, is the power of fully understanding and feeling oneself into a situation through the senses, reason, knowledge, and imagination. In sympathy one's identity is preserved while feeling *with* the other, but empathy involves losing oneself *in* the other. Freud argued that empathy enabled us to understand that which is foreign to our ego; for example, it is essential if Gentile readers are to understand Judaism, or men to understand women. Eliot's critics also confuse sympathy with altruism – a term created by Comte to describe the self-sacrifice that promotes the welfare of others at the expense of self; and Eliot is falsely charged with demanding and condoning selflessness in her characters, particularly the women. Yet George Eliot's novels do not advocate wanton self-sacrifice, as is obvious from the career of Daniel Deronda *and* the irony and latent meanings of her works; for while selfishness is always condemned, selflessness leads to losses which the texts lament, such as the death of the altruistic Milly Barton in 'The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton' (1857).

Some of Eliot's ethical and artistic aims for *Daniel Deronda* are evident in an 1876 letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe. On reading Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Eliot was greatly influenced, and possibly wished to arouse sympathy for Judaism, as Stowe had championed anti-slavery. She aspired to 'treat Jews with such sympathy and understanding as my nature and knowledge could attain to', and with rousing, 'if it were possible . . . the imagination of men and women to a vision of human claims in those races of their fellow-men who most differ from them in custom and belief' (*GEL*, VI, 301). Common to Eliot's works is the conviction that sympathy can extend beyond family and friends to include all 'others' who are different: 'we sympathise with what we know; and the wider our knowledge and experience, the wider is the scope of our sympathy' (Bate 1945, p. 151). Surrounded by social decline, however, Eliot depicts scant sympathy in the intolerant English society of *Daniel Deronda*, where morality is merely the leftover mores of a 'social contract' that has decayed to civil tolerance. Moreover, she was also aware from the work of Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin that threatened, fearful societies are incapable of extending care. This fragmentation of English society is rendered in the distinctive form of *Daniel Deronda* by the different voices and realities of the twin narratives; the swift changes of tone, time and space; and the presentation of moral extremes. Gwendolen Harleth is a heroine who cannot initially extend sympathy, yet – unlike Hetty in

Adam Bede, or Rosamond in *Middlemarch* – still elicits the reader's sympathy, while eventually developing compassion. Meanwhile, Deronda cannot find sympathy and mutual friendship in England – the very community whose sympathies Eliot wished to extend. Indeed, her most vociferous critics remained impervious to her moral aims. A *Saturday Review* article argued that *Deronda* fails because of the 'utter want of sympathy' between Eliot and her readers on Judaism: the novel is so concerned with 'foreign' issues and characters with alien 'interests and motives' that readers feel 'bewilderment and affront' (*CH*, pp. 376–7). The review parades the anti-semitic prejudices that Eliot had denounced to Stowe, yet significantly there is no comment on the degenerate English society, or the treatment of women. Fortunately, George Eliot pays her readers a higher compliment than just writing a novel to tell us 'what we already know' and offers instead the risk to 'travel away from ourselves' (p. 385).

Classic realism or proto-modernism?

A second point of critical agreement has been that George Eliot's works are realist texts. Her 1856 essay 'The Natural History of German Life' (Eliot 1992, pp. 260–95) is generally regarded as her realist and humanist manifesto, where she argues for the true-to-life, yet unsentimental representation of ordinary people in literature. This objective persists throughout Eliot's work, but much modern criticism has rightly concentrated on Eliot's 'move beyond realism' (*ORCGE*, p. 80), which is located especially in her expression of the contradictions and multiplicity of cultural reality. None the less, many critics readily assume thematic and formal certainty, so that Eliot is still primarily celebrated – or dismissed – as a purely realist author. The structuralist critic Roland Barthes 'expresses hostility to the realist novel throughout his criticism', arguing that it is complicit with dominant ideologies (Newton, p. 4). Some critics have labelled Eliot's work 'classic realism', describing her texts as conservative windows on reality, with all-powerful narrators dominating discourse, and stable self-determining characters, while transparent language conveys single meanings. Other critics argue that Eliot's works deconstruct the classic realist text.[5] A lively debate has evolved, largely suggesting that the later works are proto-modernist and that Eliot anticipated deconstructive thinking

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[5] Newton 1991, provides an excellent overview of the debate about Eliot's realism, pp. 4–19, also reproducing the most influential essays, such as those by McCabe, Chase, Boumelha and Lodge.

(*ORCGE*, pp. 62–3). George Eliot could never be safely labelled 'classic realist', and *Daniel Deronda* clearly illustrates a move beyond realism.

'The experience of reading a realist text is ultimately reassuring . . . because the world evoked in the fiction . . . largely confirms the patterns of the world we seem to know' (Belsey 1980, p. 51). Yet *Daniel Deronda* is not a text of this kind; even the opening epigraph casts doubt on the possibility of beginnings, while the first sentences question human nature and all perceptions (*DD*, p. 3). Further, when the narrative voice is seemingly at its most omniscient, it draws attention to plurality and indeterminacy. At Gwendolen's first meeting with Grandcourt, the narrator appears to share Gwendolen's perceptions, but ends abruptly and self-consciously to declare that 'Attempts at description are stupid: who can all at once describe a human being?' (pp. 89–90). Critics who dismiss Eliot as a classic realist fail to see that *Daniel Deronda* is her most self-referential work, with the language constantly focusing on its own construction and fictionality, so as to 'make strange' ordinary life and inhibit passive reading. The authoritative epigraphs undermine the narrator; while their ironic insights act like a Greek chorus to question dominant discourses. Eliot's striving for a realistic depiction of her characters' inner life leads to in-depth, psychological constructions which culminate, in *Deronda*, with the realisation that Gwendolen and Deronda are not stable egos but subjectivities in process who are not in control of their destinies. The blurring of distinction between the opinions of character, narrator or even author also complicates assumptions about dominant discourses, so that the reader has to determine meaning. Most significant in *Daniel Deronda*, both thematically and formally, is the clash between the two narratives in their 'difference' of voice, language, style, ethic and event, for they force us compare how it is to be nominally in the same reality, while existing in different cultural environments. *Deronda* also lacks closure, being the only one of Eliot's novels without epilogue or finale; it leaves the reader debating the endings beyond the text. Also, throughout her work, Eliot embraced the creative potential of contradiction and the yoking together of disparate ideas, such as her constant desire to reconcile *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* – or communal tradition versus individualist cosmopolitanism – while playing with form permits possibilities beyond realism; for 'no conventional fictional form could have accommodated' her intentions (*CH*, p. 32). Whether the text escaped Eliot's control or not, *Deronda* explores the conventions of realism and plays with other forms. While the different voices and styles of the two stories clash and undercut the unity of the narrative, elements of Romance, myth and allegory play subversively across all strands.

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The Jewish Question and Deronda's Story

During the summer and autumn of 1872, while finalising *Middlemarch*, George Eliot first began research relating to *Daniel Deronda* (*DDN*, p. xxvii); by September, she and Lewes were in the Homburg Kursaal, watching Byron's granddaughter Miss Leigh lose five hundred pounds at the roulette table 'while in the grasp of this mean money-raking demon' (*GEL*, V, 314). The moment became immortalised as the opening of *Daniel Deronda* and the world's introduction to Gwendolen Harleth and Daniel Deronda. Chance, an air of social and moral decay, and the opposition of two main characters are all represented in this opening scene, yet the centrality of the 'Jewish Question' is not yet apparent and does not become an issue until later in the novel. Gwendolen and Daniel in their respective environments virtually constitute two different strands of evolution, with distinct perspectives, opportunities and cultural experiences – particularly those of being male, educated and rich as opposed to female, badly educated and of 'reduced circumstances'. As a middle-class woman, the only possible work available to Gwenodolen is as a governess; otherwise she has no access to education, vocation, money or even morality, and English society provides no escape. Despite the account of her verve, wit, beauty, monumental presence and links to powerful women of legend, Gwendolen can do and be nothing. It is she who talks of finding the source of the Nile (*DD*, p. 110), emigrating, or sailing away, but ultimately it is Deronda who can escape, by virtue of being male, rich and empowered by Judaism.

George Eliot had long been interested in Judaism (*ORCGE*, pp. 184–6) but her involvement quickened as a result of a close friendship with the Jewish scholar Emanuel Deutsch (1829–73), who taught her Hebrew (*GEL*, V, 73). Deutsch, a fervent advocate for the creation of a Jewish homeland, visited Palestine in 1869 and embarked again in 1872 when, already ill with cancer, he died *en route*. His influence undoubtedly spurred Eliot's interest and research.[6] One of her intentions was to oppose anti-semitism (VI, 301) and thereby widen 'the English vision a little' (V, 304). This aim informs her view of Judaism as an exemplar to set against England's social decay. As Edward Said suggests, Zionism represented 'a genuinely hopeful socio-religious project in which individual energies can be merged and identified with a collective national vision, the whole emanating out of Judaism' (p.18). In response to English psychological and spiritual rootlessness and alienation, *Deronda* stresses the importance of 'roots' (*DD* p. 15) for sympathy, with secular Judaism seeming to offer a nationalistic and communal life where sympathy might flourish. The novel presents Jews as a reproach to Gentiles, for only they have retained a sense of home and ' "observance" of any civilising communal belief . . . [Eliot's] approbation for her Zionists derives from her belief that they were a group almost exactly expressing her own grand ideas about an expanded life of feelings' (Said, p. 19). The description of Mordecai's unorthodox beliefs, coupled with Deronda's intention to modify these, suggests a creed capable of accommodating 'heresy' (*DD*, p. 624), or a 'choosing to differ' (*DDN*, pp. xxxvii; xlii), such as Eliot's organicism and sympathy.

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[6] Eliot's research for *Daniel Deronda* was exhaustive and has been well-charted. See Baker 1972, 1973, 1975; & Irwin (*DDN*), 1996, pp. xxvii–xlii and *passim*.

Contemporary responses to the Jewish component of *Daniel Deronda* varied; although Gentile reviews became more critical, the outright anti-semitism of the *Saturday Review* was rare (*CH*, pp. 376–81). Overall, English readers were more offended that Jews were presented as exemplars than by the images of English corruption.[7] By contrast, response from the Anglo-Jewish community was encouraging (*DDN*, pp. xxix–xl); Herman Adler, the Chief Rabbi, wrote in appreciation (*GEL* VI, 275), positive articles appeared in the *Jewish Chronicle*, and Joseph Jacobs, in *Macmillan's Magazine*, agreed that Eliot provided a sympathetic yet realist 'gallery of Jewish portraits' and not the ususal stereotypes of 'malevolence and greed' or 'impossible benevolence' (Holmstrom & Lerner, p. 155). There was praise for Eliot's aesthetic skill, but the greatest approbation was for the discussion that *Deronda* generated. James Picciotto concluded his favourable 1876 review with the hope that 'the political future of the Hebrew race may become more important to the world at large than its religious future' (*CH*, p. 416). Shmuel Werses provides a comprehensive account of the more varied international Jewish response. Some critics opposed Eliot's stance on Zionism; some were nationalist but opposed the 'Homeland' idea; and some took issue with her avoidance of sectarian debate. David Kaufmann, a leading scholar of Hebrew poetry and Jewish philosophy, published an article '*George Eliot und das Judentum*', which admired Eliot's discussion of Jewish ideological and historio-social themes and confirms a Jewish nationalist strength and resurgence (1878, pp. 10–12). He also praised the novel's complex interconnections, asserting that 'the two narratives . . . are to be regarded as pendants mutually illustrating and explaining one another' (p. 49). Most European translations and reviews referred only to Jewish issues;

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[7] See Lewis, pp. 193–9

ironically, David Frischmann prefaced his selective 1887 Hebrew translation with a warning that his Jewish readers would find much strange 'English' matter and a heroine whom they would not care about or identify with (Werses, p. 31). Despite this mixed response, in 1935 the historian Nahum Sokolow declared that *Daniel Deronda* had paved the way for the Balfour Declaration (p. 39).

Recent criticism of *Deronda*'s Jewish section ranges widely over its themes, form and presentation, with an increase in post-colonial readings. Given Eliot's appropriation of Zionism as a reproach to English society and condemnation of British imperialism, it is a huge irony that modern criticisms of the Jewish section concentrate on the flaws and blind spots of the novel. A common and unanswerable objection is that Eliot's text relies on the vision of a Jewish homeland without acknowledging – or perhaps realising – that she was advocating Western-style colonialism. Englishness in *Daniel Deronda* is presented as ignorant, degenerate and seemingly unenriched by centuries of colonial experience, while tyranny over the inferior 'other' is frequently remarked – and most forcefully illustrated by the description of Grandcourt as a leader who 'would have understood that it was safer to exterminate than to cajole' (*DD*, p. 492). By comparison, the Jewish Diaspora is portrayed as vibrant and cross-fertilised with experience; yet Eliot's approbation of the 'Homeland' scheme is seen as imperialist in that it ignores the indigenous inhabitants. Mordecai's speech at the 'Hand and Banner' proclaims that Zion will be redeemed from ' "debauched and paupered conquerers" ' (p. 443) by Jews whom he sees as ' "poised between East and West" ' (p. 445).

Eliot's representation of 'Jews' has also not escaped criticism. Some find the work specifically anti-semitic,[8] while Reina Lewis argues that Eliot positions Jews as England's 'Orientalised other', in that *Deronda* examines 'the Orient' with an agenda of purely English concerns (Lewis, p. 201), with Judaism a vehicle for improving the English. Some critics also find George Eliot unconsciously complicit with the contemporary desire to remove dangerous 'others' from England, such as the working classes or transgressive women, as well as 'other' races (pp. 200–1). The quest for a homeland in *Deronda* may well echo such mid-Victorian imperialist and gender hierarchies; Susan Meyer claims that Anglo-Jewish Zionism was not significantly active until the 1890s (1993, p. 748) and that Eliot's 'proto-Zionism' mainly reflects the British government's desire for the establishment of a

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[8] See Meyer 1993, for a specific reading, pp. 745–6; and pp. 756–7, n. 3 for further references.

Homeland as a base from which to secure and protect land-routes in the Middle East.

A further objection is that Eliot scarcely deals with 'ordinary Jews', for with the exception of the Cohen family, all are learned, refined and skilled. Eliot also makes little explicit distinction regarding Jewish cultural, religious and political groupings, for example the British Jewish reform movement is not represented. In 1876, Picciotto observed that she did not distinguish between the Separhdim of Spain and Portugal – a distinct group of intellectual and culturally sophisticated Jews from whom Deronda is descended – and the Ashkenazim of Eastern Europe (*CH*, p. 415) – pious and spiritual peasants, whose Western counterparts, such as Mordecai, are highly educated. Eliot may reclaim only the most acceptable parts of the available racial stereotype (Lewis, p. 223), presenting an unthreatening image of learned and refined Jews in order to appeal to the sympathies of her readers and present a partisan Judaism which best serves her artistic and ethical aims. Interestingly, the majority of *Deronda*'s Jewish readers considered the characters to be realistic Jews, with Mordecai 'convincingly real to Jewish readers', and Daniel accepted (*DDN*, p. xli).[9] More important is Eliot's reconfiguring of 'the Jew'. The Jewish-to-Christian conversion tale is the oldest form of representing Jews in literature, but is also the perennial textual strategy for containing 'the Jew'; and it is only by fully appreciating this traditional limitation that the full impact of Deronda's re-conversion can be appreciated (Ragussis, p. 141–2).

Daniel Deronda is the learned and refined 'Englishman' who encounters this Judaic world. His disembodied words open the novel, yet a prolonged absence follows – the narrative remaining with Gwendolen Harleth for fourteen chapters. It is Gwendolen's own surmise that suggests Deronda considers her morally inferior (*DD*, p. 6), but the narrator's commentary mingled with Deronda's thought, implicitly confirms this judgement. This sense of absence and distanced judgement 'stands in' for Deronda through much of the novel, as the presentation of the character attempts to convey a man of potential, trapped by a sense of loss that prevents relationships, ambition and moral action. Deronda's character is often described as disengaged from conversation, always on the edge (p. 335) and this absence mimics an uncertain sense of self, for despite strong roots and the love of Sir Hugo, he is motherless, illegitimate and does not know who his father is. These experiences are presented as the reason for

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[9] Meyer 1993, p. 756, nn.1–3 for different points and references; also *DDN*, pp. xxxix-xlii

Deronda's reserve, but also his sensitivity to the pain of others (p. 147). Mordecai becomes the first man that Deronda can talk to, his first mutual friend, and their debate in the 'Hand and Banner' is Eliot's vehicle for presenting the Jewish political and ethical stances and Mordecai's beliefs, The scene is technically disappointing, being over-idealised and insufficiently realised, with the characters following too closely the opinions of Jewish historians. Moreover, as freely admitted by Constantius, one of the characters in Henry James's, 'Daniel Deronda: A Conversation', Mordecai's pronouncements are difficult to understand (Leavis, p. 293).

The stances common among European Jews at the time ranged from complete assimilation with the values and beliefs of the host-country, to an extreme religious orthodoxy where adherence to extrinsic Judaic laws dictated virtual 'internal exile' within the host-nation.[10] There was also a growing nationalist debate, which included a proto-Zionism advocating a return to the East and the recreation of Israel. In modern history, Jews were regarded as 'unfree' and unable to contribute to cosmopolitanism within their host country, because their laws and traditions took precedence over the interests of the state and universal humanity. Simultaneously, Jews were also perceived as dangerously autonomous, because – unlike their fellow Gentile citizens – they were not bound by the demands of national interest. They were thus 'aliens within' their host country, perceived as cosmopolitan and likely to ally with sectarianism, anarchy or transnational forces such as capitalism. The only alternative to this particularist yet cosmopolitan dichotomy was assimilation. However, historians such as Leopold Zunz rejected both the European absorption of Jews and rigid traditionalism. In *Daniel Deronda*, as part of her exploration of secular Judaism as an organicist way of life, Eliot tries to assess this movement and the extent to which Judaism can remain non-assimilated and tradition-based, while still being accommodated by, and contributing to a universal modernity. Eliot's 'project of Jewish nationalism necessarily challenges the perception that Jews were unequal to the tasks of modernity' while 'Daniel's cultural journey ... balances the claims of the particular against those of the universal; she does not merely subsume Judaism into the universal' (Anderson, pp. 40–1).

In the 'Hand and Banner' debate, Gideon and Pash represent assimilationism and anti-nationalism, although they still recognise the contribution of Jewish intellectual and cultural traditions. Their opinions reflect the work of nineteenth-century historians such as

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[10] See Anderson 1997, for more background to this whole argument.

Zunz (Baker, 1972). Meanwhile, Mordecai's arguments partly represent the Jewish nationalist revival, with its concern for race, heritage, cultural and racial memory, and the importance of a return to the homeland. However, the novel presents evidence that Mordecai's ideology is partly his own, drawn from the vastness of Jewish literature and all the ' "inheritance that has never ceased to quiver in millions of human frames" ' (*DD*, p. 444). He refers frequently to the learning, experience, suffering and yet mutual nurturing of his race, which still ties them together, while emphasising the origins of his people as naturally evolved relations of family, community and cultural heritage, which recalls the organicism and sympathy important to Eliot. For family, friends, roots and the ties that bind are a type of '*prereflective* cultural embeddedness . . . a fact of human existence and a value that must be cultivated in the face of modernity's damaging dispersions', and for Eliot, Mordecai's pronouncements reflect 'a higher order self-conscious affirmation of what had been merely taken for granted: the norms of affection and solidarity that characterise familial and communal bonds' (Anderson, pp. 51–2).

Compared to this cultural emphasis, there is little discussion of actual religion within the novel. Mordecai insists on the importance of a return to the East (*DD*, p. 441), but declares that he does not defend superstition (p. 442) and insists ' "I too claim to be a rational Jew" ' (p. 437). Mystical beliefs do emerge alongside his rational, nationalist ideas, and these beliefs cause problems for some critics, who erroneously include mysticism in the Judaism that Deronda accepts. Yet Mordecai's references to the *Kuzari* and *Kabbalah*, and his insistence to Deronda about the transmigration of souls (pp. 392, 447) and the importance of the ' "great Transmitters" ' (p. 431), all have rational explanations; the narrator, echoing Spinoza, argues for a tolerance of the knowledge and science that we do not yet understand, observing that otherwise steam-engines 'must have stayed in the mind of James Watt' (p. 423).

Eliot's presentation of Mordecai's mysticism and idealism is influenced by 'a rational idealism based in a rationalist literature and consistent with contemporary nationalist movements inspired by German idealism', a tradition that united the real and the ideal in order to to advise people how to live.[11] Mordecai's ideology is further influenced by a Judaic history and philosophy which also originated as guides to life and were discussed by the nineteenth-century German

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[11] Putzell-Korab 1982, pp. 171–4 and *passim*, for this discussion of the *Kuzari*; also, Baker 1975, ch. VII.

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