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From One to Many-Sided : Negotiating an Ethics of Liberalism in Daniel Deronda

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From One to Many-Sided: Negotiating an Ethics of Liberalism in *Daniel Deronda*

by

Anne Cecilia De Marzio

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts in English Literature

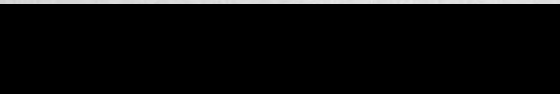
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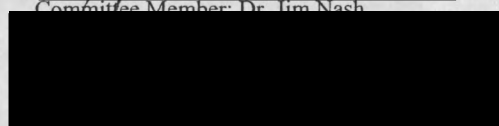
Thesis Sponsor: Dr. Lee Behlman


Dr. Mary Papazian
Dean of College of Humanities and Social Sciences


Committee Member: Dr. Patricia Matthew

May 4, 2007
(date)


Committee Member: Dr. Jim Nash


Department Chair: Dr. Dan Bronson

FROM ONE TO MANY-SIDED
NEGOTIATING AN ETHICS OF LIBERALISM IN *DANIEL DERONDA*

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts

by

ANNE CECILIA DE MARZIO

Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

2007

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From One to Many-Sided:
Negotiating an Ethics of Liberalism in *Daniel Deronda*

Following recent attempts in Victorian Studies to retrieve the broad critical rubric of liberalism, this essay aims to identify the substance under cultivation in the character of Gwendolen Harleth as many-sidedness. Gwendolen's *bildung* has as its telos a disposition attaining to a regulative ideal of liberal agency; that is, she grows into a woman who aspires to sympathize with other vantage points. The asceticism which Eliot's supreme egoist finally practices evidences not a being divested of her animating spirit and characterized by lack as other critics have argued, but one who has learned from Daniel to aspire to Goethe's "lofty point of observation." Daniel is a representation of an extreme of many-sidedness and detachment about which Eliot was ambivalent. His recognition in the novel's penultimate chapter that "[Gwendolen] was the victim of his happiness" (*DD* 805) sounds like self-rebuke, and is akin to his disapprobation of Gwendolen's gambling which revolves on the view that gaining from another's loss is always immoral. However, this moment marks the conclusion of a relationship which has been educative for both; while Gwendolen has learned to aspire to what was for Daniel the natural result of uncertainty about his origins, Daniel is made to recognize that the Jewish identity he has claimed obviates the kind of detachment which had previously allowed him to be a man for everyone. *Daniel Deronda* represents both George Eliot's negotiation of the problematic ideals of liberal agency, and her struggle to reconcile the claims of community and tradition on individuals who are called to participation in an ever-broadening world.

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My artistic bent is directed not at all to the presentation of eminently irreproachable characters, but to the presentation of mixed human beings in such a way as to call forth tolerant judgment, pity, and sympathy.

George Eliot to her publisher,
John Blackwell, Feb. 18, 1857

Introduction

The seeds for this study were sown during my first encounters with George Eliot's fiction. A trusted friend recommended *Middlemarch* by calling it the greatest work of moral philosophy he had ever encountered. Piqued by the claim and curious to discover what such praise actually meant, I tracked down a copy of Eliot's purported masterpiece; I was not immediately enlightened. I started from the beginning, then, and set about reading all of her major fiction. Several months later I closed *Daniel Deronda*, the last of her novels¹, with the images of the newly married Daniel preparing to sail eastward into a new life and of poor Gwendolen Harleth picking up the pieces of her seemingly shattered existence haunting me and urging me on to deeper inquiry. Eliot seemed to be directing me to judge, to sympathize, and even to grieve along with her characters when she determined such feelings to be appropriate and useful. Over and above this sense of having been coerced by an author into sharing her perspective, a sensation by no means new in my experience of fiction, I began to suspect that my and other readers' sympathetic identification with her characters must be the result of a larger aesthetic project aimed at our cultivation as ethical subjects.

This seemed, at first, an unequivocal good. I somewhat naively determined this kind of gentle didacticism to be the standard-bearer of good and worthwhile authorship. Contra the hermeneutics of suspicion employed by advocates of reader-response tactics

of resistance, I began to justify a desire I have always felt to engage less combatively with narratives in order to share in experiences outside of my necessarily limited sphere of existence. It did not occur to me then that inherent in my readiness to be moved by Eliot's work was a tacit approbation and acceptance of her particular moral and ethical perspectives. In other words, I had to face squarely the realization that I might not be so willing to submit to similarly powerful and coercive fiction by other authors which tended to obviate the values and beliefs I held most dear. In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Wayne Booth writes:

The question is whether the enjoyment of literature as literature, and not as propaganda, inevitably involves our beliefs, and I think that the answer is inescapable. Anyone who has ever read the same novel 'before and after,' noticing that strange loss of power a novel betrays when one has repudiated its norms, whether of Church or Party, of faith in progress, nihilism, existentialism, or whatever, knows that our convictions even about the most purely intellectual matters cannot help fundamentally affecting our literary responses. (139-41)

Booth emphasizes the importance of our beliefs in shaping our responses to literature, and notes that these responses can change depending on the change in our belief systems. I will discuss in the next section Bernard Paris' very different responses to Eliot's fiction; it is his repudiation of the "norms" he earlier identified in her work which fundamentally alters his perception of its success.

Notwithstanding my recognition of the importance of my own beliefs in shaping my responses to fiction, the sense that there was something different about the aims of Eliot's coercion persisted. What exactly I was being directed toward was the question

that began to shape my reading and re-reading of Eliot's work. Rather than requiring her readers to ratify all of the "norms" of her fiction, all that is asked is that we share in her narrators' God-like sympathy with her characters. This lit up for me the importance of sympathizing the more deeply with her egoist characters, those whose *amour propre* is so firmly entrenched that they are blind to the needs and concerns of others, and who require some kind of intervention during their narrative trajectories from characters whose subjectivity is more ethically regulated. Sympathetic responses to Eliot's egoist characters, guided by her example, are also the ideal to which she calls her deep heroes. The recovery or salvation of her lost souls depends on the example or guidance of these ethical agents, and Eliot considered the novel itself to be the ultimate tool in cultivating sympathy and fellow-feeling toward those whose lives are located in spheres outside our own. What makes Eliot's kind of coercion exceptional, and perhaps more palatable, is its goal of inspiring not a change in ideology or substantive knowledge per se, but in how we as human subjects regulate ourselves, how we construct dispositions toward alternative ways of being and knowing.²

Did George Eliot, then, hope with her art to inspire a new social consciousness among her readers? Could an aesthetics of sympathy broadly construed effect a discernible change in the disposition of those who would encounter it, and materially alter a society whose course seemed destined to run toward the increased alienation of individuals from one another? In short, could the project of self-cultivation represented through her hero figures' readily sympathetic natures help anybody but themselves? Or was Eliot championing a social ethics which, by virtue of its tendency to universalize and to valorize self-cultivation, was inherently elitist and impotent? Many recent critics have

contended the latter. In particular, Terry Eagleton notes that one “can feel what a beggar is feeling without being in the least moved to toss her a coin” (Eagleton 165). Eagleton’s staunch advocacy for the need for social and economic change to begin at the most fundamental levels leads him to conclude that “[i]t takes more than personal sympathy or the compassionate imagination to break down the social barriers between men and women, bosses and workers, or masters and servants” (165). Suspicious of Eliot’s Religion of Humanity, “a rationalist equivalent of religious belief” (165), Eagleton finally dismisses Eliot’s project (all the while giving her due credit for her exceptional prose and warm humanity) as an inherently unstable and untenable one which strains the limits of realism and, ultimately, represents a valiant but overly idealized attempt at making sense of a world vacillating between the old and the new. Indeed, Eliot is a post-theist thinker and writer, but one who resisted the tendency to tear down the foundations of belief in response to the emergence of powerful new science. I realize his objection to Eliot’s liberal-humanist project is not easily dismissed, but it is paramount to this work to interrogate the realization of the same within the fictional worlds she so carefully constructed. Eliot’s belief in the power of sympathy to effect grassroots change in English society is apparent in her novels; my concern is not with the real-life social efficacy of such a project, but, in part, with how Eliot’s social ethics bear on the characterization and the moral progression of Gwendolen Harleth.

This leads me back to the haunting images I referenced above: Gwendolen left behind, seemingly forsaken by her moral guide, and Daniel setting out with the purpose of “restoring a political existence to [his] people (the Jews), making them a nation again, and giving them a national centre” (DD 803). *Daniel Deronda* may be Eliot’s most

ambitious novel and is one which invites her readers most fully to sympathize with an egoist character. Because of the importance of Gwendolen, because she is a full-length portrait to Eliot's other egoists' miniatures, Gwendolen represents Eliot's most taxing and difficult claim on our sympathies. Because she is a heroine and an egoist, Gwendolen's is necessarily a complicated journey, and one which I will show to be a complex rendering of the possibility of the cultivation of sympathy in a shallow being. Her struggle is greater than Eliot's other heroines because she must transcend her egoism, her one-sidedness. The Gwendolen at the end of *Daniel Deronda* is no longer a spectral figure; I will argue that she is Eliot's response to critiques of liberal agency, then and now, and an affirmation of the possibility of a base and calculating *amour propre* evolving into a many-sided self.

Heroines and Egoists

In what follows, I will briefly categorize several of Eliot's major female characters as either egoist or heroine in order to underscore the unique status accorded to Gwendolen as an egoist heroine. It would be false to say that George Eliot's other great heroines do not struggle, or that any of them do not aspire toward the cultivation of better selves. All of her full-length novels contain a hero or two who represent the kind of aspiration that this study aims to locate in "the Nereid in sea-green robes and silver ornaments," the serpentine Gwendolen Harleth (*DD* 12). Dinah Morris, a dissenting preacher-woman in *Adam Bede*, represents Eliot's first attempt to portray this kind of ideal soul. Dinah's troubles, however, are more material than inward; she works at a mill to support herself and counts on the help of friends to enable her to carry out her ministry to the working-class poor of the Midlands. Her outward difficulties contrast with the

near-perfection of her soul and she is rather too good to elicit the readerly sympathy Eliot always aims for. She does choose, however, to eschew a life of total renunciation; her decision to marry Adam by the novel's end is what finally makes her real.

As Eliot's first real female hero, Dinah may be seen to be the polar opposite of all the class of pretty (and petty) one-sided egoists who inhabit Eliot's oeuvre. In *Adam Bede*, Dinah is posed opposite the milkmaid Hetty Sorrel, whose very name evokes her earthbound nature. As noted above, this is a major trend in Eliot's fiction; for almost every heroine there is a shallow egoist with whom she interacts in some way in the hope of recovering the poorer soul. In *Middlemarch* Dorothea Brooke is a Saint Theresa-like figure, her arguably over-zealous practice of self-renunciation serving to point up the superficiality and vanity of Rosamund Vincy. If Dinah is too blandly and evenly virtuous, Dorothea is also too good to be realistic. Indeed, if Miss Brooke's mystical and ascetic excesses are read as egoism or vanity, it is possible that the telos of her struggle may, like Gwendolen's, be construed as a kind of moral recovery. Like Dinah, Romola, and even Felix Holt before her, Dorothea eventually evens out, arrives at a palatable and realistic moral equilibrium. Because of Casaubon's malicious decision to attach a codicil to his will denying Dorothea the inheritance of his estate if she marries Will Ladislaw, Dorothea must choose between continuing in her role as kindly benefactress of her farming tenants or marrying for love, the kind of marriage she previously denied herself. To the great relief of many of Eliot's readers, Dorothea chooses the latter.

Of the egoists in Eliot's novels, none are ever truly altered during the course of the text they inhabit.³ They are generally static figures, and quite shallow. They usually function as a foil to the larger figures in the text, as a repository for these larger souls'

sympathies, or as a millstone around the neck of the hero with whom they are most intimately connected (I am thinking here specifically of Tito Melema). Hetty Sorrel is the egoist whom Dinah was unable to rescue despite her earnest efforts at assuring the girl that there were people who cared for her and who would be willing to help if she were ever in trouble. Hetty chooses to run away near the end of her secret pregnancy because, lacking the capacity for real love or sympathy, she cannot imagine any one of her friends extending these feelings to herself. In the end, Hetty is merely like a repentant child, begging forgiveness of those who had loved her and trying to forgive those who had wronged her so that she might go to heaven—hers is a deathbed kind of salvation. Her exile after Arthur Donnithorne rescues her from the gallows serves to underscore her continued alienation from community. Tito Melema, Romola's ambitious and adulterous husband, dies at the hands of the father he denied. Though Tito, like all of Eliot's egoists, is judged and treated with a God-like sympathy throughout *Romola*, he too does not change. He is chased by a bloodthirsty mob of citizens into the river and when he struggles onto the bank, gasping for breath like a newborn, his rebirth is instantly thwarted by the strangling hands of his father. Eliot, despite her sympathy, can sometimes be an angry God and, in the end, Tito is irrecoverable. As for Rosamund (rose of the world) Vincy, the prettiest of Eliot's egoists, she is no more recovered or spiritually cultivated than is Hetty. The difference between the two is merely one of circumstance—Rosamund is fortunate enough to marry a London doctor after the death of her first husband Lydgate, the victim of her excessive desire for material wealth.

Egoist Heroines

Gwendolen Harleth, and Maggie Tulliver from *The Mill on the Floss*, belong to a category all their own. As is typical of most children of nine years, Maggie also begins as an egoist. Though her cousin Lucy Deane, fair-haired, virtuous and mild-mannered, contrasts with Maggie's wild and impetuous behavior and 'dark' looks, she is certainly not Eliot's heroine. She is the predecessor of Mirah Cohen in *Daniel Deronda*; both are the smaller-in-scale representations of virtue opposite their novels' heroines. Maggie is beloved by readers because she is a child who wants to be loved, particularly by her older brother Tom. Her development consists of a steady stream of disappointments and trials which engage our sympathies, and which sculpt out of the tangle of her early-childhood self a tame young woman whose renunciations have tragic results. Choosing community over self and desire, Maggie resigns herself to a purgatory of alienation and social scorn. The girl who so wanted to be loved, and who refuses first Philip Wakem and then Stephen Guest so that her friends and Tom would continue to love her, becomes a prisoner to petty gossip and suspicion. Gordon Haight, in his introduction to the novel, notes that Maggie "gave the past as the reason for parting with Philip: 'I desire no future that will break the ties of the past.' And she rejected Stephen at Mudport..." he adds, for the same reason (xviii). Sadly, Maggie has the honor of being Eliot's only heroine who dies; Eliot smites the reunited Maggie and Tom in epic fashion, crushing and drowning them with a flotilla of loosened debris as they drift on the flood waters of the Floss.

Maggie begins as an egoist, becomes a heroine, and dies because there appears to be no reasonable alternative. The alternative which is not realized in Eliot's earlier novel is given life in *Daniel Deronda*. Gwendolen Harleth, whom one critic has called "the

supreme egoist in Eliot's fiction, a vivid concentration of the dichotomy between self, or the ego, and the world in which it must exist" (Cirillo 207), manages to cultivate a better self, one which can by the novel's penultimate chapter endure and appreciate this lesson:

...she was for the first time feeling the pressure of a vast mysterious movement, for the first time being dislodged from her supremacy in her own world, and getting a sense that her horizon was but a dipping onward of an existence with which her own was revolving. All the troubles of her wifeness and widowhood had still left her with the implicit impression which had accompanied her from childhood, that whatever surrounded her was somehow specially for her, and it was because of this that no personal jealousy had been roused in her in relation to Deronda: she could not spontaneously think of him as rightfully belonging to others more than to her. But here had come a shock which went deeper than personal jealousy—something spiritual and vaguely tremendous that thrust her away, and yet quelled all anger into self-humiliation (804).

This moment of "self-humiliation" is educative, not destructive or punitive, and marks Gwendolen's weaning away from her mentor Daniel. While he had been helping Gwendolen to see that others had their own points of view, he had been like a guide with his arm around her shoulder, both of them looking toward the horizon of that larger existence she had for so long failed to recognize. Gwendolen's discovery that Daniel will marry another woman, Mirah, and that he is a Jew with a mission which will likely take him away from her forever, causes her to turn and gaze at the only thing remaining "specially for her," Daniel himself. It is like her crutch has been taken away—she may at first only be able to hobble along, but Gwendolen "mean[s] to live" (807). Unlike

Maggie, whose childhood experiences tended to leave her with the impression that nothing was really “specially for her,” Gwendolen made it through childhood and adolescence with her egoism intact. Like Maggie, finally, Gwendolen grows into something better, but Gwendolen lives.

In the first chapters of *Daniel Deronda*, then, Gwendolen, “the spoiled child,” more closely resembles Eliot’s egoists, Hetty, Tito, the young Maggie, and Rosamund. Gwendolen is larger in scope than all of these except Maggie, and rivals in scale even Dorothea Brooke or Romola. She is an egoist heroine, an egoist recovered, and this is what makes her so distinct, so sympathetic, and so powerful. One critic has called “[t]he characterization of Gwendolen...a breakthrough in George Eliot’s treatment of women, and a breakthrough in the treatment of fiction” (Barrett 155), since Eliot is finally ready to allocate the largest share of her authorial sympathy and salvation to her egoist figure. Gwendolen, I would like to argue, may most accurately be called truly “mixed.” Her moral recovery by *Deronda* marks the only time in Eliot’s fiction that a pretty egoist is truly moved by the recognition of a superior nature to look inward long and candidly enough to become an earnestly struggling being for whom a better life is possible. While the faults of Eliot’s other heroines tended more on the side of excesses of religious or moral zeal, Gwendolen’s recovery answers a much more difficult question: can liberal agency be cultivated in a being who appears to manifest no real tendency toward love and sympathy? In considering her narrative, one begins to wonder if Eliot meant to say that even Hetty Sorrel, condemned for the murder of her infant, might have been moved to more than a penitent child’s confession had her interlocutor been someone other than the evangelical Dinah.

It is essential once again to highlight the nature of George Eliot's aesthetics of sympathy in reading and interpreting Gwendolen's recovery. As many critics have noted, sympathy is Eliot's most dominant device; the way she chooses to portion out her authorial or narrative sympathy directs her readers' own emotional engagement in her characters' stories. Whether or not those characters exhibit a tendency to sympathetically identify with those around them is the litmus test for their moral and ethical stature. Eliot once responded to a critique of *The Mill on the Floss* that accused her of couching a disdain for Tom by lighting up the impossibility of the reviewer feeling anything on behalf of her character if it were not for her own direction: "Pray notice how my critic attributes to me a disdain for Tom: as if it were not *my* respect for Tom which infused itself into my reader—as if he could have respected Tom, if I had not painted him with respect..." (Benson 433). Eliot's aesthetic project revolves around the notion that sympathy is not an always ready aspect of human subjectivity, that it is not a virtue all human beings practice, and that it is her authorial duty to arouse and direct readerly sympathy in the right measure and in all directions. Insofar as Gwendolen is guided by Daniel toward embracing sympathetic and imaginative consideration of her fellow beings, then, Eliot's readers are coerced into sharing Daniel's perspective regarding her spiritual journey.

The significance of Gwendolen's salvation centers on the means of her salvation. That she is an egoist who is roused by Daniel out of her shallow and solipsistic worldview marks a shift in the trend begun with Dinah and Hetty, but the fact of her salvation is not what is radical: as already noted, many of Eliot's too-virtuous heroines achieve a more ethical and sociable balance between involvement with the project of self-

cultivation and involvement with the communities around them. These characters contain already the seeds of virtue and are motivated (most often) by love to narrow their fields of action. Gwendolen's movement represents a broadening, however, and is not self-directed, nor is there evidence that she has within her the desire to embark on such a journey. What is radical about her awakening is that it is Daniel who administers the salts; his engagement with her and hers with him, and the reciprocal success of that relationship, represents George Eliot's insistence on the transferability of sympathy. Simply put, Eliot means to say that it can be taught. Daniel's involvement with Gwendolen is equally important to this study; his mentorship of Gwendolen is as educative for him as it is for her.

Deronda himself has frequently been called "wooden." Critics and readers alike have insisted on his opacity, his enigmatic nature, and his excessive virtue.⁴ Like Eliot's other heroic figures, Daniel begins as an extreme representation of virtue, if not liberal agency. His many-sided sympathies lend him a readiness to always see Caliban's "point of view" (*DD* 331) and Eliot means to underscore this tendency by defining his own journey as a search for a more concrete identity. Daniel is an orphan; he and others presume him to be the illegitimate son of his guardian, Sir Hugo Mallinger, but this turns out to be false, and he has no knowledge of his mother until the final chapters of the novel. His willingness to sympathize, and to imagine what others must be feeling or thinking, can be attributed to his uncertainty about his origins. I will show that Daniel is, like Dorothea Brooke, too good, and uniquely, too "many-sided." His discovery of his Jewish identity toward the end of the novel marks the concretization of a self which was up until this point spread too thinly. The "wooden" Daniel can at this point become a real

boy; his discovery of his origins allows him to claim a self and a vocation. On the other hand, his rapidly increasing desire to preserve and make paramount this self, and his involvement in a more narrow field of human action—Jewish nationalism—is what finally makes Daniel capable of putting his needs before those of another person, of Gwendolen in particular.

When he reveals his identity to her and tells her of his plans to marry Mirah and to go to Palestine, Gwendolen experiences the awakening discussed above, but Daniel realizes that the choices he is making based on his new identity mean that he must, as she has dreaded, forsake her: “Deronda’s anguish was intolerable. He could not help himself. He seized her outstretched hands and held them together, and kneeled at her feet. She was the victim of his happiness” (805). Employing here the metaphor of gambling which had so consistently been used as a rebuke of Gwendolen’s own selfish tendencies and egoism, Eliot does not mean to say that Daniel has erred morally or that he has become an egoist. It is rather the moment in the novel where Eliot concedes the undesirability of the former Daniel, and acknowledges that all individuals must sometimes hurt others by *attaching* themselves to something in particular. Before Daniel’s encounter with his mother and his embrace of Judaism he had been a man for everybody: Caliban’s defender, Gwendolen’s confessor and moral guide, Mirah’s rescuer, Hans Meyrick’s friend, Sir Hugo’s attaché. After the encounter Daniel can no longer be everything for everybody; he must care for himself, must sometimes put himself first and doing so means that he must leave some of these commitments behind.

This study, then, will reveal *Daniel Deronda* as representative of George Eliot’s negotiation of an ethics of many-sidedness and cultivated detachment, two important

ideals of liberalism. In it she champions the aspiration to these ideals as essential to human happiness and flourishing, and yet she affirms critiques of liberal agency which suggest that it precludes vigorous and active engagement in politics or large social movements. In the first part I will explore more fully the concepts of many-sidedness and detachment, following two very recent studies which strive to reclaim some critical value for these rather unfashionable concepts. The second part will be devoted in turn to a treatment of Gwendolen and Daniel's apprenticeships which are inevitably ended by their separation from one another. In considering each character's growth and cultivation in the novel I will show that objections to their not marrying one another, and to Gwendolen not marrying at all, have always been short-sighted in their attempts to identify the true nature of their journeys. Criticism which argues that Gwendolen seems to be a good woman at the end of her narrative but appears to have no "vocation" overvalues the importance of vocation literally understood in her narrative. What Gwendolen will do after Daniel's departure is continue to nurture the "seed" of sympathy he has sown in her mind. I will insist that each character is involved in a painful movement toward and away from each other and themselves; while Gwendolen must transcend her egoism, must learn to look critically at herself, and consequently to achieve a vantage point which allows her to sympathize with others, Daniel must descend from a too-detached, too many-sided position which has prevented him from fully involving himself in any one community.⁵

At the heart of this study is my insistence that the two halves of *Daniel Deronda* are importantly and elegantly linked with one another. Since F.R. Leavis concluded in *The Great Tradition* that *Daniel Deronda* had “a splendid Gwendolen half and a rather awful Deronda one” (Paris 2003, 112), critics have been engaged variously in defending the craftsmanship of George Eliot or in affirming Leavis’ view of her fiction as flawed by “her emotional intrusions into her work” (18) which tended to render her work unreal. An important voice in this ongoing conversation has been Bernard Paris, whose *Experiments in Life* (1965) reads Eliot’s work as an instantiation of her life-long “quest for values in a Godless universe” (vii) and defends *Daniel Deronda* as coherent both mimetically and rhetorically, and “as an elaboration of the web of relations which forms the context of the incidents and states of mind depicted in [its] first two chapters” (39). Employing the metaphor most popularly used to describe the connectedness of the various parts of *Middlemarch*, the web, Paris asserts the relatedness of the two halves. Paris’ 1965 text reads Gwendolen as recovered because of her engagement with Deronda. He reads Gwendolen as the supreme example of the completely subjectivist ego, and Deronda as an idealized and god-like objectivist being to whom she can look for example and strength. The collision of these two beings results in the salvation of the one, and the other’s discovery of a vocation which allows him “to lead an epic life, like St. Theresa’s—the kind of life that Dorothea so yearned for but could not find” (209).

Paris, however, influenced in part by the many responses to *Experiments in Life* since its publication, has become suspicious of his earlier conclusions and less confident of his appraisal of the success of George Eliot’s application of Auguste Comte’s

positivist Religion of Humanity in her fiction: the basis of that application being an attempt to “reconcile the satisfaction of the needs of the heart, which was the great strength of the old creeds, with the allegiance to empirically verifiable truth that was the foundation of modern thought” (1965, 1). Paris acknowledges his indebtedness to the psychoanalytic work of Karen Horney in the preface to his *Rereading George Eliot* (2003) and determines to return to his assessments of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* with the goal of recovering “George Eliot’s psychological intuitions in order to appreciate her mimetic achievement” (xi). Though Paris does not alter his assessment of George Eliot’s ultimate goal in fiction, he seriously revises his earlier assessment of its success:

George Eliot thought that clothing her ideas in human form and individual experience would provide a kind of experimental confirmation; but instead, as I shall show, her success in creating imagined human beings frequently subverted the ideas she was trying to verify. Although she was not aware of it, her experiments usually failed to support her beliefs (xi).

Privileging a psychoanalytic approach, Paris finally recants his view of Eliot’s fiction and shows it to be inherently unstable, and Gwendolen Harleth in particular to indeed be a “problematic sylph” whose treatment by Eliot is inconsistent and psychologically incoherent (113). Though he still contends that Gwendolen is by the novel’s end materially altered and no longer an egoist, Paris questions the nature of that alteration. He reads the finished Gwendolen as “no longer a selfish narcissist,” but one who “has no center of self to give direction to her existence” (112). As for “the much glorified Deronda,” Paris questions not only his ideality in the novel’s first phases, as Eliot’s “virtually perfect altruist who is a source of salvation to others” (112), he insists that the

early *Deronda*'s "inner vacuity" and "self-alienation" is the result of Eliot's tendency to confound "being driven to live for others out of emptiness, guilt, or despair with moral excellence and emotional well-being" (112).

I am partly in agreement with Paris' later reading of the early *Deronda*, though for different reasons which I will explicate further on. While both of Paris' major studies of Eliot's fiction are valuable, I will essentially attempt to reaffirm his earlier work's diagnosis of success, though by employing a quite different framework than positivism. Notwithstanding the fact that Paris problematically chooses in his second text to interrogate the psychological coherence of fictional characters (Paris' case-study approach and his insistence that Eliot herself fails to recognize how damaged her characters really are is anachronistic and seems oddly inappropriate to works of fiction), Paris' later reading of *Daniel Deronda* misses the mark because it reads the telos of the two main characters' bildung too literally; for Paris, the failure of "the crushed penitent," Gwendolen, to find a vocation literally understood evidences the failure of her engagement with Daniel. His insistence that the evidence for Eliot's mimetic failure is the presentation of multiple versions of Gwendolen fails to acknowledge the fact of Eliot's own continual emphasis on Gwendolen's "mixed" nature. Similarly, his focus on Zionism as Daniel's vocation similarly occludes an understanding of a more broadly construed apprenticeship in life. He insists that while the rhetoric of the novel tells us that it is good to be like Daniel and that Gwendolen has gone far toward aping him, Eliot's mimesis shows us something different (Paris 2003, 208).

Paris insists that George Eliot's "experiments are often rigged to produce favorable outcomes for characters whose solutions she wishes to show as succeeding"

and that very often her creations, “full of the spirit of mutiny...engage in treason against the main scheme of the book and ‘kick it to pieces,’ as Gwendolen does with her fits of hysterical shrieking” (Paris 209-10). Though I will dwell more on Paris’ conclusion in part II of this study, I will simply respond to these suspicions now by referring to the gist of Eliot’s rebuttal to the critique of *The Mill on the Floss* referenced in my introduction: how does Paris imagine that Eliot arrived at the end of her novel grasping at solutions for Daniel without having gotten herself to that point intentionally? How does he imagine that Gwendolen’s fits of hysterical shrieking and their implications have gone unnoticed by Eliot, as if Gwendolen’s behavior is in any way independent of her author?

It has been said that “[w]e come to George Eliot not for perfect churches but for flawed cathedrals” (Barrett 153). With this elegant description in mind, I will not attempt to claim that *Daniel Deronda* is a flawless masterpiece. I will read the instabilities which Paris and others have identified as symptomatic of Eliot’s unconscious failure to realize in fiction her ideals, rather as a confident and accurate rendering of the inherently problematic nature of the discourse on liberalism in the 1860’s and 70’s. The difference is that I will credit Eliot with being successful in what she intended: the fictional illustration of the difficulty of any being attaining to the kind of perfect liberal agency described by John Stuart Mill and Matthew Arnold. I am mostly leaving aside Eliot’s Religion of Humanity (though its positivist ideals cannot be entirely jettisoned) and insisting that by the time she embarked on her final novel, she was interested in “clothing her ideas [about liberal agency] in fictional form” in order to interrogate their tenability and ideality. That is, I am employing the term Paris used in his earlier work,

“experiment,” by emphasizing its connotation of ‘trying out’ a thesis about which there is already some uncertainty—uncertainty being the only reason to experiment.

Retrieving Liberalism

To bring this study into clearer focus, I turn now to two very recent works in Victorian studies which attempt to retrieve and appreciate concepts central to this study’s appraisal of *Daniel Deronda*. David Wayne Thomas and Amanda Anderson have both revived a consideration of the contentious Victorian discourses on the cultivation of liberal agency and of detachment. While I will depend most heavily on the concept of many-sidedness to which Thomas pays a great deal of attention in the first chapter of his *Cultivating Victorians*, it is useful to recount in some detail the key claims of both of these valuable new studies. Both Thomas and Anderson view recent critical trends which dismiss detachment and the cultivation of liberal agency as “illusory, pretentious, hierarchical, and even violent” (Anderson 7) as inherently unstable themselves, and tending to “flatten out the past, ultimately forestalling any real analysis of the ways in which Victorian authors themselves actively and even obsessively engaged questions about critical detachment” (9). Thomas writes in his preface that the reassertion of aesthetic valuation “without resorting to a neoconservative nostalgia for a dubiously conceived golden era of appreciation” (ix) is the aim of his study, and further, that the impetus to take up this challenge comes, in turn, from at least two specifiable anxieties reflecting current disciplinary conditions. Some of these critics propose that a prevailing hermeneutics of suspicion has so foreclosed on projects of appreciation that readings in literature and the arts have gradually become flattened or routine. Others argue on wider cultural grounds that the disciplinary

rationale of literary and artistic scholarship is dangerously obscured when literary scholars—to say nothing of onlookers in the larger culture—are hard pressed to explain current work as anything but an unaccountably oblique form of history, ethics, or politics. (ix)

Thomas goes on to insist that before this kind of reclamation can be undertaken it is essential to “reassess the character of modern liberal culture as well” and so he defines his project as a “preliminary reconsideration of liberal agency, understood as a crucial feature of modern aesthetic culture” (ix). Both Thomas and Anderson are concerned, then, with responding to critiques of liberal culture particularly insofar as its “classic individualism...correlates with present-day conservatism’s opposition to the welfare state” (Thomas ix). Both refer to a “hermeneutics of suspicion,” and it might be usefully asserted that just such a hermeneutics impels Paris’ shift from 1965 to 2003.

Defined by Thomas as “a temperamental and intellectual attainment involving practices of self-criticism, open-mindedness, and earnest conduct” (x) and “as a personal disposition to consider alternative vantage points in private and public issues” (26), many-sidedness is the substance this study dwells upon in its reconsideration of *Daniel Deronda*. Its important relationship to what Thomas calls liberalism’s “multiform and highly cathected” (7) nature is its ability to be located specifically within a Victorian aesthetic and theoretical context and “epitomizes the period’s liberal ideal of cultivated agency” (26). The concept is not without its problematic features for Thomas, and he refers specifically to the difficulty of establishing in what way or from what point of view an individual can acknowledge the existence of more than one form of life:

Notwithstanding the fact that Wittgenstein and his followers typically speak in the plural—of *forms* of life, that is—it is not clear for whom forms of life can be plural, if a form of life is interpreted as something immune to meaningfully “external” criticism. This immunity is generally argued from an analytical or practical perspective, through a twofold claim: that external criticism cannot gain meaningful purchase on the internal workings of a form of life; and that people within a given form of life, in turn, cannot themselves attain to a meaningfully external position. Of course, the notion of immunity can also be argued, as in [Uday Singh] Mehta’s study, in a way that appears saturated with a view of ethical propriety. In that light, ‘judging’ another form of life is understood to be not so much impossible as it is ethically regrettable. In any case, my general suggestion is that the liberal standpoint of critical self-reflection simply is that standpoint in which forms of life can be meaningfully pluralized (26).

Thomas refers here to his earlier attention to Uday Singh Mehta’s critique of liberalism, *Liberalism and Empire*, in which Thomas insists that “Mehta’s argument is directed toward [the] claim that liberalism *expresses* itself, rather than *contradicts* itself, in asserting a relation of imperialistic dominance in the face of unfamiliarity” (21). In short, Mehta’s critique of liberalism revolves on the assumption that endemic to liberalism is a kind of oppressive paternalism which tends to infantilize other ‘forms of life,’ and Thomas insists that this is rather the unfortunate result of an assimilation of “liberalism to an extreme of universalization and rationalism that figures like J.S. Mill, in particular, never advocated” (17). In Kantian terms, at the heart of liberalism is an “essential striving or aspiration,” or according to Wittgenstein, is a “tendency of all men who ever

tried to write or talk about Ethics or Religion...to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage [our form of life] is perfectly, absolutely hopeless," but was something Wittgenstein "cannot help respecting deeply" (qtd. in Thomas 23).

Implicit in these lines of thinking is the belief that human beings can and should strive to transcend, or to detach themselves from, their unique, culturally determined experiential realities in order to better understand them and their alternatives. Whether or not this is possible, whether or not one can attain to this kind of transcendent position, this "view from nowhere,"⁶ is not certain. Thomas reads the desire itself as the ideal in liberal agency and determines to "rationaliz[e] as much as possible the ironic position of liberal many-sidedness [by seeing] its cogency as a regulative aspiration" (40). In Kantian terms, what is most elemental to a conception of liberal many-sidedness is its regulative rather than substantive bearing, "whereby *regulative* ideas stand opposed to *constitutive* knowledge" (15). For Kant, "the regulative turns on how we think, on how relations and ideas of existence factor into human experience, and the constitutive turns on what we think, on what we bring into the phenomenology of human experience and engage as matter for cognitive appropriation" (15). Insofar as the Tories in mid-Victorian England viewed liberalism "as a pernicious devaluation of prereflective obedience, leading liberals to be deaf to the authority of social tradition and revealed religion," liberalism resists making substantive, constitutive, or totalizing claims about human nature and experience. The irony of critiques of liberalism like Mehta's is their failure to acknowledge this important aspect of its conceptualization: an inherent desire to be aware of and to consider alternative forms of life, and to attempt as far as possible via critical

detachment to denaturalize the form of life from which an individual has come.

Following Thomas, central to my study of Eliot is just this regulative ideal of liberalism—its attention to the cultivation of beings (characters and readers) in terms of how they think, and not what they think.

In an attempt to better illustrate how he is differentiating a more appealing regulative versus substantive liberalism, Thomas turns to a reading of the relatively minor character of Camden Farebrother in *Middlemarch* and what he calls Farebrother's "liberal heroics" (7), "an ambition to fulfill oneself by denying oneself" (9). Farebrother is in competition with Fred Vincy for the affections of Mary Garth, a young woman who admires him but loves Fred, and decides to counsel the younger man, and spur him into right action (Fred has a gambling problem) so that Fred can win Mary's hand. Thomas reads, and insists that "Victorian liberal culture reads," Farebrother's selfless actions on behalf of Fred "as an overcoming of self that counts as another and better kind of self accomplished" (10). Thomas reads Farebrother's actions as "imitative" of "liberal heroics," and as the consequence of moral reflection regarding the normative rightness of his behavior toward Fred. On the other hand, Dorothea Brooke's "more interesting" narrative constitutes a striving and struggling toward "a viewpoint carrying with it what Eliot calls 'that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling'" (12). For Thomas, Farebrother represents a more substantive, problematic ideal of liberal agency. His moral reflection relies on the perceived rightness of the courses of action he must choose between; he is not a being attaining to the regulative ideal Thomas is privileging since he "is characterized in terms largely of moral reflection" (12). This is not to say that there is anything wrong with what Farebrother does: indeed, his actions are laudable. Thomas

merely means to suggest that the substantive nature of his liberal heroics has less appeal since it makes him appear impossibly “flat,” and he is therefore more difficult to sympathize with (12).

The importance of Thomas’ reading here is his recognition that self-overcoming may have an edifying rather than a depreciating effect (as in the case of Dorothea), and his illumination of the distinction between the regulative and substantive ideals of liberalism. Struggle and aspiration are what mark a character out as embodying more compellingly a “regulative ideal of liberal conduct” (12). Additionally, his attention to this minor plotline in *Middlemarch* allows him to highlight modern and Victorian critiques of liberalism which target mainly the substantive or liberal agency apparent in Thomas’ interpretation of the Farebrother plotline and, I will argue, in the characterization of Daniel himself:

...our tendency today is to read this particular liberal threat in terms of the aridness of abstract moral rationalism and its attendant difficulties in recognizing human difference and particularity. Victorians generally perceived the threat in terms of diminished power or agency, however, with the liberal agent understood as lacking in vigor and conviction. (13).

Thomas’ language reflects critiques of the character of Daniel Deronda which alternately refer to him as a prig, as emasculated, and as having a decidedly non-agential bearing. Thomas later on notes that “[i]n these mid-Victorian years, the idea of vigor is seldom far from a gendered characterization, whereby it lines up with manliness. To the extent that many-sidedness saps vigor, therefore, many-sidedness stands opposed to manliness” (27). Critiques of many-sidedness, then and now, question the possibility of the

consubstantiality of a perfectly cultivated many-sided disposition, and of vigorous and purposeful action within the communities in which that problematic agent is necessarily constructed and called to participation.

I will take up in part II Thomas' closer examination of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* and the tension inherent therein between genius and many-sidedness. For now, however, I would like to turn to Amanda Anderson's *The Power of Distance* in order to look a little more closely at her particular project which, different from Thomas' emphasis on many-sidedness, takes detachment as its central theme. Having left off with Thomas' references to critiques of liberal agency which suggest it results in a depletion of vigor, it is useful to consider Anderson's careful look at Victorian and modern critiques of detachment. While many-sidedness will be the substance under cultivation this study undertakes to locate in *Daniel Deronda*, Anderson's explication of George Eliot's ambivalence about detachment is essential to my reading of both Gwendolen and Daniel.

Anderson addresses broad critiques of liberalism similar to those to which Thomas responds, and she chooses to use the rubric of detachment in her study because of its relationship to the cultivation of moral character in the nineteenth century. While she acknowledges that the detached perspective, or "the view from nowhere", is always actually a view from somewhere," (i.e., it is often the elevated domain of elite groups), and is willing to "expose hierarchies and exclusions when they occur," her study is concerned with affirming the "progressive potentiality of those modern practices that aim to objectify [or denaturalize] facets of human existence so as to better understand, criticize, and at times transform them" (Anderson 5-6). Like Thomas, Anderson emphasizes that her study is concerned with a regulative rather than substantive view of

detachment. Following Kant and Wittgenstein, she is convinced of the hopelessness of attaining permanently to "Goethe's 'lofty point of observation'," for instance, and calls the cultivation of detachment "the *aspiration* to a distanced view" (6).

As for critiques of detachment which argue that the practice requires a denial or exclusion of "the body, the feminine, and the particular," Anderson argues that a kind of contradiction is at play, particularly when the same voices vigorously oppose essential "cultural representations of femininity, rigorously demystifying their ideological force and exposing them as mere constructs" (8). The analysis of Gwendolen which follows will try to identify a movement toward self-distancing and toward ascesis, elemental steps toward many-sidedness. Keeping such essentialist or anti-essentialist critiques in mind will be useful in considering the importance of gender or sexuality in her narrative, particularly since the gender she performs is often rather masculine. Conversely, the many-sided Deronda has often been read as a feminized man, and seems to become more masculine in direct proportion to his increasing involvement in Zionism in the novel's later stages and as his romance with Mirah takes shape. It is interesting to consider whether Eliot was endorsing a view of extreme many-sidedness as necessarily resulting in a loss of vigor and of manliness, and whether the evolution of Gwendolen from one-sided toward many-sided represents Eliot's belief that many-sidedness was a state of being more naturally suited to one sex or another, keeping in mind woman's unfortunately constrained sphere of action in nineteenth-century England.

George Eliot was particularly ambivalent about the cultivation of detachment, and highly suspicious of its tendency to result in "distortion, idealization, or moral insensitivity" (3). In her careful reading of Eliot's "The Natural History of German

Life,” Anderson shows, however, that Eliot’s critique of detachment was more complex than an out-of-hand rejection. Though Eliot understood lived experience as essential in developing knowledge and understanding of other forms of life (she was particularly suspicious of idyllic representations of the working class in art), she believed “wide views” to be “requisite to a comprehensive understanding of social life” (13). On the one hand we have the George Eliot anxious for art to offer realistic portrayals of life in order to best cultivate real sympathy and fellow-feeling, and on the other is the Eliot who favors a kind of sweeping perspective in order that judgment not be made from too “low” a point of view, or a philistine one. Anderson calls this conflict an “impulse to assert distinctions of value” and sees Eliot’s view of modernity as inherently dialectical; it must be managed “so as to curtail its excesses and fulfill its most progressive potential” (14).

In short, Eliot’s embrace of cosmopolitanism is a rather diffident one; while her conservatism pulls her in the direction of home and tradition, toward the desire for up-closeness with a particular community or location, she cannot help but regard detachment as a means to cultivate self-understanding as well as sympathy with those outside the warm circle of home and friends. Since nobody can be (or should be) everywhere, Eliot views art as essential, as “capable of supplementing abstract forms of knowledge by promoting a self-overcoming that enables attention to others, and thereby lays the ground for moral evolution” (15). More precisely, Eliot’s ambivalence about detachment depends on her simultaneous insistence on the essentiality of community in the formation of moral agents, and the cultivation of the cosmopolitan individual in an ever-broadening world.⁷

Detachment is an essential aspect in the cultivation of many-sidedness. As Anderson is careful to illustrate, George Eliot worried about the moral and social repercussions of overly disengaged individuals, and was always concerned with the cultivation of sympathy for one's fellow men and women. Yet, without a measure of self-distancing and an attempt to mount to a more transcendent perspective, it is impossible to consider another's point-of-view. John Stuart Mill was also ambivalent about the ideal of detachment, particularly insofar as it resulted in atomized selves and "the impersonal, value-neutral tendencies of impartiality" (19). For Mill, who was in many ways less conservative than Eliot and more concerned with giving modern reflective practices "the force of tradition" contra Eliot's preference for using self-reflexivity in order to find one's way back home, the ideal of detachment was just as fraught and full of seeming contradictions (Anderson 20).

As noted above in the discussion of many-sidedness, the question of the feasibility of even attaining a distanced view has also been heavily debated. Anderson is careful to illuminate these tensions and yet she is more concerned with lighting them up as evidence of a rich dialectic which animated the Victorian period, rather than dismissing the entire discourse as so many critics currently do: "Countering with the view that no such objectivity exists, critics show themselves unable to imagine critical distance as a temporary vantage, unstable achievement, or regulative ideal: it's all or nothing" (32). In Anderson's view, "cultivated detachment is an ongoing aspiration and incomplete achievement" (33), and she believes that a regulative ideal is essential to the health of literary criticism. For Eliot, I hope to show, it is not only the thing to which she calls Gwendolen and Daniel, but it is the ideal way of being for her readers. As we are

‘coerced’ into sharing her sympathetic God-like vantage point, her close-up but elevated “lofty point of observation,” we are interpellated as many-sided beings.

In order to understand the movements I will be tracing in the following two parts of this study, I have chosen the rubric of liberal agency, and specifically that of the cultivation of many-sidedness and detachment described here. Because these ideals were largely circulated and debated in George Eliot’s time, and because they have been more or less dismissed in recent decades, I consider Thomas and Anderson’s retrieval of them to be of the utmost importance for my own reading of *Daniel Deronda* and for literary criticism more generally. The ambivalence or uncertainty surrounding liberalism does not seem to recommend it as a framework upon which to hang any certainties about this novel, and yet certainty should perhaps not be the aim of criticism.

In his “The Commitment to Theory,” Homi K. Bhabha proffers a perspective on theory or criticism which seems to support a more regulative ideal. In an attempt to depolarize theoretical or critical endeavors (endeavors Bhabha reads as unfortunately and often falsely mirroring in their militaristic and staunch advocacy of one position or its opposite the escalation in the polarization of political and social stances) and following J.S. Mill, he advocates a kind of “ambivalence at the point of the enunciation of a politics” (Bhabha 2384). Seemingly in favor of a kind of negotiation between opposing points of view, Bhabha hopes not to compromise or to create a new, middle-ground position, or to promote a kind of static syndicalism, but to better understand how each one is always imbricated with the other:

The language of critique is effective not because it keeps forever separate the terms of the master and the slave, the mercantilist and the Marxist, but to the

extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, *neither the one nor the other*, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics. (2385)

It is important to notice that Bhabha is not speaking about a new political position being constructed, but a new “political object.” The language of “translation” and “hybridity” he employs to describe the means to achieve this new political object recalls Wittgenstein’s estimation of the impossibility of straining beyond the limits of our cultural particularities: “This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless” (qtd. in Thomas 23). And yet it seems that this is exactly the political object that Bhabha has in mind: a kind of aspiration to escape the limits of our cages so that we may “translate” the language of the other, to detach ourselves from ourselves, to throw ourselves “into the *mental position* of those who think differently” (Mill, qtd. in Bhabha 2383) in order to make sense of what at first appeared nonsensical.

Bhabha aims to reveal a Third or interstitial space of enunciation in order to “elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (2397). This sounds like a rather fantastical notion, and yet one which I agree is essential. What Thomas and Anderson have called the “flattening” of critical discourse due to a hermeneutics of suspicion which has “foreclosed on projects of appreciation” (Thomas ix), is the impetus for their respective returns to Mill, Arnold, Kant and Wittgenstein, and to many-sidedness and detachment. Bhabha, frustrated with a dichotomy between the political and the theoretical, the critical and the active, seeks in Mill and (via Jacques

Derrida's conception of *différance*) in liberalism, a way out of the standoff and into a richer and more cogent 'way of being' theoretical. By assigning value to detachment and to ambivalence, Bhabha adopts a more open critical stance. He seeks, however, an "international culture based on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*," an elision of tradition and individual locatedness at which George Eliot would likely have blanched.

It seems important to include reference to Bhabha's important essay, especially as it ostensibly advocates a particularly liberal disposition or subjectivity, if only to illustrate the progressive potential or critical utility of an engagement with liberalism. On the other hand, a recent essay by Elaine Hadley in *Victorian Studies* directly criticizes Thomas and Anderson's recent projects. Hadley reads the two against Ian McEwan's *Saturday*, and concludes that McEwan's use of Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" as essentially a rape prevention measure (apparently the would-be assailant's encounter with the poem softens him enough to prevent the assault) represents the "fantasy" of liberal agency. What Anderson referred to as liberalism's almost "embarrassing earnestness" is clearly what Hadley finds so unconvincing. Hadley further remarks: "The explicit claims that Arnold himself might wish to make for "Dover Beach" and art more generally—something about art's capacity to humanize the Baxters of our day—just doesn't seem politically correct or even very plausible in a post 9/11 era" (Hadley 93).

Indeed, Arnold might wish to make such a claim, though he would certainly alter it slightly. He would insist that Baxter (the would-be rapist) becomes more human by being led to a recognition of his victim's humanity. Hadley means to suggest, I assume, by her reference to the political incorrectness of such a humanizing project that an

implementation of the same would imply that Westerners believe terrorists to be inhuman. It is rather the opposite: the implication is that in order to kill we all must necessarily disavow our victims' claims to humanity. Notwithstanding the effectness of concerning oneself with "political correctness" when terrorism and mass murder have become an everyday occurrence, Hadley's dismissal of the "fantasy" of liberal agency represents the real resistance in criticism to consider seriously aesthetic valuation or to credit what Hadley calls the "liberal cognitive aesthetic" with any agential valence (94). Like Eagleton, she is dismissing Anderson's and Thomas' retrieval as a panacea to the world's social ills. Calling liberal cognition "politically spent," Hadley almost dismisses out of hand both authors' projects (99).⁸ Further complicating her rejection of their retrieval, Hadley has this to say:

Moreover, during an era when the president of the United States suggests that "intelligent design" ought to be taught alongside evolution in science classes, the principles of detachment and the aspiration to objectivity, the exercise of self-criticism and the testing of conviction in the public sphere of debate seem imperative. (99)

It is unclear for whom the practice of detachment and self-criticism is imperative: Hadley, or the president? Hadley seems to be insisting that the president look more closely at his proposed educational policies and sound them in the public sphere so that he might see more clearly the error of his ways, so that he might see *her* point of view. Her rhetoric in this essay is redolent of the kind of polarity for which Homi Bhabha recommends that Third Space, and the fact of her resorting to such a fundamentally contested debate as intelligent design versus evolution to pad her rejoinder to Thomas

and Anderson's retrieval suggests she has their projects pegged as politically conservative.

I have given an account of Hadley's critique of a retrieved liberalism because it underscores that retrieval's necessity. Intent on escaping from the ideology critiques which looked so much like players on opposite political or ideological teams facing off, Anderson and Thomas it seems have been, at least by Hadley and for the moment, handed red jerseys and repositioned across the divide. Understood as a regulative ideal and promising only to change the world one Gwendolen at a time, the aspiration to liberal agency might very well enable critics and readers to transcend the zero-sum game—to play with *mixed* motives. By understanding Eliot's final novel as a negotiation of the problematic ethics described in the preceding section, readers and critics can begin to make sense of some of the seemingly unstable aspects of her text. The next part of this study will read the evolution of Gwendolen Harleth from one-sided to potentially many-sided. As she moves from casino to home, from self-involved alienation to the bosom of mother, sisters, and home, Gwendolen's *bildung* is a moral and ethical one. Gwendolen is representative of the most insidious kind of one-sided self-involvement. Her tutelage under Deronda is an interrogation of the transformative capabilities of liberal agency. Conversely, Deronda's engagement with Gwendolen as well as his discovery of his Jewish identity enable him to overcome the crippling effect of his existence as a problematic extreme of many-sidedness and detachment.

II

In order to make any substantial claim for or against Gwendolen Harleth's salvation in *Daniel Deronda*, it is necessary to clearly define what Gwendolen is saved from and what she is *becoming* by the end of the novel. Several critics read Gwendolen as recovered from her initial egoism, and many more disagree with this assessment by pointing up what they perceive to be a self overthrown rather than a self recovered. In "Salvation in *Daniel Deronda*: The Fortunate Overthrow of Gwendolen Harleth," Albert Cirillo reads Gwendolen's recovery as the happy result of Daniel's intervention. Nevertheless, his essays fails to pinpoint the essence of her salvation, opening the door for critiques of Gwendolen that claim she is a being most definitively characterized by lack and confusion at the end of her narrative. In emphasizing Daniel's active overthrow of her selfish view of the world, Cirillo identifies her movement as other-directed rather than self-directed; with this reading in mind, it becomes difficult to imagine her continuing to grow morally and emotionally with Daniel no longer serving as counselor and guide.⁹

My point of departure from Bernard Paris is in his insistence that renunciation and self-reproving inwardness mark a character out as diseased. For Paris and others, Gwendolen is dispirited and full of "guilt, self-hatred, and despair" (176), and incapable of flourishing in life independent of Deronda, whose disapprobation of her worst self has worked its way insidiously into her psyche and continues to haunt her. The dreaded and spectral kind of surveillance from which she has always been fleeing has finally fixed her in its gaze. Many diagnoses of Gwendolen's condition at the novel's end depend too heavily on early-Foucauldian conceptions of 'normalizing subjectivity,' while paying

little to no attention to his later studies relating to the ‘care of the self’ or his “ethics of freedom.” Or, like Paris, too much emphasis on her ‘madness’ or lack of self-esteem result in identity-based critiques which view her as a victim of internalized psychological violence, a being most clearly defined by lack, rather than as a self-cultivating agent whose ascesis promises flourishing.¹⁰ This study aims to avoid those same pitfalls by staking the claim that Gwendolen has grown into a many-sided being by the time she pens the wedding-day letter to Daniel; her attainment of this regulative ideal of liberal agency necessarily contains the promise of continued growth. In what follows, I will read the several encounters Gwendolen has with Daniel, who exemplifies the ideal, in order to show that Eliot meant us to read her salvation as her movement toward this cultivated ideal of liberal agency.

The One-Sided Child

Book I of *Daniel Deronda* is entitled “The Spoiled Child,” and tells the story of Gwendolen as she moves from the gaming resort, Leubronn, and back home to Offendene. All children are egoists, and Gwendolen, though twenty-one years of age, still exists in this childlike relation to the world. Our first glimpses of her are guided by Daniel’s own curious surveillance as she impetuously gambles away her winnings. The book’s first lines consist of a series of questions which we discover are Daniel’s only after they are asked:

Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams? Probably the evil; else why was the effect that of unrest

rather than of undisturbed charm? Why was the wish to look again felt as coercion and not as a longing in which the whole being consents? (I.i.7)

Daniel is uncertain about the woman he is observing, and this is the first clue to Gwendolen's "wonderfully mixed consciousness" the narrator credits her with further on (694). There is something about Gwendolen which intrigues Daniel from his very first observation of her, though his feeling is not admiration, nor even captivation with an unquestionably beautiful appearance. Daniel disapproves of all those engaged in the activity of trying to gain from each other's loss. Each gambler exists in that moment in an oppositional relationship with everyone else, creating in the room what the narrator describes as a kind of "negativeness of expression which had the effect of a mask" (9). The act of gambling places the individual "in a kind of unholy opposite to sympathetic relationship" (Ermath 35).

Elizabeth Deeds Ermath notes that gambling was a favorite metaphor of George Eliot for a lack of sympathy and its concomitant impulse to conceal and mistrust: "[w]ithout sympathy and trust in the possibility of others...characters liked Godfrey Cass and Tito demonstrate the alternative experience of enmity and suspicion" (35). She goes on: "They remain on guard, defensive, fearful of discovery when discovery alone would save them" (35). Gwendolen is similarly on guard and defensive, noticing from across the smoky gas-lit room a total stranger watching her with what she perceived to be "a smile of irony in his eyes" (*DD* 11). She experiences a "tingling resentment" at his "measuring her and looking down on her [and 'the human dross around her'] as an inferior" (10). Accustomed to being exulted and praised as superior among women, Gwendolen is stung, but she is intrigued.

The feeling that Daniel disapproves of her compels Gwendolen to continue to bet though her streak is over, and she soon loses all her winnings. When she gets up from the table she is pleased to note that his gaze has remained steadily on her—this being better than that “he should have disregarded her as one of an insect swarm who had no individual physiognomy” (11). Gwendolen’s perception of this highly charged first encounter tells us much about her. Like her future husband, Gwendolen is not only convinced of her superiority, but regards other people with almost uniform contempt. They are “dross” and swarming insects and it is her custom to demand that they take notice of her own transcendent position. Her belief in her preeminence “received a disagreeable concussion, and reeled a little, but was not easily to be overthrown” (12).

Later that evening, Gwendolen’s holiday is cut short by the letter containing the “stupefying” news of her family’s ruin (16). Though the news is bad for a large group of relations—her mother and four stepsisters, as well as her Aunt and Uncle Gascoigne who have a large number of children—Gwendolen’s chief concern is for herself:

There was no inward exclamation of ‘Poor Mamma!’ Her mamma had never seemed to get much enjoyment out of life, and if Gwendolen had been at this moment disposed to feel pity she would have bestowed it on herself—for was she not naturally and rightfully the chief object of her mamma’s anxiety too? But it was anger, it was resistance that possessed her, it was bitter vexation that she had lost her gains at roulette, whereas if her luck had continued through this one day she would have had a handsome sum to carry home, or she might have gone on playing and won enough to support them all. (17)

If Gwendolen were inclined to sympathize with anyone it would be herself. Though there are many outbursts of "Poor Mamma!" from Gwendolen in the novel, it is not until the end that these exclamations seem to come from a genuine sense of her mother's difference from herself.¹¹ Though it seems as though Gwendolen shows a capacity for sympathy and love in the beginning for at least her mother, I would rather insist that the feeling Gwendolen has for her mother is simply a feeling for herself in relation to her mother. We may read her connection to her mother as the simple result of her failure to individuate herself from her maternal figure since she has failed to mature.

Her frustration that she might have "won enough to support them all" seems to reflect a very masculine desire to financially care for her family. Dorothea Barrett writes that "the impulse behind this is that of a daughter trying to fulfill the obligations of what has become a husbandly relation to her mother" (167). Gwendolen certainly resists poverty and obscurity for herself and her family, and goes as far as pawning the turquoise necklace left her by her father on her way out of Leubronn, but half the impulse for this desperate measure is her enormous pride and reluctance to ask her chaperones for any help.¹² After a sleepless night spent pacing and gazing at her reflection in her mirror, Gwendolen steels herself for her journey. Looking once more at

her image in the growing light, her face gathered a complacency gradual as the cheerfulness of the morning. Her beautiful lips curled into a more and more decided smile, till at last she took off her hat, leaned forward and kissed the cold glass which had looked so warm. How could she believe in sorrow? If it attacked her, she felt the force to crush it, to defy it, or run away from it, as she had done already." (18).

Donning her traveling clothes and kissing her own image, this is Eliot's supreme egoist at the beginning of her journey. She will soon discover that her troubles are far worse than she had imagined and that she may have to take a position as governess in a Bishop's family. For a girl who had been so averse to helping her mother by tutoring her many sisters, such a vocation is anathema. Indeed, the details about Gwendolen's life revealed in the following chapters constitute such a picture of selfishness that it is a wonder we sympathize with her at all. Gwendolen always shares a bedroom with her mother, sleeping on a cot next to her; one night her mother was in pain and begged her daughter to get some medicine for her: "[t]hat healthy young lady, snug and warm as a rosy infant in her little couch, objected to step out into the cold, and...grumbled a refusal" (24). The next day, however, Gwendolen "tried to make amends by caresses which cost her no effort" (24-5). In another incident, she had "strangled her sister's canary-bird in a final fit of exasperation at its shrill singing which had again and again jarringly interrupted her own" (25).¹³ Though she repented and bought the sister a white mouse in reconciliation, Gwendolen excused herself "on the ground of a peculiar sensitiveness which was a mark of her general superiority" (25).

Gwendolen's role is that of the "queen in exile" (41) and she expects to be treated as such. Yet, she is charming, and is described as having an iridescent character, the result of "contrary tendencies" at play: "We cannot speak a loyal word and be meanly silent, we cannot kill and not kill in the same moment; but a moment is room wide enough for the loyal and mean desire, for the outlash of murderous thought and the sharp backward stroke of repentance" (42). Though Gwendolen has a conscience, she is one-sided, imagines little (if at all) what other people might be feeling and thinking, and as

she tells her mother, "I can never love anybody. I can't love people. I hate them" (82). As she gets further along in her doomed relationship with Grandcourt, a man who is as bored with the world as Gwendolen professes to be though he has "hunted the tiger" (137) and has a fortune at his disposal, it becomes clear that her disgust for men in particular is even more pointed. She cannot stand to be touched, recoils first when her cousin Rex tries to 'make love' to her, and becomes agitated when Grandcourt tries to kiss her neck after their engagement (327). Susan Ostrov Weisser notes that Gwendolen's repulsion for men and her suppression of her sexual desire is indicative not of her striving to imitate an ideal of feminine morality, but to "protect herself from the vulnerability of either loving too much or not being loved in return" (Weisser 3). I would rather insist that her aversion to love-making is reflective of her consciousness of her inability to return affection. Gwendolen is unwilling to accommodate the signs and gestures of romance because she desires only to rule men.

Gwendolen exhibits what many feminist critics have identified as a wonderful determination to rule the world, very much akin to Daniel's mother, the Alcharisi. Though she has moments which seem to jar her from her confidence in herself, she always recovers and feels again the "possibility of winning empire"—hardly a realizable or desirable ambition in a nineteenth-century heroine (64). There has been some discomfort in her life, but Gwendolen remains confident that any wrong she does may be amended by easy acts of penance, and wishes to master even her future husband. Amanda Anderson notes that Gwendolen's stunted moral growth is attributable to her lack of a childhood home (137). Offendene is merely one in a series of houses that Gwendolen, her mother, and sisters have inhabited in her life. The family had always

been transient and the loss of Mrs. Davilow's fortune means they will have to move once again. This transience "precluded the natural development of a prereflective partiality (which Eliot envisions as a 'sweet habit of the blood') that would ideally serve as the affective foundation for the reflectiveness which allows one to become a 'citizen of the world'" (Anderson 137-8). She is an egoist without even an attachment to home.

As for Daniel, and despite his uncertainty about his origins, "a partial rootedness is effected by his strongly grounded filial affection toward Sir Hugo and his deep connection to his boyhood home" (Anderson 138). This man of whom it is often asked, "Is he an Englishman?," knows nothing of his heritage. Gwendolen and others suppose Daniel to be Sir Hugo's illegitimate son. Since Sir Hugo's estate is entailed on Grandcourt, Gwendolen gets herself into a rather complicated relationship with the young man who she feels might just be the rightful (if not lawful) heir to the fortune she stands to gain through marriage. Also complicating the picture is the fact of Gwendolen's promise to Lydia Glasher not to marry Grandcourt. Having herself borne Grandcourt a "fine son" and three daughters, Lydia extracted from Gwendolen a promise not to stand in the way of her and her children's happiness. But Gwendolen does not keep her promise. She involves herself in a dangerous gamble; convinced that she will soon master her husband and "urge him to the most liberal conduct towards Mrs. Glasher's children" (314), she rationalizes her marriage as a way to save her own family as well as Lydia's. In her naiveté, Gwendolen thinks she can turn what would ordinarily be a zero-sum game (winning a man, and his money, from another woman) into a mixed-motive one, but soon finds that mastering Grandcourt is impossible. The man who enjoys kicking his dogs and making them whimper, cannot be overthrown by Gwendolen.

Indeed, he had chosen Gwendolen for the very spirit she embodied, for the added challenge of overthrowing her: "He meant to be master of a woman who would have liked to master him, and who perhaps would have been capable of mastering another man" (320).

By the time of her second encounter with Daniel, Gwendolen has become a woman who is beginning to feel herself very much in trouble. She recognizes that the wrong she has chosen to do is of a very different kind than canary murder. Before she accepted Grandcourt's proposal, Gwendolen determined that society would not look much askance at her even if it was generally known that she had been informed about Lydia and the children. Rationalizing that people "regarded illegitimate children as more rightfully to be looked shy on and deprived of social advantages than illegitimate fathers," Gwendolen still had to contend with the inward feeling of "indignation and loathing that she should have been expected to unite herself with an outworn life" (298). As noted, she constructs a kind of mixed-motive rationalization for accepting Grandcourt; she hopes to engineer a way for Lydia and herself to benefit financially from her marriage with Grandcourt, rather than taking all or surrendering all to Lydia. Gwendolen's underlying determination to master her husband and make him do right by his children can hardly be called heroic, however. Unlike Farebrother, who works against his own interests by counseling Fred Vincy to give up his dissipated ways so that the younger man can win their mutual love object, Gwendolen is unwilling to sacrifice her chance at financial and social ascendancy. She makes a shallow judgment based on a societal practice that does not bear moral sounding—the social and financial

marginalization of illegitimate children—and ignores the lurking feelings of dread and uncertainty plaguing her.

Daniel's Many-Sided Self

When Daniel hears of the engagement, he constructs a sympathetic picture of poor Gwendolen driven to marry a man she obviously finds distasteful in order to save herself from poverty. Daniel decides that the shift in Gwendolen's feelings toward Grandcourt "implied a nature liable to difficulty and struggle—elements of life which had predominant attraction for his sympathy, due perhaps to his early pain in dwelling on the conjectured story of his own existence" (324). His is an extraordinarily sympathetic nature, and he is particularly drawn to people who require defense and rescue. His association with Mirah, whom he prevents from drowning herself, as well as his sacrifice of his own study time at Cambridge to Hans Meyrick when the reckless artist injured his eyes, are evidence of this inclination. Deronda's particular vulnerability to women in trouble is the result of his conviction that his own mother must have been such a woman once. His tendency to sacrifice himself and his own needs and ambitions for the benefit of others is certainly problematic, despite the "fervour of sympathy," the "activity of imagination on behalf of others" which impel his acts of self-sacrifice:

'Deronda would have been first-rate if he had had more ambition'—was a frequent remark about him. But how could a fellow push his way properly when he objected to swop for his own advantage, knocked under by choice when he was within an inch of victory, and, unlike the great Clive, would rather be the calf than the butcher? It was a mistake, however, to suppose that Deronda had not his share of ambition: we know that he suffered keenly from the belief that there was

a tinge of dishonour in his lot; but there are some cases, and his was one of them, in which the sense of injury breeds—not the will to inflict injuries and climb over them as a ladder, but—a hatred of all injury. (178).

Daniel's sympathetic feeling for Gwendolen and others is certainly an idealized way of being. However, his "many-sided sympathy...threatened to hinder any persistent course of action," and "was in danger of paralyzing in him that indignation against wrong...which are the conditions of moral force" (364).

In short, Daniel's is an extreme of many-sidedness, resulting in the loss of vigor and in a pernicious moral relativism from which "view from nowhere" he weakens his ability to judge. Daniel desires at this stage in his life 'some external event, or some inward light, that would urge him into a definite line of action, and compress his wandering energy" (365). The encounters with Gwendolen, and his subsequent enlightenment as to his Jewish heritage which makes him feel able to take up the torch of Jewish nationalism Mordecai hands him, constitute the external events which steer for him a more definite course. Amanda Anderson reads *Daniel Deronda* as inherently dialogic, "ruminat[ing] powerfully on the relation between cosmopolitanism and nationalism" (119). His is an "allegory about cosmopolitanism" which reveals Eliot's own "mixed attitude toward the instabilities of modern cosmopolitan life, and not...her attempt to flee those instabilities by constructing Jewish identity as an absolute ideal or ground" (121). Daniel's early education, which simultaneously offered him lessons about the value of home and rootedness, as well as fostered in him a kind of detachment owing to his uncertainty about his birth, prepared him to encounter other forms of life with an openness and desire to understand. His attempts at learning Hebrew so that he

might bridge the (language) gap in understanding between himself and Mordecai is the signal for this cultivated detachment.

Anderson's reading of Deronda himself is convincing, but what of Gwendolen? While Deronda requires an event which will show him the way toward a more persistent course of action, Gwendolen needs to overcome a crippling egoism. Her engagement with the problematic Daniel is more interesting when one considers that the ideal way of being he both advocates and models is not exactly bringing him happiness and fulfillment; while the regulative ideal of liberal agency, or many-sidedness, Daniel practices is sufficient to guide him toward right action and right feeling, it is not in itself a vocation. If his way of being is a model for Gwendolen, then she must, at some point, run up against the same kinds of obstacles to fulfillment which are impeding Daniel's own progress.

In conversation with Daniel, Mirah relays Hans' description of Daniel as lacking desire and ambition. This analogy elegantly expresses the root of Daniel's problem:

But Mr. Hans said yesterday that you thought so much of others you hardly wanted anything for yourself. He told me a wonderful story of Bouddha giving himself to the famished tigress to save her and her little ones from starving. And he said you were like Bouddha. That is what we all imagine of you. (465).

Daniel bristles at the comparison and suggests that when "Bouddha let the tigress eat him he might have been very hungry himself" (466). Daniel has been emasculated by many-sidedness, and is viewed by others as having no desires himself. It seems that Gwendolen and Daniel would be well-served by somehow sharing with one another a little of what the other lacks. It is interesting that though Daniel is interested in

Gwendolen, he actually begins to resist her when she begins to depend on him more heavily. Unlike Mirah, who Daniel rescues in part by leaving her under the care of Mrs. Meyrick and her daughters, Daniel cannot save Gwendolen by foisting her on somebody else. He is reluctant to engage himself fully in her life and concerns; he fears the kind of involvement which promises a commitment he is not prepared to make. Gwendolen's eyes very simply need to be opened to the fact of her existing always in relation with others, and others not simply existing for her. Eliot means us to see that it is essential that Daniel be the one to effect this transformation—his sympathetic but critical engagement with her, and his eventual departure from her life are the means to her awakening. Were her mentor any other man, Gwendolen's story would end in her marriage to him, and she would be deprived of the crucial lesson described above: the realization that "whatever surrounded her was [not] somehow specially for her (*DD* 804). The encounters and confessional moments which I will detail below begin to effect this exchange.

Encounters

When they meet again at Diplow before her wedding, Gwendolen is already intrigued by his grave manner, by his "superiority that humiliates" (331). She frankly reminds him of his "object[ion] to [her] gambling" (337). He responds by calling gambling "a besotting kind of taste, likely to turn into a disease," and remarks that "there is something revolting...in raking in a heap of money together, and internally chuckling over it, when others are feeling the loss of it" (337). Though he agrees that it is sometimes impossible to avoid gaining from another's loss, Gwendolen realizes that he would surely disapprove of her decision to marry Grandcourt. Daniel is attracted to what

he recognizes as a struggle going on in Gwendolen, but he is not yet aware of all that lies beneath her searching interest in his views on gambling.

She has not yet identified Daniel as someone to whom she can unfold her mind because she assumes he would despise her if she did. It is clear she identifies him as being in some way superior to herself, but she still desires more than anything at this stage his “unmixed admiration” (331) of herself. In her translation of Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity*, Eliot writes:

The consciousness of the world is a humiliating consciousness; the Creation was an ‘act of humility’; but the first stone against which the pride of egoism stumbles, is the *thou*, the *alter ego*. The *ego* first steels its glance in the eye of a *thou*, before it endures the contemplation of a being which does not reflect its own image. My fellow-man is the bond between me and the world. I am, and feel myself, dependent on the world, because I first feel myself dependent on other men. If I did not need man, I should not need the world. I reconcile myself with the world only through my fellow-man. Without other men, the world would be for me not only dead and empty, but meaningless. Only through his fellow does man become clear to himself and self-conscious; but only when I am clear to myself, does the world become clear to me (Eliot “Essays” 461).

At this stage in her narrative, Gwendolen has made little progress toward self-consciousness or consciousness of the larger world. What she requires from those around her is an unmixed admiration much like her own contented gaze at herself in the mirror at Leubronn. Kissing that “cold glass which had looked so warm” is symbolic of Gwendolen’s seeking but not finding a *thou* in which she can finally begin to achieve real

understanding of herself and the world. The realization that someone had “thought her gambling wrong, had evidently bitten into her,” but Gwendolen has not yet come to “depend” on him in order to better understand herself or the world. Her movement toward many-sidedness, I am suggesting, must take the form of a gradual awakening. Her ego must first “steel its glance in the eyes of a *thou*,” the God in Daniel, which reflects the God in her.

In the famously church-like atmosphere of the Abbey at Christmas, the two have their most educative exchanges; the moments are edifying for both, and Gwendolen learns to rely on Daniel, whose sympathy and goodness is such sweet relief from the calculating evil of Grandcourt. They begin a dialogue about her abandonment of music which highlights the aspiration inherent in Deronda’s character, and the resolve in Gwendolen’s to never be middling; the difficulty in her position is that she has no great genius for music and so she would rather give it up. Having been disabused by Klesmer of the idea that she might have a successful career on the stage, Gwendolen has set her mind against musical appreciation, understood in her gentile circle as inherently participatory and imitative. This brief exchange on aspiration follows:

‘For my part,’ said Deronda, ‘people who do anything finely always inspirit me to try. I don’t mean that they make me believe I can do it as well. But they make the thing, whatever it may be, seem worthy to be done. I can bear to think my own music not good for much, but the world would be more dismal if I thought music itself not good for much. Excellence encourages one about life generally; it shows the spiritual wealth of the world.’

‘But then if we can’t imitate it?—it only makes our own life seem the tamer,’ said Gwendolen, in a mood to resent encouragement founded on her own insignificance.

‘That depends on the point of view, I think,’ said Deronda. ‘We should have a poor life of it if we were reduced for all our pleasure to our own performances. A little private imitation of what is good is a sort of private devotion to it, and most of us ought to practice art only in the light of private study—preparation to understand and enjoy what the few can do for us. I think Miss Lapidoth is one of the few.’ (436)

John Stuart Mill’s views on genius and many-sidedness, or genius *versus* many-sidedness are useful in considering this singularly important moment in Gwendolen’s education. Opposite the artistic genius of Klesmer, the Alcharisi, and even Mirah Lapidoth is posed the “middlingness” of Daniel’s and Gwendolen’s musical talent. While it is interesting to note that true genius is assigned predominantly to the Jewish characters in the novel, and mediocrity to the ‘English,’ the distinction that I would like to make between these two classes of character is one of aspiration versus attainment, or imitation and appreciation versus achievement.

David Wayne Thomas notes of Mill’s statement, “[I]n the human mind, one-sidedness has always been the rule, and many-sidedness the exception,” that it constitutes an advocacy of “exceptionalism, a cultivated subjectivity above and beyond the norm” (28). In the same way, genius is a rarity which an exceptional few have the capacity to attain. There is a troubling tendency to elitism in the notion of the many-sided individual looking down upon the mass of ordinary one-sided beings, or those who must content

themselves with mediocrity while looking up at an ideal of genius which they can never claim. Similarly difficult is Mill's suggestion essentially "that unoriginal minds are incapable of seeing what originality could do for them," which makes almost impossible the notion of the unoriginal, one-sided being giving credit "to a need in inverse proportion to their sense of actually experiencing that need" (31). How can cultivation begin when an individual cannot even recognize her need for such a project? According to this logic, all those like Gwendolen lie fallow.

At work in this scheme are the discrete notions of regulative and substantive ideals of liberal agency. What Thomas finally concludes is the crux of Mill's often confused logic as he works his way through a negotiation of the ideals of genius and many-sidedness are "two antithetical values: on the one hand, a vision of genius, understood as a heroics of individuality; and on the other hand, a practice of liberal many-sidedness, a kind of tolerance and cosmopolitanism that has to be understood itself as another kind of accomplishment" (33). What is left unanswered in *On Liberty* is a determination about the possibility of "the expansive consciousness of the genuinely original genius [putting] down roots in the unoriginal mind" (33) Thomas goes on: "[i]t seems that originality, or genius, will be appreciated only by an agent constituted through a open-minded quality of many-sidedness that Mill has said is hardly typical in the population generally" (33). For Thomas, this is a real difficulty with Mill's conception of genius. Gwendolen's resistance is reflective of George Eliot's similar ambivalence about an ideal of genius which appears to preclude participation by most of the population, and is a decidedly sympathetic aspect of her characterization—who among us can easily persist in striving for an achievement we know to be unattainable? What must occur

before Gwendolen can take up music once more is a 'sowing' of her mind with the seeds of many-sidedness.

What she cannot yet recognize as "another kind of accomplishment" is the cosmopolitanism and tolerance that Daniel represents, that his own "private devotion" to genius represents a kind of genius itself. Though Thomas is reluctant to ascribe to Mill an estimation of many-sidedness as a kind of genius, it seems that Eliot is asking readers of Gwendolen's narrative to recognize that what Daniel is urging her to aspire to is the genius, or at least exceptionality, of many-sidedness. It is a "second form of heroism," a "liberal heroics of self-management" and for Gwendolen, having run up against the truth of her own artistic shortcomings, it is what remains for her to strive toward. The exchange on music, and Gwendolen's difficulty in submitting to what she views as a Sisyphean task, mirrors her reluctance to take up the problematic ideals of many-sidedness or cultivated detachment Daniel represents. It must be noted that Gwendolen, by acknowledging the special gifts of Klesmer and Mirah, does show herself capable of recognizing genius and that her quibble seems similar to critiques of Mill which argue for the elitism of his views on genius.

Confessions

Michel Foucault's work on the concept of *parrhesia* informs my understanding of the confessional relationship so elemental to Gwendolen's and Daniel's growth.¹⁴ By leaving aside traditional notions of the confessional relationship, we can read Gwendolen and Daniel's confessional moments as egalitarian and mutually edifying, rather than as patriarchal and, perhaps, dangerously purgative. Translated most concisely as "free speech," *parrhesia* is an essentially relational practice. Foucault's attention to it belies

criticisms which insist that his work generally “valorize[s] an aestheticized, narcissistic attention to the self” (McGushin 115). According to Foucault, the *parrhesiastes* “is someone who says everything he has in mind: he does not hide anything, but opens his heart and mind completely to other people through his discourse” (Foucault 12). The concept is understood in two ways, the first of which is a kind of frankness which borders on “chatter” and is equated with a kind of undisciplined urge to say just what one thinks without considering the effect of that speech act on others. What Foucault is more interested in is *parrhesia* as truth telling which has implications for both the *parrhesiastes* and his or her listener.

Indeed, *parrhesia* “is a relationship to the other which serves the purpose of converting and saving the other” (McGushin 115). The narrator’s suggestion that Gwendolen’s turning Daniel “into a priest,” was preparing an education also for Daniel seems to reflect this relational concept: “[t]hose who trust us educate us” (430). Gwendolen’s subsequent unfolding of herself to Daniel allows him to more meaningfully experience her point of view, and also underscores Daniel’s own reluctance to take the role of *parrhesiastes* himself. While he allows the picture of himself as “Bouddha” feeding himself to the hungry tigress to prevail, and fails to share with Gwendolen the workings of his own mind and heart, he withholds an important lesson from her—his existence separate from herself. And yet perhaps Gwendolen is not ready at this stage to acknowledge his difference. As Feuerbach wrote, “[t]he *ego* first steels its glance in the eye of a *thou*, before it endures the contemplation of a being which does not reflect its own image.” The *thou* or “alter ego” which Daniel represents, or the God in mankind, must first be acknowledged before she can experience that other half of his being which

is the “phenomenal or visible nature of the world” (Eliot “Essays” 459). In other words, what she currently sees in him is that which is Godlike, or superior, and not what is human.

A bit later, Gwendolen makes a statement about Mirah which highlights Eliot’s decision to feature an egoist heroine in *Daniel Deronda*. Daniel gives an account of Mirah’s goodness, and her near-drowning, but Gwendolen replies, “Those people are not to be pitied...I have no sympathy with women who are always doing right. I don’t believe in their great sufferings,” points up our own willingness to sympathize against all odds with Gwendolen.¹⁵ Eliot knew that her readers would root for Gwendolen, would even feel a little sympathy with her refusal to sympathize with the too-virtuous Mirah. However, her cynicism about Mirah opens the door for Daniel to express an even greater sympathy for Gwendolen: “I suppose we faulty creatures can never feel so much for the irreproachable as for those who are bruised in their struggle with their own faults” he says (439). Comforted by his apparent sympathy for the misguided, Gwendolen begins to be brave enough to take the role of *parrhesiastes*, of truth teller.

Without fully disclosing her knowledge of Lydia Glasher, Gwendolen admits to Daniel that despite his warning her “not to make [her] gain out of another’s loss,” she has “done a great deal worse” (445). Daniel feels an alarm “at Gwendolen’s precipitancy of confidence towards him,” which may be attributed to his sense that it is not quite proper to be on such intimate terms with another man’s wife. But I am reading his alarm as evidence of his subconscious fear of becoming so deeply imbricated in her troubles that his ‘lofty point of observation’ is compromised. In her desperation to escape her misery she persists in trying to draw out from him some recommended course of action. He tells

her to “[I]ook on other lives besides your own. See what their troubles are, and how they are borne. Try to care about something in this vast world besides the gratification of small selfish desires. Try to care for what is best in thought and action—something that is good apart from the accidents of your own lot” (446).

His promise that she will transcend her current one-sidedness urges her to pursue him further as to how she might effect this transformation. Daniel finally launches into what sounds a little like advice and a little like self-rebuke:

I take what you said of music for a small example—it answers for all larger things—you will not cultivate it for the sake of a private joy in it. What sort of earth or heaven would hold any spiritual wealth in it for souls pauperized by inaction? If one firmament has no stimulus for our attention and awe, I don’t see how four would have it. We should stamp every possible world with the flatness of our own inanity—which is necessarily impious, without faith or fellowship.

Daniel is giving voice to something he wrestles with inwardly, his feeling that his too sympathetic nature has led him to an inaction which precludes “faith or fellowship” with any one form of life. While he urges Gwendolen to seek knowledge, to feel how her life impinges on other lives and to try to imagine how others feel—in short, to be like himself—he is struggling with the consequences of this “second form of heroism” on his own life. Daniel is struggling with his own self-reproving consciousness of his lack of a vocation. These moments begin to work on Gwendolen, and they appear to be forcing Daniel to think through and articulate the aspects of his character which are most troubling. Yet Daniel cannot verbally convey the most important lesson that remains for

her—the fact of his existing not “specially for her” (804)—he can only show this by ‘forsaking’ her.

Gwendolen is a character whose divided self is apparent from the beginning. She has the capacity for remorse, and *knows* what is wrong to do though she cannot *feel* her way to her own determination of right action. She does not innately have what Daniel and Dorothea Brooke have, “a viewpoint carrying with it what Eliot calls ‘that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling,’” (Thomas 12) and her struggle is toward cultivating it. Unlike Farebrother, Gwendolen has not yet attained what Thomas calls an “inner-directed” capacity to self-regulate. She has begun by the time of the conversations at the Abbey to experience the pain of awakening to a realization of her involvement in a larger community than she previously thought. Her actions and their effects are no longer limited to her little family circle, and caresses and little white mice can no longer assuage the hurt she causes others. She is ready to listen to Daniel, to begin to tell him what she is thinking and feeling, but as long as he exists for her as a counselor and guide, she cannot attain to “that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling” (Thomas 12).

The death of Grandcourt and Daniel’s discovery of his Jewish lineage occur almost simultaneously. The meetings between Daniel and the Alcharisi are as emotionally fraught as those between Daniel and Gwendolen after Grandcourt’s drowning. It is a moment of crisis and joy for Daniel. Having lamented his lack of direction and his inaction, the “external event, or...inward light, that would urge him into a definite line of action, and compress his wandering energy,” has finally come to fruition (365). But because of his previous cosmopolitanism, Daniel must disappoint others. The

first to experience this disappointment is his mother. Urged on by dread as she approaches her death, Leonora decides she must give her son the inheritance that she denied him when she hid his identity. The feeling that urges the Alcharisi, the dread she feels, is not the dread of future wrongdoing, but is a fear of being punished in death by her father, which we may read as her fear of punishment by God the Father whom she has denied. She wants no love from Daniel, does not want his sympathy or forgiveness (though he offers it anyway), and only wants to unburden herself. She is appalled when he delights in the unexpected gift she gives him—it is the thing she had tried to “save” him from—the fact that he is a Jew. Leonora reveals that she loathed the faith she was born into from the time she was a small child, and tells Daniel that he can never imagine what it is “to have a man’s force of genius within you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl” (631). Leonora confesses to Daniel, but she wants only to escape from the dread that haunts her. She tells the truth, but not, like Gwendolen, because she is seeking his sympathy, or fellowship with him. She is, in fact, rather distressed that he so clearly welcomes the truth she offers him.

Lisabeth During compellingly argues for the significance of dread working both negatively against and positively for Gwendolen’s moral recovery. Throughout most of the novel, and even before she meets Daniel at Leubronn, Gwendolen’s dread of the worst part of herself serves to “sever [her] from the concerns of the community (During 90). And yet, dread seems to insist on its subject’s capacity for imagination, an essential ingredient of sympathy. Gwendolen’s mixed nature, the simultaneous impulse to do wrong and the backlash of remorse Eliot so often describes, is indicative of a nature capable of regeneration; Gwendolen needs Daniel’s sympathy with her struggle to

awaken her to the fact of her dread being not so terribly unique. While it is true that “[t]he object enjoying the sympathy is encouraged to think that the sympathizer truly ‘lives’ in them” and can rather encourage than correct egoism (During 98), sympathy is not the only aspect of Deronda’s intervention which works on Gwendolen’s consciousness. As explicated above, the value of aspiration was first articulated by Daniel in their conversations on music and genius. The initial failure of Daniel’s sympathetic intervention to sow in Gwendolen the “seeds of impartial sympathy” (99) is the result of Daniel’s particular inability to reciprocate as *parrhesiastes*.¹⁶ He does not tell the truth about himself in the way Gwendolen does because he does not know the truth about himself. When he is ready to disclose to her who he is, Gwendolen may then benefit from his acting the role of *parrhesiastes*.

Daniel struggles mightily under the burden of Gwendolen’s confession about Grandcourt’s drowning. Gwendolen is a woman possessed with the need to recount every detail of the event as accurately as she can. Continually recalling his “dead face,” Gwendolen believes she has finally come to realize the possibility of her worst self. And yet what she tells Daniel turns out to be far less “*dread*[ful]” than her initial claim of guilt. Daniel is convinced “that there had been throughout a counterbalancing struggle of her better will” (696). To him, “her remorse was the precious sign of a recoverable nature; it was the culmination of that self-disapproval which had been the awakening of a new life within her; it marked her off from the criminals whose only regret is failure in securing their evil wish” (697). During reads the event as finally functioning to free her from the premonitions and dread she has experienced throughout the novel. She no longer needs to flee the “dead face” because it is has come to pass, and I would add that her desire for

concealment has been so far eliminated as to allow her to engage sympathetically with her fellow human beings.

The last book in *Daniel Deronda* is entitled "Fruit and Seed." Favoring a metaphor for cultivation and potential, George Eliot means to express very clearly that her hero is now reaping the sought after fruit of his many-sidedness, and that her heroine has now been sown with its seeds. When the book begins, however, neither have completed their journeys. The moment described in my Introduction has yet to occur which will release Gwendolen from her dependence on Daniel. Gwendolen has gone home to be with her family at Offendene where they will live comfortably on the £2000 Grandcourt has left her; the rest of the estate was left to Grandcourt's son and to Lydia. Gwendolen is gratified that her marriage to Grandcourt has not robbed his mistress and their children of what she feels they deserve—indeed, it seems her mixed-motive gamble has miraculously paid off. Daniel visits her twice without revealing to her anything about his future plans or what he has learned about himself. Finally, he makes the confession to her which allows her to recognize the half of him which is phenomenal and belonging only to him.

She has thus far recognized in him only that part of each of them that inheres in all men and women, the *thou* or *alter ego* described by Feuerbach. Daniel's truth-telling, his *parrhesia*, causes her to feel "the pressure of a vast mysterious movement, for the first time being dislodged from her supremacy in her own world, and getting a sense that her horizon was but a dipping onward of an existence with which her own was revolving" (804). She is crushed that he does not love her, certainly, but she has now come to an understanding of her relationship to the world that would not have been possible without

Daniel's sympathetic engagement with her. His intervention allows her to see that there is a part of herself that is reflected in all human beings. Gwendolen is finally made to recognize the aspect of Daniel which does not reflect her own image, which is not the God in him, but the man in him. When he tells her that he plans to marry, she famously asks him, "But *can* you marry?" (805). Until this point, Gwendolen has not recognized Daniel as capable of desire. Indeed, Daniel does not even acknowledge his love for Mirah until he discovers his identity. The self-sacrificing "Bouddha" is now able to begin to satisfy his hunger, to name the woman he loves, and to embrace a vocation. By attaching himself to one form of life, while retaining his native sympathy and his aspiration to consider alternative vantage points, Daniel is newly invigorated.

Gwendolen's letter to Daniel releases him from the guilt he feels at leaving her behind. His inward expression of sorrow—"she was the victim of his happiness"—felt during their last meeting is assuaged by her recognition of his sorrow and her desire to comfort him (*DD* 805). Gwendolen has begun to show herself capable of imagining how someone else must be feeling. Though the lines, "I have remembered your words—that I may live to be one of the best of women, who make others glad they were born. I do not yet see how that can be, but you know better than me" (810) are somewhat troubling since Gwendolen seems to believe that Daniel has some special knowledge that she lacks, the letter conveys the sense that Gwendolen has at least attained a disposition aspiring to consider Daniel's point of view. From a woman who earlier balked at the idea of continuing to sing despite the knowledge that she lacked genius, her readiness now to try to do what seems impossible is evidence of her progress. There is no small distance between herself and Daniel at this point in the novel; when Daniel was trying to describe

to Gwendolen how discovering his Judaism made a great difference in his life, he perceived that “the distance between her ideas and his acted like a difference of native language” (802).

The allusion to native language recalls Bhabha’s concept of translation and Wittgenstein’s notion of an essential straining “against the boundaries of phenomenal experience” (Thomas 23). What is phenomenal in Daniel, his Judaism and the meaning that holds for him, is outside of Gwendolen’s experience—its import in his life is, very simply, “nonsensical” to her. And yet, in her letter Gwendolen shows herself attempting to overcome this difficulty, to recognize that what is nonsensical to her is incredibly meaningful to Daniel. By assuring him that she will live, she evidences also her awakening to his need to be freed from her dependence on him. The last line of her letter, “it shall be better with me because I have known you” is something she has said before. This iteration, however, comes after Daniel’s final lesson for her. With her dread behind her, situated with mother and sisters at home, Gwendolen’s story begins to look even a little like Mirah’s whose own recovery was partially enabled by her time with Mrs. Meyrick and her three daughters. For Eliot, “the conservative role played by hearth and home is a healthful one, enabling ‘recovery’,” (Anderson 14) and for a young woman who has never had a deep sense of belonging at home before, this is perhaps the best place to begin to cultivate the “seed” of many-sidedness.

CONCLUSION

What will become of Gwendolen? George Eliot's decision not to marry Gwendolen to Daniel, or to anybody else at the end of *Daniel Deronda* has troubled readers since the novel's publication. As I have shown, her separation from Daniel is elemental to her development into a many-sided woman. His recognition that claiming an identity means that he must sometimes hurt others allows him to more literally experience the turmoil Gwendolen was undergoing during their conversations at the Abbey. Daniel's discovery of what is essentially a middle way represents Eliot's compromise in an ethics of liberalism, impelled by her ambivalence about cultivated detachment, and her championing of a many-sidedness which promotes sympathy and fellow-feeling with other forms of life. The novel begins with her careful illustration of two extremes: the one-sided Gwendolen, and the many-sided Daniel. What Eliot acknowledges by drawing Gwendolen out from her egoism, and by bringing Daniel back into the sphere of action by calling him to participation in a community to which he rightfully belongs, is that many-sidedness is desirable, and that it can be taken too far.

As for Gwendolen, whose attainment of this regulative ideal of liberal agency has only just begun to be apparent, what fruit might it bear? The difficulty that Paris has with reading Gwendolen as having benefited from her relationship with Daniel is that he cannot identify a concrete self independent of Deronda, one which will allow her to flourish on her own. What he is seeking depends very heavily on Karen Horney's concept of a "real self... 'the alive, unique, personal center of ourselves,' the actualization of which is the meaning of life, and alienation from which is a psychic death" (Paris 2004, 11). For Paris, Gwendolen is finally alienated from her real self, that which made

her a charming, active, and vigorous being. There is no evidence, however, that what animated Gwendolen has disappeared. Indeed, I am arguing not that she has lost any part of herself, but that she has begun to cultivate a critical distance from herself which allows her to reflect meaningfully on who she is and who she might become. The difficulty is that Paris is seeking a substantive or concrete Gwendolen, while I am insisting that Eliot gives us a Gwendolen necessarily in process, and becoming.

Thomas notes, “[t]he anxiety that haunts projects such as Mill’s turns on the prospect that many people or classes of people—the crowd, the public, the masses, women, those of other races—might be finally committed to a one-sided animal nature after all” (28). Mill’s direct acknowledgment of woman’s being cut off from educational advancement, from the cultivation of the higher faculties in his *On the Subjection of Women*, evidences his awareness of the unjust nature of the gross inequality between the sexes in nineteenth-century England. Because women are made subordinate to men, because they are almost universally denied access to liberal education, they have been forced to remain in a kind of childlike or slavish subservience. What is fascinating about the relationship between Gwendolen and Daniel is that Eliot would like us to recognize that Gwendolen has begun to advance without access to the kind of education available to the men of her class, and within a marriage where her husband functions as a kind of master. The allusion to Gwendolen’s failed program of reading toward the end of the novel, consisting of the highest political and philosophical texts of her day, is meant to remind us of how inessential these were to her development. While she believed they were required, the fact that she finds no time for them points up their inutility in the cultivation of the self-reflective agency she seems to practice at the end of her narrative.

What begins to change her is not her reading of Plato or Locke, but Daniel's sympathetic intervention, and her awakening is made complete by his departure, by the necessity of going on without him.

In his "What is Enlightenment," Kant makes a case for the necessity of freeing oneself from another's guidance. He writes that "[e]nlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another" (Kant 41). Gwendolen does not choose to separate herself from Daniel, but she finally seems to embrace her autonomy in the letter she writes. To argue that Gwendolen has achieved enlightenment is perhaps going too far, but it is useful to consider Kant's essay especially in regards to Eliot's choice to leave Gwendolen unmarried. He writes further:

The guardians who have so benevolently taken over the supervision of men have carefully seen to it that the far greatest part of them (*including the entire fair sex*) regard taking the step to maturity as very dangerous, not to mention difficult. Having first made their domestic livestock dumb, and having carefully made sure that these docile creatures will not take a single step without the go-cart to which they are harnessed, these guardians then show them the danger that threatens them, should they attempt to walk alone. Now this danger is not actually so great, for after falling a few times they would in the end certainly learn to walk...
(emphasis mine, 41)

To Gwendolen, the feeling that she is forsaken by Daniel results in her spectacular grief. What is perhaps disconcerting for readers is the sense that the “spoiled child” would not have been as troubled by his departure, and yet the egoist Gwendolen had no aspiration to enlightenment, no desire to “be one of the best of women, who make others glad they were born” (*DD* 810). Daniel takes Gwendolen in hand and endeavors to encourage her to strive, and yet he does not desire to “make her dumb.” The day and a half of weeping which Paris and others read as evidence of either hysteria or desolation may be read as Gwendolen’s “falling a few times” before finally recognizing that she can indeed walk alone. Reading *Daniel Deronda* is a many-sided experience. Sharing in Eliot’s detached perspective,¹⁷ which pretends only to see each character’s point of view, allows us to attain to a vantage point which is nearly impossible to reach, and certainly impossible to maintain. It is an ideal to which Gwendolen is called without the benefit of the crutch we readers possess in the novel itself. We cannot wonder that she stumbles; her letter shows she has begun to regain her balance.

Notes

¹ Of course, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* is George Eliot's last piece of fiction; its particular fictiveness, however, is of a different kind than the major fiction I am referring to and so is outside the purview of this study. Similarly, I will be paying less attention to *The Lifted Veil* and to *Scenes of Clerical Life*, particularly in regards to my later efforts to classify Eliot's characters according to their relative "egoism" and "heroism."

² Much of the language employed, in particular my use of "substantive" vs. "regulative," here has been shaped by my reading of Thomas' *Cultivating Victorians*, which I will treat in greater depth in the first part of this thesis. His elegant and instructive reading of Kant, Wittgenstein, Mill, and Arnold is crucial to this study.

³ I am making this claim despite other critics' conclusions to the contrary. Bernard Paris notably insists that many of Eliot's egoists are in some way "saved," but in my view none achieve the kind of "many-sided" disposition that Gwendolen does.

⁴ See in particular Paris (*Rereading* 179-180) for a summary of critical responses to *Deronda* ranging from Leavis' proclamation about "the astonishing badness of the [Deronda] half," and Henry James' and Harold Bloom's description of *Deronda* as a "prig" and an impossibly idealized type.

⁵ Suzanne Graver's work on the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, or "local, organic, agricultural communities," and "urban, heterogeneous, industrial societies," very cumulatively studies the tension in Eliot's fiction between these "ideal types" or "standards" which no society completely attains, but which inevitably impinge on one another in a society undergoing extensive change (Graver 14). Graver's study of

community helped to shape my reading of *Daniel Deronda*, particularly insofar as Gwendolen and Daniel appear to be caught between these ideal types of society. Their respective movements from home to casino, from London to countryside, from England to Italy or Palestine, represent in many ways Eliot's ambivalence about the alienating or atomizing tendencies of *Gesellschaft*, and the tendency of *Gemeinschaft* to constrain sympathy for others outside one's community.

⁶ See Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*.

⁷ Anderson's work on the tension in George Eliot between country life and city life, or tradition and cosmopolitanism, draws heavily on Suzanne Graver's *George Eliot and Community* in which Graver analyzes the competing ideals of *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* in Eliot's fiction.

⁸ In fairness to Hadley, it must be noted that she does not attempt to fully respond to Thomas or Anderson in this brief essay—she begs her readers' forbearance until her forthcoming book, *Living Liberalism*, is published. She promises that it constitutes a more complete response to these critical retrievals (Hadley n6).

⁹ Critiques which argue for Gwendolen's lack include Eileen Sypher's "Resisting Gwendolen's 'Subjection': *Daniel Deronda's* Proto-Feminism," in which Sypher argues that the novel's open-endedness is disturbing insofar as "Gwendolyn's' interior life has not been enriched through her experiences" and that she is hardly "a serene, self-contained figure in an alternative domestic arena" (521).

¹⁰ For readings which similarly read the novel through a psychoanalytic lens, see Stone and Tromp. Stone interestingly concludes that Gwendolen's return to her woman-

centered home may be the best hope for her psychological recovery, though her emphasis on Gwendolen's 'hysterics' is opposite the ethical approach I am favoring.

¹¹ In his excellent "'The One Poor Word' in *Middlemarch*, Dwight Purdy makes a careful study of when and how the term "poor" is employed. He insists that Eliot apportions the adjective in order to direct readerly sympathy and to convey irony in equal portions. The characters who are most often described as "poor" are the ones with whom it is most difficult to sympathize. It is interesting to note that the term is not once used in *Daniel Deronda* to describe the villainous Grandcourt.

¹² Nancy Henry reads the pawning of the necklace and Daniel's redeeming it for her as the first in a series of miscommunications between the two. Characterizing Gwendolen's desperate attempts to barter as laudable and Daniel's actions as presumptuous, Henry insists that Daniel "is not prepared to understand why a woman might take the extreme measure of cutting herself off from her familial treasures in order to achieve financial independence, and in this respect his misunderstanding of Gwendolen foreshadows his incomprehension of his mother when he finally comes to learn her story" (Henry 112). Reading Daniel's interference as presumptuous since it fails to recognize Gwendolen's motivations misses the allegorical intent of his actions.

¹³ It is interesting to note here that this little 'murder' of the canary constitutes one of the very few 'first-degree' murders in Eliot's major fiction. Though Baldassare, Tito's father in *Romola*, strangles him in vengeance, it is most common that murders are the result of failures to act: Thus, Bulstrode fails to tell his maid not to give Raffles any more brandy in *Middlemarch*, Hetty Sorrel abandons her baby and doesn't return in time

to rescue it, Gwendolen fails to toss the rope to Grandcourt in time, and Maggie forgets to feed Tom's pet rabbits.

¹⁴ Cf. Shumaker, and Bernstein. Bernstein's reading is troubling insofar as it equates the evil of Grandcourt with Eliot's desire to punish harshly the egoist Gwendolen. This insistence on Eliot's almost vindictive treatment of the character to whom she shows so much narrative (if not authorial) sympathy does not seem consonant with Eliot's overall aesthetic intent. A kind of simplistic mythology about the homely Eliot's hatred of beautiful women seems to pervade this reading. Bernstein insists on a kind of identical relation between the nature of Gwendolen's confession and Leonora's. Shumaker's essay similarly reads the confessional moments as failing to heal the women involved.

¹⁵ In her "Feeling as One Ought About Fanny Price," Nina Auerbach makes a brilliant case for the monstrosity that is Fanny Price in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. Though Eliot's other great heroines are not like Fanny Price, they certainly struggle and are sympathetic, Gwendolen constitutes an even further removal from Eliot's tendency to lionize the innately virtuous woman. She may best be described as the anti-Fanny Price and Eliot's awareness of how much more likeable a character like Gwendolen is *because* she doesn't always feel or do as she *ought* is an interesting commentary on readers' sympathetic tendencies. In her *Vocation and Desire*, Dorothea Barrett reads Gwendolen as Eliot's coming to terms with her own temptations and egoism, as a kind of self-recognition and self-proclamation which marked her acceptance of herself. Though I disagree with Barrett's reading insofar as I find it impossible to read *Daniel Deronda* without the sense that Eliot is desperately trying to alter her heroine, I applaud Barrett's

refusal to read the beautiful egoist as being meanly punished by the cerebral and unattractive Eliot.

¹⁶ While I am not in complete agreement with During's critique of sympathy, her essay cogently expresses the utility of Daniel's departure from Gwendolen in the final stage of her moral recovery.

¹⁷ In her review of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, Eliot endeavors to defend the novel from claims that it is immoral. She calls the novel "many-sided," and notes that its failure to moralize does not make it immoral, but rather calls on its readers to judge for themselves, and to share in its detached point-of-view. I believe Eliot attempts the same form in her fiction, but that her use of sympathy to guide her readers is more coercive, and yet still allows her readers some agency in judgment (Eliot "Essays").

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