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"Dark smiles": Race and desire in the works of George Eliot

Carroll, Alicia Jane, Ph.D.

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"DARK SMILES":

RACE AND DESIRE IN THE WORKS OF GEORGE ELIOT

by

ALICIA CARROLL

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fullfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1995

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Anne Humphreys

Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

"DARK SMILES":
RACE AND DESIRE IN THE WORKS OF GEORGE ELIOT

by

Alicia Carroll

Adviser: Professor Fred Kaplan

In Victorian fiction prior to George Eliot, the self and the desirous "other" are often divided into English and non-English pairs: Emily Brontë's Catherine and her alter ego, the gypsy Heathcliff; Dickens' dream of blonde virtue, Oliver Twist, and his nightmare of dark acquisitive evil, the Jew Fagin; Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre and her biting, "dark double," Bertha Mason. Exploring a theory of racial "fusion," George Eliot's writing is more likely to combine self and other in one figure. Her conflation of racial, cultural, and ethnic identities makes a complex challenge to historical literary representations of otherness. If the nineteenth-century novel is, as Edward Said or Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues, an agent of political power in general, of imperialism in particular, Eliot's contribution to the form, her "representation of England to the English" introduces a criticism of the status quo's separation of self and other, subject and native. Especially subverting stereotypes of "white" innocence and "dark" desire, Eliot's multicultural characters like the dark "gypsy," Maggie Tulliver, or the Jewish-English gentleman, Daniel Deronda, struggle to voice the desires which other Victorian novels seek to silence.

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For his careful reading and constant, patient accessibility, I must first acknowledge the role my adviser, Fred Kaplan, played in the writing of this dissertation. As a writer, scholar, and teacher, his example has and will continue to guide my career. I must also thank N. John Hall, who has been an interested reader from the initial proposal to the completion of my dissertation. Anne Humpherys also provided valuable comments on the dissertation which are much appreciated. My personal debts are equally deep. I have to thank my family of artists and painters for their commitment to my education in both the cultural and academic worlds. Without the childhood full of art classes, museums, and interesting books which my parents, Davis and Valera, provided, Elizabeth, John, and I might never have known of the life of the mind. Friends and teachers like Tom Lewis and A.J. Prosser have also actively supported the writing of this dissertation and I thank them. Finally, the contribution of my husband Robert Kulick has been invaluable. This dissertation is dedicated to him.

Hiram Powers, *The Greek Slave* (1841 - 1847).

*This photograph of Hiram Powers' *The Greek Slave* appears on p. 97 of Jean Fagan Yellin's *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture*.

Preface

In 1851, at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London, the American artist Hiram Powers exhibited his life-size sculpture of a slim, idealized female nude, *The Greek Slave*. Wrought of the whitest marble, the sculpture is a powerfully iconographic representation of race and desire. The statue's head is shamefully, gracefully, inclined. Her eyes are averted from the Turkish marketplace in which she stands for sale. A paradigm of modest, sexually vulnerable, "innocent white womanhood," the image of the Greek slave was used to raise sympathy (and money) for the defense of Greece against the Ottoman Empire (hooks 159). The white Greek woman sold into the slavery of the Turkish harem was a metaphor for the sacking of classical values; her sexual violation by the "bestial" Turks represented the ultimate desecration of the values of Western civilization itself (Douglass 110). Ironically, the sympathetically depicted image of the Greek slave was used simultaneously to raise money for the abolitionist cause in England and America and to raise money for Greek independence in the American South. The perversity of slavery was dramatized because the slave

was white. Her sexual violation seemed the more pernicious because the slave-owner was dark, a Turk or "Mussulman," an "infidel" or exotic other. Indeed, the statue itself, so idealized as to be literally smoothed of the marks of adult sexuality, is de-eroticized, almost prim and chaste in its cool marble purity. But, though the slave is not erotic, her viewer is. The experience of desire belongs not to the slave woman but to the viewer who, in the act of looking, mimics the role of the buyer, the "cruel," lascivious Turk (Douglass 110). When one approaches the statue, one steps into a representation of the Turkish marketplace; one also encounters the boundaries of nineteenth-century sex roles. Chastity and non-desirous innocence are powerfully represented as white and female; desire is as powerfully represented, in the mind's eye of the viewer, as "dark," infidel, and male.[1]

Accompanied by John Chapman, a man with whom she had shared some degree of sexual intimacy, Marian Evans visited the Great Exhibition where *The Greek Slave* was displayed; the visit articulates the vast abyss between such contemporary Victorian representations of sexuality and actual sexual practice. One wonders what Evans, who later wrote of a Greek slave and her pseudo-Oriental, English owner, made of the statue. The impression, if indeed Eliot ever recorded one, is gone, ephemeral as the cut leaves of Chapman's diary wherein he recorded the details of his simultaneous "love" for Marian Evans, his wife Susanna, and

their governess Elizabeth Tilley (Haight 94). Far from the image of white female innocence and dark male desire, the lives of these Victorians speak to the subtext of sexual transgression which was very much alive under the rigorously drawn morality of their day. Transgressing that morality in her fiction, as she had in life, George Eliot became deeply engaged in representations of desire which were often, like Powers' statue, informed by the presence of race. Questioning and subverting the status quo of "white" innocence and "dark" desire, Eliot's characters refuse the simple clarity of Powers' cultural icon. Indeed, in Eliot's work the trope of non-desirous white innocence is often washed over by darkness. Characters "dilute" their whiteness through their desire for exotic others, leaving England for the East as in *Daniel Deronda* or marrying "alien blood" as in *Middlemarch* (*Middlemarch* 441, 527). Eliot's dark-haired, black-eyed heroines, like the "gypsies" Maggie Tulliver of *The Mill on the Floss* or Fedalma of *The Spanish Gypsy*, are "dark," "rough" questions posed to the smooth assumptions of dominant cultural images like *The Greek Slave* (*The Mill on the Floss* 155).

Studying the assumptions of Victorian notions of race necessitates an explanation of my own use of the term and of the terms "cultural other" and "exoticism." Older in English culture than Desdemona and Othello, the idea of race is a trope that the modern reader now knows exists far less in blood than in history and culture. The dangers of the

trope, as Henry Louis Gates Jr. argues, are still too much with us (5). For that reason, it is essential to note here that the terms "race" or "blood" are always used with the knowledge that they are particular constructs. In studying their particularities, George Eliot's particularities, and those of her contemporaries, I do not, as Gates urges, consistently demarcate my awareness of race or blood as cultural constructs with quotation marks. I am assuming that, particularly since the publication of Gates' landmark work on the subject, *"Race," Writing and Difference*, I am addressing a community which is also aware of the socially, culturally, and historically constructed aspects of race and blood.

Likewise, in my use of the terms "cultural other," or "other," I write from a perspective which recognizes that otherness is also a construct of a dominant culture, here the culture of Victorian England. In using these terms I wish to invoke and emphasize the sense of distance and strangeness with which Victorians viewed non-English peoples. I do not share George Eliot's sense of distance, but wish to stress the process whereby her culture created standards of normalcy and deviancy. In using the term "exotic," I recognize that it is also a term which comes from a particular frame of reference, here from within the British empire, and looks outward. As with the word "Oriental," the "exotic" is the result of a cultural process which relies on particular stereotypes applied by Westerners to

the East. In my use of these words, as in my use of the terms "race" and "blood," I do not demarcate their socially constructed quality with quotation marks. Since the publications of Edward Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, the very denotations of these words have changed to include an awareness of the racial stereotypes and false assumptions which the British and Westerners have applied to people of other cultures and races.

Finally, George Eliot, a white, British woman, writes of what she perceives as racial darkness or otherness in order to explicate the absence of sexual desire in the lives of white men and women. Even as she practices "reverse Orientalism" or reverse racism and discrimination, where value is ultimately placed on the other over the English, Eliot takes liberties with those others themselves, appropriating their stories for her own. She is, perhaps like all of us, self-interested. I do not think, however, that her interests are ultimately in conflict with those of other peoples or races, for they seek a way to live without the rigid boundaries, the cultural prisons, which bind us all.

Endnotes

[1]For the history of Powers' *The Greek Slave*, and for my quotations from Frederick Douglass' 1850 letter to *The North Star*, I am indebted to Jean Fagan Yellin's discussion of the statue in her book, *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL PAGE ii

ABSTRACT iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS iv

ILLUSTRATION Hiram Powers' "The Greek Slave" v

PREFACE vi-xi

TABLE OF CONTENTS xii

CHAPTER I
George Eliot and the Trope of Race 1-41

CHAPTER II
"Dark Smiles":
Victorian Anthropology, George Eliot, and the Gypsies 42-99

CHAPTER III
The Giaour's Campaign:
Seduction and the Other in *Felix Holt: the Radical* 100-147

CHAPTER IV
"A Queer Genealogy":
Ethnicity and Sexuality in *Middlemarch* 148-179

CHAPTER V
Arabian Nights:
"Make-Believe," Exoticism, and Desire
in *Daniel Deronda* 180-234

BIBLIOGRAPHY 235-240

Chapter I

George Eliot and the Trope of Race

Like the majority of Victoria's subjects, Mary Ann Evans encountered people of other cultures and races mainly in books. Though multi-lingual and cosmopolitan, liberal and internationalist, the central figure of a group of Victorian intelligentsia which included the early social scientists Herbert Spencer and George Henry Lewes, George Eliot nonetheless arrived at an idea of racial difference through a process remarkably similar to that of any other well-read Victorian. For her, as for Dickens, Thackeray, or the Brontës, Byron's *Oriental Tales*, Scott's *Ivanhoe*, E.W. Lane's translations of *The Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, George Borrow's *The Zincali; or an Account of the Gypsies of Spain*, Goethe's *Parliaments of East and West*, and Shakespeare's *Othello* comprised a vision of people from other races or cultures that was highly mythologized and distinctly Western-European. Often implicitly, often quite consciously and deliberately, such texts, along with an entrenched cultural mythology of otherness and the writings of the new fields of sociology and anthropology, were to inform each of Eliot's many literary representations of otherness.[1] As in Byron or in Herbert Spencer's writings, the other of darker skin or different blood, the African, the Gypsy, the Oriental, or the Jew, were perceived as

intriguing, often deviant figures who represented rebellion, aggression, and sensuality. Like the "mystic gypsy" woman whom Mary Ann Evans herself had encountered as a child, such figures in her adult fiction and poetry often lure narrative itself away from the well-worn paths of English domestic fiction (Eliot "Brother and Sister Sonnets" 428). The "dark smiles" of her gypsy women, Caterina Sarti, Maggie Tulliver, and Fedalma, or the "dangerously mixed blood" of Will Ladislaw and Daniel Deronda, disrupt the tendency in the Victorian novel to repress or silence sexual or political desire ("Brother and Sister" 428; *Middlemarch* 339). A complex trope developed from the "gypsy changeling" of Eliot's first short stories to the "cursed alien" Will Ladislaw, Eliot's experiment in multiculturalism allowed her to create plots that subvert and question the narrative path towards English domesticity (*Scenes of Clerical Life* 146; *Middlemarch* 527). Indeed, establishing a kinship and identification with cultural others allows Eliot's narrator to articulate what an English character cannot: the unmentionable experiences of sexual desire and pleasure, the pressing need for political change, and the need to revivify the spiritual life of English culture.

Eliot's interest in multiculturalism manifests itself most potently in the problem of intermarriage or miscegenation, what Will Ladislaw calls the "dilution" of English blood through the introduction of "new" blood, literally different blood (441). Eliot struggles with the desire for, and the taboo against, miscegenation through a gallery of

figures who are half-English and half-exotic, who, as objects of desire themselves, represent the process of dilution, change, and social evolution. Caterina Sarti of "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story," Maggie Tulliver of *The Mill on the Floss*, Fedalma of *The Spanish Gypsy*, Harold Transome of *Felix Holt*, Will Ladislaw of *Middlemarch*, and finally Daniel Deronda, each experience a kinship with another race or culture. Renowned, or infamous, since the publications of *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss*, for "conveying throughout the body of her fiction the force of sensual appetites," Eliot "seems more aware of the joys of libido" than Dickens or Thackeray (Polhemus 180). This is clear, as Robert Polhemus argues, in her sensuous descriptions of landscape or rural life -- Hetty Sorrel making butter in the dairy, Maggie Tulliver walking in the Red Deeps with Philip Wakem. "Blocked from [representing] anatomy," Eliot describes such scenes "amorously and draws implicit comparisons between [them] and the erotic body" (Polhemus 181). If the Victorian writer was blocked from representing the anatomy of the English body, however, she or he might represent the anatomy of the cultural other without fear of moral reprisal. In the nineteenth-century, the African, the Gypsy, the Jew, and the Oriental were all legitimate "subjects" for examination, taxonomy, dissection, and literary representation. Transposing elements of Scheherezade's Orient or Moorish Spain into English narratives and literally into the blood of English characters allows Eliot to attempt to resist, sometimes successfully, sometimes

unsuccessfully, a pervasive "cultural frigidity" which effects both male and female experiences of desire and sexual pleasure in the English novel (Polhemus 187).

In perceiving the ethnically different as exotic and sensual, and in eroticizing the characteristics of other peoples and races, Eliot mirrors a tendency in Victorian culture that takes great liberties with reality. In nineteenth-century England, Edward Said notes, the East (Africa, Egypt, Palestine, Persia), became "an encyclopedia of exotic display and a playground for" English and European scrutiny (*Orientalism* 161). Orientalists such as Edward Lane, the translator of Eliot's edition of *Arabian Nights*, viewed themselves as moral and Christian in opposition to barbaric, often licentious others. As in Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, an important book on the subject of "the conflict of races" for George Eliot, the Oriental other is heavily eroticized (*Selected Essays* 380). Paradoxically a collection of Eastern or Oriental stereotypes, Rebecca, the "lovely Jewess," is described with a visual abandon that is in sharp contrast to Scott's representation of the cool Anglo Rowena:

> Her form was exquisitely symmetrical, and was shown to advantage by a sort of Eastern dress, which she wore according to the fashion of the females of her nation. Her turban of yellow silk suited well with the darkness of her complexion. The brilliancy of her eyes, and the profusion of her sable tresses, which, each arranged in its own little spiral of twisted curls, fell down upon

> as much of a lovely neck and bosom as a simarre of the richest Persian silk ... permitted to be visible. It is true, that of the golden and pearl-studded clasps which closed her vest from the throat to the waist, the three uppermost were left unfastened on account of the heat, which something enlarged the prospect to which we allude. (*Ivanhoe* 83).

In her Persian veil and turban, Rebecca is a representative of the warm, alluring East; she brings its heat and perceived sensuality to cold England. Scott's portrayal of Rebecca clearly reflects the eroticism of difference. Having very little contact with real Jews, Arab, Gypsies, or Africans, Eliot (like Scott, Dickens, and Shakespeare) creates similarly eroticized images of otherness in her texts.

Behind the sexual mythology of difference which Victorians created and institutionalized as fact in their fiction and other works, lies a wealth of information, confusion, and fear about English sexuality itself. Both Eliot's attraction to miscegenation and her wariness of it are based on Victorian concerns about the sexuality of her own people and the people of other cultures and races. Versed in contemporary anthropological "discoveries" about the bodies and sexual practices of other peoples, convinced of the then-common belief that ethnicity could be linked to body type, character, and morality, Eliot's use of the cultural other reflects contemporary anthropological and medical texts where others serve as a basis for comparison to English cul-

ture[2]. That comparison inevitably reflects the "civilized" self-containment and harnessed productivity of English men and both the absence of sexual desire (a destructive, non-productive energy) and the presence of fecundity (a positive, reproductive energy) in English women. Constructing a medical mythology which supported such beliefs, the English medical profession created a non-desirous female and a desirous male. William Acton, a mid-Victorian surgeon, explains the myth with the unquestionable emphasis of a medical fact: "The majority of women (happily for them) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind.... What men are habitually, women are only exceptionally" (Girouard 107).

This stereotype is clear again in *Ivanhoe*, which represents both the social construct of exoticism and its double victimization of English women and cultural others. If the Jewish Rebecca is depicted as overtly erotic, her English counterpart is modeled on Dr. Acton's frigid ideal. A "Saxon beauty," she is even the more striking to the returning crusaders because she "differs" from "the Eastern sultanas" (44). Like Rebecca's, Rowena's beauty exists in direct relation to her ethnicity and class status. "Exquisitely fair" and blue-eyed, her English, aristocratic body is largely unmentionable and inaccessible, literally veiled (45). Like alabaster in her whiteness, she is as cold to the touch. Dressed, as Gwendolen Harleth will also be, in "pale sea-green," Rowena, with her bare arms and flaxen hair, is made of water or ice, not fire (45). Her

bed chamber, richly decorated with tapestry and white ivory, is frigid. Its "rich hangings [shake] to the night blast" while the "torches stream sideways" from the cold air that permeates the castle (60). The lady Rowena, for all her status, is clearly imprisoned by her own cultural stereotypes. The blonde, blue-eyed Ivanhoe is equally chaste, cool, and, most importantly, sexually disciplined. In the backlash of exoticism, so clearly if simplistically delineated by Scott's frigid and overtly sensual characters, punishment falls upon both the victimized and the victimizing cultures. The latter creates an idealized chastity and the absence of sexual feelings. It is these ideals which Eliot resists, disrupts, and subverts in her novels which blend characteristics of Englishness with otherness.

1.

Eliot's primary interest in the trope of the cultural other lies ultimately as much in the study and critique of Englishness as it does in otherness. Her technique is, then, like Eliot herself, both conventional and unconventional, conservative and radical. What most other Victorian authors expunge from their texts -- the disposals, for example, of Bertha Rochester or Heathcliff from the Brontës' novels -- Eliot embraces. Her use of the racial stereotypes of darkness, sensuality, and aggression most often remain vivid forces at the ends of the novels. If they do not,

their absence is tragic, like the death of Maggie Tulliver at the end of *The Mill on the Floss*. More subtle in this regard than the Brontës, Dickens, Thackeray, or Disraeli, Eliot's representations of otherness complicate what students of nineteenth-century multi-culturalism or imperialism have come to see as the Victorian status quo. Eliot's technique presents a complex challenge to the readings of Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, both of whom see the fiction of the Victorian period, especially the period of imperialist domination during which Eliot wrote, as supportive and reflective of the values of empire. Expunging the text of the deviant and foreign other Fagin, for example, allows the high Englishness of Oliver Twist to replace his Gothic otherness and so re-establishes the value of Englishness. Patrick Brantlinger excludes *Daniel Deronda*'s "reverse Orientalism" from this pattern in Victorian fiction, recognizing that the novel's "romantic nationalism" works "against a host of what might be called provincial nationalisms, including the simple nationalist/racist proposition that it is better to be an Englishman than a Jew" ("Nations and Novels" 268). To Brantlinger, Said, and Spivak, Eliot's "earlier novels" make no such propositions. Aside from *Deronda*, the exotic figures who intrude on Eliot's earlier texts are discounted. Indeed, their presence is overshadowed by an entrenched critical perception of Eliot as a novelist of the English Midlands and provincial life.

The image of George Eliot as a Midland novelist is owed

to her lyrical and often nostalgic portraits of country life, of hedgerows and manor houses glowing subtly under a "pale English sunshine" (*Felix Holt* 582). Eliot's sense of nation, particularly her "affectionate joy in our native landscape, which is one deep root of our national life," mingles "certain conservative prepossessions" with the influences of "our midland scenery" (*Theophrastus Such* 25). But even at the beginning of her career, when her "conservative" attachment to England and to Englishness was pronounced, Eliot was interested in the idea of the "fusion" of races. Half-resentful, half-admiring of Disraeli's "windy eloquence" and his exploitation and glamorization of his own "Oriental" heritage, Eliot used his "theory of races" as a platform for her own (*Letters* I:246):

> Extermination up to a certain point seems to be the law for the inferior races -- for the rest, fusion both for physical and moral ends. It appears to me that the law by which privileged classes degenerate from continued intermarriage must act on a larger scale in deteriorating whole races. The nations have always been kept apart until they have sufficiently developed their idiosyncrasies and then some great revolutionary force has been called into action by which the genius of a particular nation becomes a common mind of humanity. (*Letters* I:246)

In this candid letter to John Sibree, the twenty-eight year old Mary Ann Evans speaks frankly about the role racial "fusion," miscegenation, or intermarriage, plays in building

a "common humanity." She fears the degenerating effects of inbreeding without the dilution of other blood. This is the cultural dilemma enacted in "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" in which a constitutionally "delicate," "white and blond" aristocrat is attracted to the vivacious and passionate "black-eyed" Italian, Caterina Sarti (164, 136). As in that story, in this early letter Evans reveals her aesthetic and sexual attraction to otherness as well. "Looking at the matter aesthetically, our ideal of beauty is never formed on the characteristics of a single race. I confess the types of the 'pure races,' however handsome, always impress me disagreeably" (*Letters* I: 246). From Caterina Sarti to Daniel Deronda, beauty is always dark in Eliot's fiction. The dark figure, moreover, is most often a "fusion" of several races and cultures. Caterina is an Italian "gypsy" child, nurtured like Brontë's Heathcliff in an English country house. Maggie Tulliver is also imagined as a "dark gypsy" or a "mulatto," nurtured amidst the pink and white Tullivers, while Fedalma, of *The Spanish Gypsy*, is in fact a gypsy raised in a European home. Harold Transome of *Felix Holt: The Radical* absorbs his seductive qualities from his coming of age in Smyrna. Will Ladislaw and Daniel Deronda, both English and Continental and both possibly Jewish, complete the trope of racial fusion. Indeed, Eliot carefully constructs their exoticism, associating Ladislaw with gypsies and Deronda with the beautiful Prince Camaralzaman of the *Arabian Nights*. The element of racial contrast between the exotic figure and an English or European lover is often

eroticized in Eliot's fiction. In "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story," she is careful to emphasize "the striking contrast" in Caterina and her lover's "colouring": "He with his exquisite outline and rounded fairness, like an Olympian god; she dark and tiny, like a gypsy changeling" (146).

Apparently, Eliot was drawn to the beauty of otherness. If she could not admire *Coningsby* or *Tancred* themselves, or Disraeli's theory that "the Jews are the only pure Caucasian race" (*Coningsby* Bk IV Ch 10)), she found their exoticism and sensuality pleasing. In *Tancred*, the illustrations of Oriental costume struck her as "beautiful" in comparison to "ours [which] are execrable" (*Letters* I: 246). Such comparisons, however, immediately provoke Eliot's nationalistic and racial anxiety. In her letter to John Sibree, Eliot denounces Disraeli's "exult[ation]" over the idea of a "fellowship of race" (*Letters* I: 246). Using decidedly anti-semitic language, she argues against exclusive racial claims to "superiority" (246). Much that is culturally Jewish, she suggests, "seems to have been borrowed from the other Oriental tribes. Everything *specifically* Jewish is of a low grade" (247). Here the "Gentile nature" of a still provincial Mary Ann Evans "kicks most resolutely against any assumption of superiority in the Jews" (246). Her belief in the healthy inter-breeding and "dilution" of the races collides with her own dislike of Disraeli, which is voiced in the language of ethnic prejudice. The struggle for a "common humanity," the desire to repeal racial exclusivity, is qualified by Eliot's own nationalism and a still aggressive

Christian bias as well as by a desire to protect the "genius" of her own particular culture from the process of intrusion and exclusion which must accompany racial "fusion." Most of all, Eliot's theory of racial fusion provokes the author's interest in and her anxiety over sexual liaisons between English and other peoples. No sooner does Eliot urge that fusion than she qualifies it.

After asserting her theory of racial fusion as an ultimate celebration of the "common humanity" of man, Eliot falters. Writing to Sibree, she imagines what was, for the English Victorian thinker, the most extreme representation of difference, the African. For Eliot, racial "fusion" is to be accomplished primarily through miscegenation. Considering the African body as she considers Jewish culture, she confronts the reality of racial difference:

> The Negroes certainly puzzle me - all the other races seem plainly destined to extermination or fusion not excepting even the "Hebrew-Caucasian." But the Negroes are too important physiologically and geographically for one to think of their extermination, while the repulsion between them and the other races seems too strong for fusion to take place to any great extent. (*Letters* I:246).

Here, as in Eliot's fiction and poetry, the idea of racial and cultural fusion is always disrupted and "puzzled" by the problem of perceived stereotypes of difference and the "repulsion" supposedly bred by difference. The gradual process of racial fusion, occurring through miscegenation,

prompts both repulsion and fascination throughout Eliot's canon when a cultural other is made both "beautiful" and threatening. The "little mulatter" Maggie Tulliver contains elements within her, particularly an aggression bordering on "demonism," which Eliot strives to keep separate from the rest of the text through her insistence on Maggie's chastity (*The Mill on the Floss* 61; Auerbach 382). Likewise, the Jew Daniel Deronda is rigorously chaste, preferring "the beauty of the closed lips" to the beauty of the overtly sensual (213). But, often absently singing from Rossini's *Otello*, Deronda is also linked to Shakespeare's Moor and to his threatening aggression and sexual desire. Paradoxically, in both novels, as in the rest of Eliot's canon, it is the sexual attraction between these others and their English objects of desire which drive narrative forward.

Mary Ann Evans' letter to John Sibree possesses an unguarded candor which is, of course, absent from the published work of George Eliot. It is the letter of a provincial and relatively unsophisticated young woman who within a year would leave England for Europe and embrace the freedom of becoming "a foreigner on the earth" (*Letters* I:335). Leaving England, Evans would also leave behind her ideas of "Jewish inferiority" and English superiority. The letter is of course illuminating. It reveals the extent to which Eliot had inherited a notion of race that involved ideas of superiority, inferiority, fusion, and extermination. Her casual suggestion that those "inferior" will be "exterminated" is chilling. Like Conrad's Kurtz, Eliot's

early excursion into the heart of ethnic difference results in fascination, fear, and repulsion. All of those elements are paired with a sense of her own nation's superiority and power. Deeply troubling to the late twentieth-century mind, Eliot's words are those of the colonialist, and that inheritance is arguably profound. It is still at work in the career which began shortly after 1848, as the young woman of the midlands became gradually more and more disenchanted with England's cultural arrogance and militarism. During those years, Eliot corresponded with Harriet Beecher Stowe, abhorred slavery and colonialism, and read widely in the histories of other cultures. By the time she wrote *Middlemarch*, with its purportedly Jewish object of desire, Will Ladislaw, her racial value system had become prejudiced toward the other as it once had been prejudiced against it. By *Daniel Deronda* and *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, it is the English who are portrayed as culturally "inferior" and it is English values which Eliot sets about to "exterminate." Still thinking like a colonialist, Eliot seeks to conquer her own nation. Retaining some of the usages of race based in "the dubious pseudoscience of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries," Eliot uses tropes of racial difference to criticize the dominant English culture (Gates 4).[3]

Indeed, by the time George Eliot wrote the 1879 *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, the conservative "prepossessions" of her early "Midland" writings are viewed from a cosmopolitan distance. From that perspective, the narrator

self-consciously "checks" his nostalgia (28). He is now well-aware that "this England of my affections is half-visionary -- a dream in which things are connected according to my well-fed, lazy mood, and not at all by the multitudinous links of graver, sadder fact, such as belong everywhere to the story of human labor" (28). The "sober harmonies" of the English landscape reflect sometimes grimly sober truths (27). "My father's England," that "elder England" before the reform process began in earnest, possessed meadows unsullied by the locomotive, but it also possessed "frankly saleable boroughs," prisons without water, "bloated, idle charities," and, above all, "a blank ignorance of what we, its posterity, should be thinking of it" (26). Purportedly acting as editor of *The Impressions*, Eliot is unmistakably present. Her narrative voice's distance from its subject is caught between the voice's own nationalism and its frustration with the process and fruits of reform. Nostalgic for its own midland nativity, the narrative voice is removed from the very subject of nativity and national identity itself. Theophrastus, like Eliot, leaves the geographic space of the Midlands. While he "cherish[es his] childish loves -- the memory" of home -- the adult narrative voice is freed in the act of exile:

> I have learned to care for foreign countries, for literatures foreign and ancient, for the life of Continental towns dozing round old cathedrals, for the life of London, half sleepless with eager thought and strife, with indigestion or with hunger; and now my

> consciousness is chiefly of the busy, anxious metropolitan sort.... I belong to the 'Nation of London.' (28)

In this position of "voluntary exile," Theophrastus, like George Eliot, creates a narrative voice that acts as both outsider and insider. Having constructed herself as "a foreigner on the earth" (*Letters* 1851), Eliot valued the perspective which internationalism lent to English narrative. Unlike the distinctly British works of Dickens, Emily Brontë, or Austen, this perspective allows a great fluidity of geographic and metaphoric cultural movement in her texts, permitting her to be both politically and geographically "out" of England. The internationalist perspective is also a commitment to openness. Dickens, Kipling, Trollope, Thackeray, the Brontës, and Wilkie Collins write of the cultural other. But when they do so they clearly elevate Englishness over otherness. In the nineteenth-century novel, "both the writer and the English heroes they portray merely remain fearful of what they cannot understand in other societies" (Street 37). For example, "association with natives" is always morally costly in Kipling (Street 34). In Eliot's fiction, however, that conventional morality of Englishness and otherness is often reversed. Retaining subtle shades of Eliot's early theory of racial difference and the anxious, tentative ideal of racial fusion, Eliot's representations of otherness nonetheless cross the borders of empire to both eroticize and idealize the cultural other.

Eliot's championing of the Jewish people is perhaps the most clear example of her multiculturalism or inter-nationalism. In *Daniel Deronda* and *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, Eliot's argument for ethnic tolerance and her now expanded theory of ethnic or racial difference is recognizably more sophisticated than the pseudo-scientific discourse of her day. Her essay on the position of the Jews, "The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!" in *Theophrastus Such*, is a frank indictment of English nationalism and racism. The narrative voice identifies with those who have been per-secuted. Its collective "we" is self-critical and the glories of empire are crimes. Moreover, the essay celebrates "diversity" amidst "general sameness," condemning ethnic prejudice as "that grosser mental sloth" which makes people prefer things because "of their likeness" (133). With a remarkably clear-eyed, unsentimental acumen, Eliot extends the British preference for sameness to its propensity for colonization. Valuing its own national heritage, England has not "recogniz[ed] a corresponding attachment to nationality as legitimate in every other people, and [does not] understand that its absence is a privation of the greatest good" (137). Guilty of "arrogant notions of our own superiority," the English are "a coloniz-ing people, and it is we who have punished others" (136). Remarkably consistent with Edward Said's theory of imperialism, Eliot's essay also bases the act of coloniza-tion on the colonizers' sense of cultural superiority.

Eliot's critique of imperialism, however, exists very

much in a nineteenth-century context that strongly emphasizes "a feeling of race, a sense of corporate existence, unique in its intensity" (*Theophrastus* 139). It is this feeling of race, particularly its corporate or bodily "intensity," which marks characters like Maggie Tulliver. The feeling and the appearance of ethnic difference motivate her, like Fedalma in *The Spanish Gypsy*, to leave her comfortably "civilized" and narrowly constrained frame of domesticated womanhood. Eliot engages what Henry Louis Gates Jr. calls the "dangerous trope" of ethnic difference in her fiction where the passionate intensity of her gypsy characters, the aggression of her dark women, and the spirituality of her Jewish figures are emphatically outlined as "natural attributes" of "racial character" (5).

In her defense of the Jewish people, as in her reviews and criticisms of Harriet Beecher Stowe's fiction, Eliot also displays her awareness of race as a social, historical, and cultural construct. The Jewish people, she argues, have been persecuted and disparaged. Such treatment "breeds" vice, "cupidity," and "avarice" (141). "Who taught them that?" Theophrastus asks, and his answer is Christian (particularly Protestant) European men, "those who hold power" (141). Nonetheless, it is crucial that in literature such "vice" and "avarice" be represented. In the fiction of Stowe, whom Eliot much admired, she nonetheless deplored the "artistic defects" of representing an oppressed people without examining "the Nemesis lurking in the vices of the oppressed" (*Selected Essays* 381). Objecting to Stowe's

"absence of any proportionate exhibition of the Negro character in its less amiable phases," Eliot suggests that there is "argumentative suicide involved in [such] one-sidedness" (381). Worse:

> Mrs. Stowe loses by it the most terribly tragic element in the relation of the two races -- the Nemesis lurking in the vices of the oppressed. She alludes to demoralization among the slaves but she does not depict it; and yet why should she shrink from this, since she does not shrink from giving us a full-length portrait of a Legree or a Tom Gordon? (381)

Eliot's commitment to realism will not allow her to endorse the "argumentative suicide" of Uncle Tom or Eliza. Instead, her fictional others are always troubled by the "demoralizing" mark of otherness which they guard against even as they are marked by subtle allusions to their sensuality or "cupidity".

Eliot's belief in a "natural rank" of ethnicity, then, works against the grain of contemporary Victorian writings on race while it is also informed by them. Indeed, Eliot capitalizes on the Victorian belief that cultural others, particularly darker peoples, were more susceptible to "sense, instinct, and passion" than were English people (Lewes). Undoubtedly influenced by George Borrow or Herbert Spencer's pseudo-anthropology, Eliot often wrote of "blood" and its power to determine character. In his essay on George Eliot, Patrick Brantlinger argues that "by 'race' she doesn't mean 'blood' so much as heritage and tradition, more

a cultural than a biological category" (270). Brantlinger allies Eliot with a "modified Lamarckianism that treats tradition as a form of cultural memory codifying partially willed stages of evolution" (270). However, Eliot's reading in George Borrow, Byron's *Oriental Tales*, and *The Thousand and One Arabian Nights* was a powerful conveyance of cultural information that captured the imagination and formed opinion. It was a deeply entrenched belief that "a people with Oriental sunlight in their veins" were bound to feel differently and act differently than Northern Europeans (*Theophrastus Such* 146). As in the cases of Fedalma, Caterina Sarti, Maggie Tulliver, Harold Transome, and Daniel Deronda, the blood in their veins influences and motivates behavior despite their nurture as Europeans. Indeed, it is often "blood," a fluid, powerful presence which prompts Eliot's cultural others to discover and claim their cultural heritage. The "mark" of blood and its biological element is undeniable in Eliot's canon (*Daniel Deronda* 215). What distinguishes her very Victorian, biological notion of race is that she is often moved to reverse discrimination. This is particularly true of her writings on the "natural rank" of the Jews:

> After being subject to this process [of persecution and discrimination] the [Jewish people] have come out of it ... rivaling the nations of all European countries in healthiness and beauty of *physique*, in practical ability, in scientific and artistic aptitude, and in some forms of ethical value. A significant indication

> of their natural rank is seen in the fact that at this moment, the leader of the Liberal party in Germany is a Jew, the leader of the Republican party in France is a Jew, and the head of the Conservative ministry in England is a Jew. (*Theophrastus Such* 141)

Here Eliot has entirely reversed her 1848 objections to the "superiority" of the Jewish people. Arguing against anti-semitism and the English fear of difference, Theophrastus constructs an alter ego to Dickens' Fagin. His construction of a naturally elevated, ethical, physical, and intellectual Jewish racial type is identical to Eliot's cultural agenda in *Daniel Deronda*. There the Jewish protagonist is of such naturally high rank that for many he floats off the novel's pages and out of the reader's interest. "An angel at a dinner party," he is apparently ethereally, transcendentally, complacently, intolerably "good" (Stephens 188). *Apparent* goodness, however, cannot conceal the mark of ethnic difference under which Deronda suffers. Enacting Theophrastus' philosophy of ethnic difference, Deronda himself is dangerously close to Stowe's Uncle Tom: an idealized portrait of moral virtue. His character owes a debt to the process of racial stereotyping, a debt in reverse to the one owed to Fagin, and to the sexual politics of the process of racial stereotyping in particular.

Daniel Deronda's rigorous preference for "the beauty of the closed lips," like the gypsy Fedalma's vow of chastity and Maggie Tulliver's refusal to elope with Stephen Guest, all react to the sexual threat that is inherent in the

other's "dark smile." The process of "fusion" which "makes mankind whole" is not a smooth one in Eliot's narratives ("Brother and Sister Sonnets" 429). Rather, releasing desire between cultural others is difficult, sometimes unachievable. Remarking on "the beauty" of the Jew's "*physique*," as she later would on the gypsy-like Maggie's dark beauty, or the enchanting Oriental beauty of Mirah Cohen and Daniel Deronda, Eliot clearly aligns the other, usually a female or a feminized other, with erotic attraction. In allowing the beauty of the other and making the attraction to the other a force that drives narrative, Eliot is able to address the disruptive presence of desire in a fundamental way. Clearly aware of trends in natural history. Eliot knew that the dominant culture perceived Gypsies, Jews, Orientals, and Africans as more "primitive" or "less evolved" than English people (Street). As such, they possessed a heightened access to "sense, instinct, and passion" (Lewes 28). Heavily mythologized perceptions of the English self created an ideal, highly-"evolved" English woman who was, finally, politically and sexually passive and, above all, domesticated. Her equally evolved male counterpart was warned to fight his own "natural" inclinations toward the lower appetites, and to devote himself to chastity, virtue, progress, industry, and empire. "Washing" her characters over with images of darkness and difference, Eliot allows them to pull away from those traditional values of the Victorian text. Darkening her English men and women, "diluting" their blood, allows her to dilute the

stranglehold of sexual virtue, the compulsory frigidity which then grasped the genre of the novel itself.

Anti-imperialist and sometimes even anti-British, Eliot came to value the ethnic other over ethnic sameness or Englishness. However, as she frequently returns to the memory of the Midlands, she is fully conscious of her audience of English readers and of her own love for the nation itself:

> Let it be admitted that it is a great calamity to the English, as to any other great historic people, to undergo a premature fusion with immigrants of alien blood; that its distinctive national characteristics should be in danger of obliteration by the predominating quality of foreign settlers. I not only admit this, I am ready to unite in groaning over the threatened danger. (*Theophrastus* 147).

It is this "threatened danger" which creates a stress in Eliot's fiction, a conflict between dual allegiances to a culture once valued, a "great historic people," but now, to Eliot, rapidly becoming a nation of philistines. The "danger" is inherent in Eliot's careful avoidance of the "dilution" of Englishness through sexual liaisons between characters of "alien blood" and different classes. While the prophet Theophrastus groaned over the danger of "premature fusion," he accepted, however, that such fusion was an inevitable stage in the evolutionary process. For

> the tendency of things is toward quicker or slower fusion of races. It is impossible to arrest this

> tendency: all we can do is to moderate its course so as to hinder it from degrading the moral status of societies by a too rapid effacement of those national traditions and customs which are the language of the national genius. (148)

The only hope or recourse for the preservation of national culture is in the "striving after fuller national excellence ... the moulding of more excellent individual natives" (148). Attracted to the ideal of "fusion," Eliot also seems determined to stave it off and preserve separate national identities. This is clear in the sexual stalemate between Daniel Deronda and Gwendolen Harleth. As clear, however, is the inevitability of the fusion of races in the remarkably unconflicted narrative in *Daniel Deronda* of the marriage of Catherine Arrowpoint and Herr Klesmer.

The conflict between Eliot's desire for racial fusion and her fear of miscegenation articulates the extent to which race itself is an historical and cultural construct. Eliot urges that the "level" of discourse on the subject of race must be raised above its current state (148). Her attempt to raise that level of discourse, marked by her own belief and investment in the notions of race and blood, allowed her to create the most sophisticated and complex portrait of otherness extant in the nineteenth-century novel. Indeed, increasingly interested, by the end of her career, in the problem of the fusion of races, Eliot reveals in her letters and essays a life-long interest in the novel's depiction of inter-racial conflict and desire. As

early as 1856, in her review of Stowe's *Dred*, Eliot praised "Mrs. Stowe's *invent[ion* of] the Negro novel" (*Selected Essays* emphasis Eliot's 380). She found *Dred* "a novel not only fresh in its scenery and its manners, but possessing that *conflict of races* which Augustin Thierry has pointed out as the great source of romantic interest -- witness *Ivanhoe*" (380). Because they possessed "that grand element -- conflict of races," Stowe's novels of "Negro life" opened up "a national life in all its phases - popular and aristocratic, humorous and tragic, political and religious" (380). Eliot found that the narrative of slavery, of ethnic and racial conflict, opened "in all its phases" the wider, "national life" to the novelist's examination. As she would argue nearly thirty years later in "The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!," the English reveal their own arrogance, philistinism, and militarism in their treatment of peoples of other cultures. In her fiction, where she consistently links otherness to femaleness and the experience of sexual desire, Eliot uses the same trope to explore the "chartered barbarities" of the position of women in English culture (*Selected Essays* 379).

2.

Ultimately, the primary narrative value which Eliot's use of the cultural other disrupts is that of the domesticated woman. Both Millet and Showalter have discussed the

"internal colonization" imposed on all women by patriarchy. Showalter has even described the literature of women as the "literature of the colonized" (197). In colonialist writing, moreover, the image of woman is often a trope for the image of otherness. Patrick Brantlinger, perhaps unwittingly, demonstrates this conflation in his *Rule of Darkness*:

> In British literature from about 1830 to the 1870's, white heroes rarely doubt their ability to tame various geopolitical mistresses -- Africa, the sea, the world -- and to bring civilized order out of the chaos of savage life. (44)

Equating Africa, the sea,and the world beyond England with the "chaos of savage life," Brantlinger also genders that "savage" element as female. The primary other of the "white hero" is woman. Otherness, like Africa, is a "mistress" which must be "tamed" or domesticated. Brantlinger's elision is startlingly and authentically Victorian.

If the English viewed themselves as "superior" to other peoples, the essence of their superiority, it was popularly believed, lay in their domestic status quo (Spencer 757). In Victorian anthropology, the ideal cultural family structure was arranged in a hierarchy ruled by a patriarch who ventured out into the social world to provide for his wife and child. Marriage was to be exclusively monogamous, a legal institution which sanctioned sexual relations. Studying other "primitive" cultures led the Victorians to refute earlier notions that the patriarchal family was, as had been

argued in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a product of "natural law" (Fee 87). In their many case studies of other cultures, Victorians discovered, and named, the existence of exogamy, endogamy, promiscuity, and incest. These practices were "natural" as well as "primitive." The political organizations of such cultures, often matriarchal or matrilineal, might also be natural. In contrast, the domestic and political arrangements of Victorian England were clearly the result of "a long and painful evolutionary struggle away" from nature (Fee 87). Casting aside Rousseau's noble savage, the Victorians envisioned themselves as "the final culmination, the glorious end-product of man's whole social, sexual, and moral evolution from savagery to civilization" (Fee 87).

The particular mark of that moral evolution was the domestication of women. Throughout his *Principles of Sociology*, Herbert Spencer argues that the absence of women from social and political life is the hallmark of a civilized culture. Women in primitive cultures were treated with neither dignity nor respect. "Forced" to work alongside men, they were not ladies. Spencer tallies the evidence. His sources record that in primitive societies women have been observed "fishing, carrying and pitching tents, digging up roots, planting, plowing, and reaping, building houses, climbing trees for small animals, and even hunting and going to war" (Spencer 629). In his own culture it was clear that "women's status" was improved "by limitation of their labors to the lighter kinds" (629). Middle or upper-class European

culture had reached "the pinnacle of female evolution" (Fee 100).

> Women had ascended the pedestal to become "the angels of the home;" no longer sexually or economically exploited, the women were safe in their drawing rooms, far removed from the frightful realities of 'natural' life. Men, of course, were firmly in control. Though the demands of marital fidelity might sometimes conflict with their own 'natural' passions, they too felt far removed from the savage state. And the rewards of civilized life compensated for any lingering sympathy for the primitive freedoms. (Fee 100)

The pseudo-scientific ideology which Fee critiques also invaded Victorian studies of others who might not be actual primitives but who might be closer to primitivism than middle or upper-class Victorians thought themselves to be, for example the working and non-working poor, the Irish, the Gypsy, the Jew, and the Oriental. Living with less "definite, coherent, order" both socially and domestically, they were "anthropological survivals of an earlier stage (Fee 100). Like the savages, the lower classes had simply not advanced very far in evolutionary terms" (Fee 101). To the Victorian sociologist, the working-class hovel looked similar to the African hut or the Indian teepee. As the savage instinct flourished in both those domiciles, so might it flourish at home in England.

Like Maggie Tulliver, the wild, black-haired, black-eyed child of Eliot's second novel, the woman who would tip

the precariously balanced construction of domesticity as the mark of a high state of evolution risked becoming an anthropological "deviant" or evolutionary throwback (Levy 109), like the Irish or the working woman. The outright feminist worked against evolution itself; she was uncivilized, barbaric, and even savage, an "Amazon" rather than a lady. Like the Amazon, she might possess "primitive sexual impulses that threaten to disrupt the order of things" (Levy 111). Linking female disruption to "primitive" sexuality, Victorian pathologists conducted numerous comparisons between "savage and working-class women," and particularly between "savage" women and English prostitutes (Levy 109; Gilman 245). Their dissections confirmed their suspicions; the two were anatomically similar. "The oversexed prostitute and the improperly gendered African female seemed to be at the same stage of genital evolution" (Levy 80). In this sense, the savage herself could be as nearby as the next neighborhood. As Anita Levy argues, all disruptive or desirous English women risk comparison to those "improperly gendered" women of different cultures. All women may have "primitive sexual impulses that threaten to disrupt the order of things. The female nature of the woman's body is her link to these 'other' women and thus it authorizes and shares their subjection" (111).

Allowing the "over-sexed" qualities of cultural others into her texts presents Eliot with a number of narrative and political problems. Unleashed in a Victorian narrative, sexual desire is a disruptive force that threatens family

values and the desirous figure's commitment to community. These conflicts are clear in *The Mill on the Floss*, *The Spanish Gypsy*, *Felix Holt*, and *Daniel Deronda* in all of which the desire of or for the cultural other causes or threatens the disruption of the novel's moral value system. Maggie Tulliver, Gwendolen Harleth, Fedalma, and Esther Lyon, in particular, all recognize that "desire is a regressive force in women's lives"; they "sublimate women's sexual pleasure to meet a passionless and rational ideal" (Kaplan 162). Whether that ideal involves the narrative commitment to class, family, race, or community, Eliot's characters are caught between their desire to experience sexual pleasure and their fear of moral compromise. The threat that they will become "the slave" to another's "voice and touch," losing their rational ideals and values, is the ever present dark side of sexual pleasure in Eliot's canon ("Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" 146). If, as in "the official scientific discourses of otherness, fiction relocates sexual desire within the female" (Levy 77), Eliot refuses to whitewash the conflicts that ensue in the experience of desire. Unlike Dickens or the Brontës, she does not expunge desire by criminalizing or murdering her desirous others.

While Eliot's "other" women clearly inherit stereotypes reserved for women of other races and classes, the narrative voice of George Eliot does not sanction that subjection but celebrates it as she attempts to release women from the narrow plots of domestic fiction. Darkness and beauty are allowed to exist side by side, along with a literal desire

for escape from traditional plots. Embracing the dark, the "savage," and the wild over the fair, the civilized, and the domestic, Eliot's narrators disrupt contemporary Victorian standards of "pink and white" beauty and feminine passivity. From the darkly smiling gypsy woman of the "Brother and Sister Sonnets" to the luxuriously bearded Daniel Deronda, Eliot uses the trope of the beautiful, if threatening, other to bring sensuality, aggression, and disruption into the English novel. The other allows her, like the Victorian anthropologist, to discuss the female or the desirous body. Her literary examinations find beauty where the scientist finds repulsion. In "read[ing] the skin," Eliot does not excoriate but celebrates difference, particularly in dark women like Fedalma, the gypsy, who literally dances into the text and exits it amongst her tribe of "Tall maidens" who lead "a busy, bright-eyed sportive life," wearing clothes which expose "the living curves, the shoulder's smoothness parting the torrent strong of ebon hair" (*The Spanish Gypsy* 180). The eroticism of Eliot's other women disrupts divisions held sacred in most Victorian texts -- the separation of the domesticated self and the desirous other, the colonizer and the colonized.

So powerful is Eliot's link between the desirous female self and otherness that in her two final novels, in which the primary other figures are male, their maleness is washed over with an androgynous femininity. The resident alien of *Middlemarch*, Will Ladislaw, is possessed of a "queer genealogy" which spills over into his sexual identification as

well (527). His face seems always "in preparation for metamorphosis" (155). Indeed, as Dorothea contemplates the portrait of Ladislaw's grandmother, "the colours deep[en], the lips and chin [seem] to get larger ... the face [becomes] masculine" (203). Ladislaw's androgynous beauty, "his frequent blushes, and his transparent girlish complexion" have disturbed some critics (Barret 134). Yet these elements emphasize his ability to slip in and out of genders as he slips in and out of a variety of ethnic and class identities. First introduced through the portrait of his rebellious grandmother, Ladislaw and his queerness of gender and ethnicity cement Eliot's alliance between the imprisoned sexual self and the victimized ethnic self. As both a beautiful, "girl"[ish] man and the object of Dorothea's girlish desire, Ladislaw and Dorothea's attraction to him act as a conspiracy against the silencing of desire in the Victorian novel.

Daniel Deronda, as well, has been described as effeminate. He is compared to Prince Camaralzaman of the *Arabian Nights* who is, significantly, the androgynous twin of his lover Queen Budoor. Described in "the language of heroines," Deronda is "a soft, lovely creature whose clothes enhance his attractiveness" (Munich 23). He too links an unmistakable femininity to otherness. Making the strangely foreign Ladislaw and Deronda both cultural others and objects of desire, Eliot tests the boundaries of Victorian narrative. Her subversion of contemporary anthropological "discoveries" about the bodies and gendering of other

peoples all indict, through contrast and paradox, the denial of sexual desire in English novels. In leaving the boundaries of those narratives and entering other cultures, other races, and even other bodies and genders, Eliot ultimately expresses a troubled resistance to Victorian family values and to its concommittant illustrations of racial difference.

3.

In her book, *Black Looks*, bell hooks asserts that black women "have always known that the socially constructed image of innocent white womanhood relies on the continued production of the racist/sexist sexual myth that black women are not innocent and never can be" (159-160). George Eliot relies on just this constructed image of darkness to "wash" her English or European characters free of a damning frigidity and a compulsory innocence. The weight of the construct of "white womanhood" is so heavy, and so despised, in Eliot's fiction that it is often expressed in images of drowning or in images of chains and slavery. Clasping her pink and white, blue-eyed brother, the dark Maggie Tulliver is pulled under the flood at the novel's end by a suicidal need to prove her "innocence," her virtue. Stretching her arms over her head as if she were, in fact, throwing off manacles, Gwendolen Harleth also feels the weight of her own masquerade as an innocent (*Daniel Deronda* 758). hooks'

statement addresses the black/white absurdity of racial difference, taxonomy, and classification. It also reminds us, chillingly, how little distance separates us from the early nineteenth-century images of Scott's dark, sensual Rebecca, and his blonde, frigid Rowena. From the "other" side of the racial construct of difference, hooks' frustration speaks to the same issues as Eliot's fiction. But it also inscribes an assumption that the "socially constructed image of white womanhood" itself is not as pernicious a "racist/sexual myth" as the one which refuses the sexual innocence of black women. Eliot's canon asserts that, indeed, both constructs deny the full human experience of sexuality.

Perhaps the most philosophic and comprehensive use of race in Victorian fiction, Eliot's multiculturalism remains distinctly shaped by Victorian social science, literature, and cultural mythology. The belief that "natural attributes such as rhythm, athletic ability, cerebration, usury, fidelity, and so forth" are attributed to race is active in Eliot's work where, like other Victorians, she relies on and exploits the concept of "racial character" (Gates 5). The nature of her implementation of "racial character," however, skirts the goals of that system of racial characterization and classification. If that system lends "the sanction of God, biology, or the natural order to even presumably unbiased descriptions of cultural tendencies and differences," Eliot disrupts, even overturns, the system's value of Englishness or whiteness (5).

That disruption of Victorian values necessitates the

re-evaluation of much of our contemporary cultural criticism whose own political agenda is clearly mapped out:

> It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English. The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored. These two obvious "facts" continue to be disregarded in the reading of nineteenth-century British literature. This itself attests to the continuing success of the imperialist project, displaced and dispersed into more modern forms. (Spivak 262)

Hence, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak reads Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* as "the imperialist project cathected as civil-society-through-social-mission" (263). While she does not, she says, mean to "undermine the excellence of the individual artist," she hopes her reading will "incite a degree of rage against the imperialist narrativization of history, that it should produce so abject a script for her" (263). Implicit in Spivak's critique is that the author herself cannot differentiate between the "facts" of her cultural moment, cannot separate herself from the modern "Hep! Hep!" to any extent, as George Eliot, in fact, does, and that the critic, particularly the "U.S. feminist critic" who looks at the nineteenth-century British text and does not find an "abject script" of imperialism, participates in the imperialist project and "redraws the axioms of

imperialism" herself (262).

In the race to condemn imperialism and the nineteenth-century imperialist, George Eliot's subtle uses of the cultural other have been examined only as either imperialist or not imperialist, as if that were their major source of importance. In criticism now, the sun still rises and sets on the issue of empire. Discerning the "facts" of the process of imperialism, moreover, now supersedes the facts, the historical particularities of a particular artist. Ultimately, as Edward Said argues in *Culture and Imperialism*, the system of racial classification permits the process of empire. "Almost all colonial schemes begin with an assumption of native backwardness and general inadequacy to be independent, "equal," and fit" (Said *CI* 80). Establishing a continuum of the dual process of imperialism and othering, Said sees the centrality of English perceptions of its own racial superiority, its own right to rule, spread broadly through the canvas of the nineteenth-century English novel:

> Jane Austen sees the legitimacy of Sir Thomas Bertram's overseas properties as a natural extension of the calm, the order, the beauties of Mansfield Park, one central estate validating the economically supportive role of the peripheral other. And even where colonies are not insistently or even perceptibly in evidence, the narrative sanctions a spatial moral order, whether in the communal restoration of the town of Middlemarch centrally important during a period of national tur-

bulence, or in the outlying spaces of deviation and uncertainty seen by Dickens in London's underworld, or in the Brontë stormy heights. (79)

The sweeping political generalizations of Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, like the equally sweeping formalist generalizations of D. A. Miller, both arrive at the same reading of Eliot and of *Middlemarch* as "no substantial challenge to the way things are" in the English novel (Miller 122). Eliot, like Austen, Dickens, and the Brontës, concludes her novels by "confirm[ing] and highlight[ing] an underlying hierarchy of family, property, [and] nation" as well as imparting "a very strong spatial *hereness* to the hierarchy" (Miller 79). As the "mere monogamy" of the end of *Middlemarch* makes marriage the center of narrative interest (Miller 188), the "spatial moral order" of the novel, according to Said, makes Middlemarch the center of the universe.

These gross readings, however, avoid Eliot's complexities, torture her own political acumen, and disregard the disruptive presence, in most of her works, major or minor, of an exotic outsider, a racial or cultural "other" who fractures the very concept of "communal restoration." If Dorothea Broke leaves Middlemarch with her husband, whose blood is "frightfully mixed," the narrative is not sanctioning but violating the "spatial moral order" established by Austen, Dickens, and the Brontës. If the Gypsies, which reappear in Eliot's "Brother and Sister Sonnets," *Scenes of Clerical Life*, and *The Mill on the Floss*, ultimately cul-

minate in Eliot's creation of a gypsy heroine in *The Spanish Gypsy* who rejects a European life for a nomadic, tribal one, that too is a violation of what Said sees as the English novel's comprehensive validation of Englishness, its use of Englishness as a primary referent for the other. The spatial counterpoint of Englishness and its "positive ideas of home, of a nation and its language, of proper order, good behavior, moral values," is more often, in Eliot's England, a sham (Said 81). While I agree with Said that "even George Eliot (in whose *Daniel Deronda* the Orient has plans made for it) [is a] writer ... for whom the Orient was defined by material possession, by a material imagination," I cannot align Deronda's blithe, unexamined possessiveness with any "positive ideas of home" or nation (*Orientalism* 169). In Eliot's fiction, the two do not go hand in hand. What satisfaction does the new Mrs. Grandcourt feel "as they approached the gates, and when her husband said, 'Here we are at home! and for the first time kissed her on the lips" (*Daniel Deronda* 405)? Gwendolen "fell silent ... a numbness had come over her personality" (405). With her fair-haired, white-handed husband only pages earlier taking the part of Governor Eyre, Gwendolen, like Deronda, identifies with the colonized, not the colonialist. I have "always felt a little with Caliban," remarks Deronda during the discussion of the rebellion in Jamaica (376). Never studied comprehensively, Eliot's trope of otherness suggests that the critique of empire and Englishness, and the struggle to express desire, begins far earlier in the history of the

British novel than was once thought.

Finally, Eliot's use of the trope of dark otherness acts as a counterpoint to the equally powerful trope of what bell hooks calls white "innocence" (hooks 159). That construct, the opposite of dark desire, insists on the rigorous, undeviating purity of Englishness and its triumph in the Victorian novel leaves a variety of casualties (Bertha Rochester, Heathcliff, Fagin) in its wake. In Eliot's depictions of English men and women, however, we are forced to see the simultaneous imposition of anti-eroticism and anti-exoticism that is wrought by the triumph of white innocence. Interrupting and often fragmenting her novels of vocation, Eliot's exotic subtexts challenge the absence of pleasure and desire in English domestic fiction. Gwendolen Harleth and the Jew Daniel Deronda, like Esther Lyons and her "giaour" Harold Transome, act out roles which recall Shakespeare's *Othello*. Willing links of miscegenation are created between a desirous white woman and a threatening, sexual other. As in Shakespeare's play, in Eliot's novels, "femininity is not opposed to blackness and monstrosity, as white to black, but identified with the monstrous, an identification that makes miscegenation doubly fearful" and, in Eliot's texts, doubly intriguing (Newman 145). Often attracted to the dark other, the "innocent" white figure in Eliot's canon is far more conflicted than readers like Said or Spivak conclude. Indeed, through her characters who possess not one but several ethnic and cultural allegiances, Eliot challenges our assumptions about English domestic fic-

tion which, as Said suggests, is expected to worship a national and personal concept of "home". It is appropriate to begin this study of otherness, then, with George Eliot's desirous "gypsies," Caterina Sarti, Maggie Tulliver, and Fedalma of *The Spanish Gypsy*, all of whom struggle to feel at home in domestic settings which seem anathema to them.

End Notes

[1]Eliot was perhaps the most scholarly of the nineteenth-century novelists and her extensive research for her novels is apparent in her writer's notebooks. In the case of *Daniel Deronda* and *The Spanish Gypsy*, Eliot made extensive notes on Judaism and on Gypsy culture. As often, however, her representations of otherness rely not on notes but on her past reading or cultural mythology which reappear in her works through both implicit and explicit allusions to Byron, Goethe, Scott, or *The Thousand and one Arabian Nights*.

[2]For my understanding of the sexual politics of Victorian anthropology, I am particularly indebted to Elizabeth Fee's article of the same name and Anita Levy's book *Other Women: The Writing of Class, Race, and Gender 1832-1898*. Amongst the many other cultural critics I refer to in this dissertation, Patrick Brantlinger, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Sander Gilman, and Jonathan Arac in particular have studied the nineteenth-century dialogue between the social sciences and the experience of sexual desire.

[3]In *Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature: Nationalism, Exoticism, Imperialism*, Nancy Vogeley describes this process as "negating [an] earlier form of subjection but still operating according to the same terms" (53). In his discussion of Disraeli and Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, Patrick Brantlinger discusses the difficulty of escaping "the ideological circle of nationalism-imperialism-racism" ("Nations and Novels" 273).

Chapter II

"Dark Smiles":

Victorian Anthropology, George Eliot, and the Gypsies

1.

In Eliot's "Brother and Sister Sonnets," a little English girl wanders into a "copse, where wild things rushed unseen" (4.9). She suddenly stumbles upon a gypsy woman. Frightened, the child meets the woman's "dark smile" and is abruptly connected to "the fear, the love, the primal, passionate store which makes mankind whole" (4.14; 5.3). This moment of recognition and primal identification between European and gypsy woman, repeated in no less than three of Eliot's works, reveals the novelist's fascination with a "wild" or "savage" culture and its women (Grellmann 23). As Eliot knew from her research on gypsies, contemporary anthropological discourse viewed the gypsy woman as a threatening, dangerous entity, a savage lurking in country lanes.[1] Often working to maintain the family economically and participating in tribal government, she is portrayed as both sexually and politically disruptive by highly critical, armchair anthropologists who valued the domestic woman as the high watermark of an "advanced" civilization. Subverting those popular anthropologists in her fiction and poetry, Eliot also subverts their model of the "modern," "evolved"

anthropological family.[2] In doing so, she also disrupts the inevitably passive political destiny of women within that family, ultimately arriving at the creation of her sole female reformer, Fedalma of the rarely discussed *Spanish Gypsy*.

Eliot calls upon the gypsy figure first in *Scenes of Clerical Life*, where Caterina Sarti, an adopted "gypsy changeling," suggests a gender reversal of a Victorian standard for otherness, Heathcliff of *Wuthering Heights* ("Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" 146). As that heroine's identification with gypsy imagery articulates primal sensuality and a desire to seize control of both the sexual and the social body, so does the same imagery articulate Maggie Tulliver's feelings of otherness in *The Mill on the Floss*. Associated with the "demonic" by Nina Auerbach, Maggie's rage also has a particularly ethnic face and body which are confirmed when she attempts to run away with her "unknown kindred" a tribe of gypsies (171). In these works, and finally in her poem, *The Spanish Gypsy*, Eliot argues against the domestication of women in the tradition of the modern or "civilized" anthropological family. Through the construct of the gypsy woman, she seeks a "terribly different experience from ordinary womanhood" (Cross 43).

By invoking the presence of gypsy women, Eliot is able to address the presence of desire, both sexual and political, in an especially fundamental way. Always aware of trends in natural history, she knew from her reading that

the dominant culture perceived the gypsy woman as biologically different from Europeans. By invoking the nature of the gypsy woman's body, with the "savage's" access to "sense, instinct, and passion," Eliot addresses the English woman's limited access to the same experience (Lewes "Uncivilised Man" 28). Likewise, in exploring the gypsy woman's greater access to economic or political independence through her paid work as dancer, mystic, or tribal leader, Eliot finds a model of female independence which asserts the value of woman's public contribution to the community. *The Spanish Gypsy*, then, in which the domestic role is flatly exchanged for political power, contends against the trend in Eliot criticism which argues that she consistently values the life of the community over the life of the individual. Her exotic poem argues that women do not grasp power because it is unavailable in their culture, not because the public role is less noble or less effective than the private, domestic one. In leaving the "circumstances and subjectivities" of Victorian England and entering another culture (Fraiman 147), another race, and even another body, Eliot finds a female model who reverses Dorothea Brooke's political reticence, preferring large historic acts, to small "unhistoric" ones (*Middlemarch* 613).

In Victorian popular culture the gypsy is perceived as a "savage" "race" of African origin who is "darker" than the "natives of the [European] countries in which they dwell" (Borrow, xxiii, 2). The standard texts which Eliot used to

learn about gypsies for *The Spanish Gypsy* reflect the dominant ideologies of the new fields of anthropology and sociology. In Eliot's sources the other was envisioned as "half-savage," "primitive," or "wild and barbarous" (Borrow 28, 323, 328). Moreover, the sexual politics of this pseudo-scientific discourse is clear in studies of gypsy culture. In his study of the Zincali, the gypsy tribe George Eliot was to depict in *The Spanish Gypsy*, George Borrow, explorer and self-styled cultural historian, reflects the suspicion with which the English viewed the gypsy. He contrasts their domestic life with English customs, establishing the latter as the epitome of social evolution. In his study, *The Zincali; or, An Account of the Gypsies of Spain*, Borrow cites the transience of gypsy life as proof of their "savagery". Indeed, "all wandering tribes may be ranked amongst the savage people of the earth, whose very reason is little better than a brute instinct, and who, indeed, in other respects, are but very few degrees superior to the brute creation" (249). English life, on the other hand, taking place in English homes and villages, constitutes the standard of civilization which others should follow. Borrow is vehement on this point. More than Spain, Romania, or Italy, "no country appears less adapted for that wandering life, which seems so natural to these people, than England" (16). Here, instead of "wilderness and forests ... every inch of land is cultivated," domesticated, anathema to the gypsy's "natural" or wild environment (16).

The transient gypsy culture, where women often worked alongside men, seemed an earlier, older anthropological model. The particularly rigid English codes of sexual experience -- chastity, courtship, and marriage -- seemed glaringly absent from gypsy life. A common exotic in the English countryside, the gypsy became an easy analogue for the savage. Closer to home than the far-away Hottentot, marked by the darkness of their skin, hair, and eyes, traveling bands of gypsies embodied multiple European fears of race, gender, and class difference. Conflated within anthropological accounts of gypsy women, those fears reveal a wealth of information about cultural perceptions of woman herself. The gypsy woman was quintessentially female, remaining in the state which "rude nature" had originally formed her (Lewes "Uncivilised Man" 22).

The mark of her primitiveness was most clearly visible in her domestic relations or gypsy "family economy" (22). As Herbert Spencer aligned the relegation of women to the domestic sphere with a highly evolved state of civilization, so did widespread notions of gypsy life confirm their "rude-ness" or "savagery" through the visible presence of gypsy women in public and economic aspects of the culture. Hence, when gypsy men and women did not "take an equal share" in the economic survival of the family, they were perceived as reversing standard Victorian sex roles (Grellmann 37). H.M.G. Grellmann asserts that it "still is the custom among the wandering Gipsies ... that the man does not maintain the

wife, but the wife the husband" (34). Consistent with the emphasis of the rest of his *Dissertation*, Grellmann suggests that the Gypsies are "still" caught in an earlier evolutionary pattern which his own culture has evolved beyond. Moreover, while he contradicts crude notions that, for instance, the breasts of gypsy women, like those of Hottentots, "at the time of their nursing increase to a larger size than the child they give suck to" (8), Grellmann nonetheless is hardly subtle in his assertions that gypsy women are oversexed, lascivious, immoral, and promiscuous. Under his rhetoric, when the gypsy woman enters public life as a paid worker or merchant, she quickly deteriorates into a prostitute:

> the women always endeavor to contribute their share towards the maintenance of the family: some deal in old cloaths [sic], others frequent brothels, or let their persons out, in some other way, for hire. This is common in Spain ... Constantinople ... and all over Turkey: probably because in other places, nobody likes to be connected with such uncleanly beings. (34)

Grellmann's distortion of working gypsy women into prostitutes is clear in his leap from tinkering and trading in old clothes to women trading "their persons" for profit. Focusing on the "unclean" nature of gypsy women, he sees their dark skin as the physical manifestation of a darkly corrupt morality.

Grellmann also reflects contemporary European attitudes

which saw the Gypsy woman as a sexual temptress. With her "unclean" skin and loose morals, she sought to seduce and exploit light-skinned European men, contaminating them in the process. The exotic gypsy woman is then alternately "beautiful" and "disgusting" (Grellmann 8). Though mitigated by "black skin," their "white teeth, long black hair ... lively, black rolling eyes, are, without dispute, properties which must be ranked among the list of beauties even by the modern civilized European world" (8). Grellmann's description of the male gypsy body as fit and lean from his spartan outdoor existence contrasts sharply with his vision of the female gypsy body. Living the same active life as her male counterpart, she becomes overtly sensual, earthy, and sexually corrupt. Her perceived heightened awareness of her body translates into a dangerous and threatening exploitation of its charms. This is clearest in his description of another business in which gypsy women engage, dancing for profit, which is described as "another means they have of getting something" from "men in the streets" (34). It too is aligned with prostitution:

> Their dances are the most disgusting that can be conceived, always ending with fulsome grimaces, or the most lascivious attitudes and gestures, uncovering those parts which the rudest and most uncultivated people carefully conceal; nor is this indecency confined to the married women only, but is rather more practiced by young girls ... who ... for a trifling

> acknowledgment, exhibit their dexterity to anybody, who is pleased with these unseemly dances. They are trained up to this impudence from their earliest years, never suffering a passenger to pass their parents hut without trying to get something by striking about naked before him. (34)

Like Grellmann's Hottentot, the gypsy woman was perceived as sexually promiscuous, nondiscriminatory, immodest, "rude," and "uncultivated." Unlike the Hottentott, however, she often lived in England and Europe where her "disgusting sight" might be glimpsed first hand (8). "Let me only ask," reminds Grellmann, "if as children we have not at some time or other run affrighted from a Gipsey?" (8). Encounters between gypsies and English people became a part of social mythology. Sighting the gypsy woman's "dark smile," perhaps in a rural "Gipsey Lane" as Marian Evans had as a child, was a not uncommon experience fraught with cultural implications (Cross). Here was a "savage," "black"-skinned other, an outlaw who broke laws not just of town and country, but of culture. Here was a culture which was popularly believed to reverse sex roles. Here was a woman thought to be sexually different and available, free of western limits in public and private life. Clearly, this figure frightened and threatened the armchair anthropologists like Borrow and Grellmann. Clearly, she intrigued George Eliot. The gypsy woman provided Eliot with a model of both private and public liberation, of both political and domestic equality.

Rather than "run affrighted" from gypsy culture, Eliot ran toward it. Unlike her anthropological sources, and unlike the precedent of gypsies in Victorian literature, she seeks to celebrate rather than to domesticate the other gypsy woman.

Eliot, then, denies the anthropological ideology which insists that the woman who rejects civilized, domestic culture is anthropologically "deviant" (Levy 109). Like Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, Dinah Morris, or Romola, the woman who seeks to leave her home and work, whether she is teaching, reforming, preaching, or writing, is anthropologically deviant in the eyes of the dominant culture. "Nature never meant for her" to work in any but a domestic context (*Adam Bede* 67). Within the pseudo-scientific discourse, the woman who worked became an Amazon; like them she might possess "primitive sexual impulses that threaten to disrupt the order of things" (Fee 111). Regulating and controlling the female body through domestic order, the body itself becomes less disruptive to society's order. The process of domestication allows for "progress" to occur in an industrialized world which increasingly strives to harness natural energy for profit, for the expansion of industry and empire. Eliot's gypsies are a way of articulating a desire to return to a non-industrial, earlier anthropological model of family, one in which women have the ability to contribute to the maintenance of the family, in which sexual desire is less rigidly regulated through courtship and marriage codes,

and, ultimately, one in which women take a role in the shaping of political rule and government. This desire is clearly expressed by Fedalma, the Spanish gypsy, who frankly bargains with her father for the rights of "the women of our tribe" as she agrees to leave Spain and build a nation for her people in Africa (385).

To make this transition, which no other Eliot heroine can make, it seems essential that the novelist leave provincial England and even her own race. In her notes on Borrow and Grellmann, Eliot turns a frank gaze on the issue of color and race. In her *Writer's Notebook*, she twice records the skin color and racial origin of the tribe of gypsies she has chosen to represent in *The Spanish Gypsy*. These are the Zincali, a tribe descended from Africa which later emigrated to India, Persia, and then Spain. In a rush of excitement and discovery she hastily records "Zincalo = the black men (of Sind or Ind!)" (94). The exclamation point is as uncharacteristic as the mistranscription of Borrow's "Zend" into "Sind." Certainly, Eliot was intrigued. The next entry in her notebook repeats the observation, underscoring that the name of the tribe Zincali "signifies 'the black men'" (94). Borrow, her source, is quite clear that the "countenances" of the Spanish gypsies are "as dark as those of Mulattos ... and in some few instances of almost Negro blackness" (298). It is evident that when he suggests that these people are "of savage ancestry" he means that they are of African descent (94). With that fact comes a cultural

and racial mystique which compelled George Eliot to write "a drama on a subject that has fascinated me" (George Eliot Journal, 6 Sept 1864). Intending to dramatize the problem of renunciation, inspired by a vision of Titian's *Annunciation*,

> nothing would serve me except that moment in Spanish history when the struggle with the Moors was attaining its climax, and when there was the gypsy race present under such conditions as would enable me to get my heroine and the hereditary claim on her among the gypsies. I required the opposition of race to give the need for renouncing the expectation of marriage. (Cross III 42-43)

Indeed, it is apparent from *Scenes of Clerical Life*, the "Brother and Sister Sonnets," and *The Mill on the Floss*, that Eliot's gypsy culture and gypsy women particularly had "fascinated" her long before 1867, the date of *The Spanish Gypsy*.

The adult Marian Evans, like Grellmann, clearly remembered her own childhood encounter with a gypsy, a memory recorded in her "Brother and Sister Sonnets." One of a band of "mystic gypsies, who still lurked between me and each hidden distance of the road," the sonnet's gypsy woman stands between the narrator and her desire to wander away from her older brother and the "benediction of her [mother's] gaze," away from domesticity and into the wild (428). The moment between English girl and gypsy woman

allows the child a glimpse of non-domesticated womanhood. The gypsy's "dark smile," the "copse where wild things rush unseen," all have aspects of fairy-tale scenes of sexual temptation and initiation that are complicated by cultural beliefs about gypsies and European children. Folk tales depicted gypsies as child stealers. Girl children were prime targets to be exploited, many Europeans believed, as prostitutes or white slaves. The gypsy woman, both attractive and frightening, brings the English girl face-to-face with her own entry into girlish vulnerability. She is, above all, consistently perceived as wild and "primal." She is a vision of femininity unthinkable in an English girl outside the young Catherine of *Wuthering Heights* who "*is*," of course, the double of the gypsy Heathcliff. Her disruptive presence articulates the child's desire to escape the "trodden way" of convention. Her exotic differentness signals the chasm between the child's desire for escape and the reality of her carefully enclosed, provincial world. Meeting the gypsy woman, the child meets her own desire, and it is a formidable moment of encounter. In Eliot's fiction, the same shock of primal identification is combined with a dialogue between Eliot's own research into social anthropology and larger Victorian beliefs about other cultures and their women.

Uncultivated, powerful in her mysticism and darkness, the gypsy in Eliot's fiction creates a paradigm of cultural otherness that is synonymous with the escape from the well

"trodden ways" of domesticity that would exile women from political life and limit them to the home ("Brother and Sister Sonnets" 3.1). She offers a model unavailable in Eliot's own culture. Moreover, Eliot found the "conflict" between cultural other and dominant culture aesthetically "grand," especially when that conflict found its expression in inter-racial romance (Cross 43). Likewise, she found the "tragic elements" of racial exploitation compelling ("*Dred*" 381). "Lurking" in the exploited other was a disruptive, rebellious violence, coupled with a sexuality unbound by English social codes ("*Dred*" 381). In careful language, Eliot suggests the outsider of different blood or color provided a window into a primitive willfulness and sexuality which was both romantic and liberating, terrible and frightening.

Eliot's initial flirtation with the image of the gypsy in fiction occurs as early as "Mr.. Gilfil's Love Story," the second of the *Scenes of Clerical Life*. The story's affinities with and revisions of *Wuthering Heights*, which contains the most famous nineteenth-century literary gypsy, Heathcliff, are as intriguing as the evidence for them is solid. As she was writing the story during a field trip to the Scilly Isles for Lewes' *Sea Side Studies*, Eliot read Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Bronte* aloud with Lewes. Sequestered on a "remote patch of rock, round which the Atlantic roars and dashes like a troop of lions," Eliot and Lewes found Gaskell's biography the "*one* new book we have

been enjoying" (Lewes *George Eliot Letters* 315; Eliot *Letters* 316). Working in a solitary, dramatic, natural setting "almost equal to Haworth moors," the two were moved by Eliot's nightly readings, suffering "wet eyes and swelling heart, as chapter after chapter was read" (Lewes *Eliot Letters* 315). Lewes was particularly moved by the biography's portrayal of Charlotte's younger sister:

> Emily has a singular fascination for me -- probably because I have a passion for lions and savage animals, and she was *une bete fauve* in power, splendour, and wildness. (*Eliot Letters* 315)

George Eliot concurred. Although busy finishing the second of the *Scenes of Clerical Life*, she wrote to Sara Hennel that the *Life* was "deeply affecting throughout: in the early part romantic, poetic as one of her own novels, in the later years tragic.... Mrs. Gaskell has done her work admirably" (Cross 334). Gaskell's Brontës had been Eliot and Lewes' only other human "society" on their wind-swept "patch of rock" (Lewes *Eliot Letters* 315). The two pursued their separate projects while nightly steeped in her mythologizing of the "more somber than sunny" imaginations which had "wrought creations like Heathcliffe," the gypsy of *Wuthering Heights* (Charlotte Brontë in Gaskell *Life* 280). Lewes, writing on George Eliot's behalf, posted the finished "Mr.. Gilfil's Love Story," on April 16, 1857, the day after he posted the letter to Elizabeth Gaskell quoted above. On their next trip abroad, the two would repeat the pleasing

Brontë-Gaskell combination by re-reading *Wuthering Heights* and *Mary Barton*.

Gaskell's mythologizing of Brontë's novel and its "savage" associations through the gypsy Heathcliff are present in Eliot's second *Scene*. The idea of the gypsy Heathcliff and his soul mate, the strangely other Catherine, reappear in Eliot's short story. Indeed Eliot seems determined to bring Heathcliff and Catherine out of their spectacular Gothic isolation and into the everyday life of an English village and manor. As she disrupts their splendid isolation, Eliot also complicates the anthropological issues addressed in *Wuthering Heights*. There Brontë unsettles social homogeneity by introducing Heathcliff; she uses the same language used in anthropological discourse to articulate cultural anxiety over racial purity and familial lineage. An old, even ancient family, "ignorant of boundaries of race, class, and sex," led by the savage Heathcliff, is painfully destroyed as is Heathcliff himself (Levy 88). Eventually, he is "written out of the story entirely" (Levy 77). He epitomizes the Victorian anthropological mythology of the savage who becomes a "demon akin to Young's barbarians -- never sleeping, never eating, with eyes that do not close even after death" (Levy 77). Finally, the novel creates a "modern" properly gendered and encultured "family" after "dismantling an older historical family" (Levy 77). Of course, a "thoroughly domesticated daughter appears in the place of the untamable Catherine"

(Levy 77). In this sense, the novel's attempt at otherness is crushed by the impending family values of the Victorian period which hold the domesticated woman as a determinant of "civilization."

That the gypsy changeling is a woman in Eliot's story redirects the problems of race and gender which Brontë poses through Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. The gender reversal also redirects a tendency in nineteenth-century British literature to envision the outsider as typically a male figure, a European or a Jew. Here the "dark, attractive lover," who threatens to taint English blood lines with "savage" blood, is a female who combines the characteristics of Catherine and Heathcliff into one entity (Levy 77). It is important, moreover, that Caterina Sarti is only invested with gypsy qualities; she is perceived as a "gypsy changeling" (146). But it is the idea of the culturally disruptive gypsy figure which Eliot depicts here in this early fictional work. Caterina is of Italian descent, not a "true" gypsy like those in *The Mill on the Floss*, *The Spanish Gypsy*, and the sonnets. The gypsy presence in this early work is germinal. It is significant in that it is the earliest representation of Eliot's lifelong fascination and establishes a context for woman's political and sexual rebellion in the later, more fully developed works. The gypsy imagery in this *Scene* initiates the same questions about wildness and domesticity, femininity and the desire for self-rule, which are elaborated upon later. Eliot over-

tly rejects the anthropological model of the evolved family, led by its profoundly domesticated woman, the hallmark of Victorian social evolution. Her Caterina produces, at the end, no abbreviated, gentle and maternal "Cathy." Instead, as Eliot ends the Cheverel family dynasty, she creates a paradoxical relationship between domestication and infertility.

As with Catherine in Brontë's novel, the reader first meets the "gypsy changeling" Caterina after her death. Entering her room, we learn, like Lockwood, that it is a chamber never entered by any one besides Mr.. Gilfil and old Martha the housekeeper (129). Like Catherine's room in *Wuthering Heights*, this "locked-up chamber" in Mr.. Gilfil's house is "a sort of visible symbol of the secret chamber in his heart, where he had long turned the key on early hopes and early sorrows, shutting up forever all the passion and the poetry of his life" (130). The barren room, with its deteriorating, half-finished baby clothes, preserved for thirty years like the empty talismans of an unfulfilled domestic ideal, underscore the barren quality of the culture, its paradoxic worship of the domestic and its inability to be sexually fertile and reproduce itself. The familiar narrative proceeds in the voice of the "communicative old lady," Mrs. Patten, but is soon interrupted by Eliot's narrator who offers to "carry your imagination back to the latter end of the last century" to tell of Caterina's childhood, her unhappy love affair, her marriage, and her

early death, like Brontë's Catherine, during pregnancy.

Rescued from starvation by the British aristocrats, Sir Christopher and Lady Cheverel, the "little, black-eyed monkey" Caterina is brought home from her native Italy to England (142). An amalgam of Brontë's Heathcliff and Catherine, Caterina is invested with the qualities of an exotic outsider and a passionate, untamed sensuality. As the gypsy Heathcliff is at first preternaturally small, fitting into Mr.. Earnshaw's pocket from which, magically, he is drawn and presented to Catherine, so is Caterina a tiny imp, a "little black-eyed monkey," more miniature animal than human child. Growing up close to nature, "very much like the primroses which the gardener is not sorry to see within his enclosure, but takes no pains to cultivate" (159), Caterina is allowed to bond with nature, and, in keeping with anthropological theories, becomes a sensual, passionate adolescent, a child-woman who is in close contact with sexual desire and has already begun a liaison with an adult man. But Caterina's otherness prevents her from marrying the object of her desire, Sir Christopher's nephew and heir, Anthony. A social-realist retort to the Earnshaws, the Cheverels never "had any idea of adopting her as their daughter, and giving her their own rank in life. They were much too English and aristocratic to think of anything so romantic" (152). Caterina might become a "protege, to be ultimately useful" (152). Set in 1788, on the advent of revolution in France, Caterina's story is a microcosm of

that class revolt which is here played out exclusively in the domestic realm. As the "great nation of France was agitated by conflicting thoughts and passions," so does she experience "terrible struggles" of will and desire (147). In her passion for Anthony she "dashes" herself against "the hard iron bars of the inevitable," the deep-seated British fear of exogamy (147). Initiating a trend in Eliot's fiction, Caterina is the first heroine to link cultural otherness and the desire for political power.

In this story, the issues of color and race, Britishness and foreignness, are consistently gendered as Caterina's sexual desire and her body itself are made to seem strange, even monstrous. Against a background "all of creamy white," Caterina seems "yellowish" (134). The difference is most emphatic when she and Anthony are together "in all the striking contrast of their coloring -- he with his exquisite outline and rounded fairness, like an Olympian god; she dark and tiny, like a gypsy changeling" (146). Like Heathcliff, Caterina in her otherness has violent, demonic currents which cause her to "set her teeth against the window-frame" in her "mad passion" for Anthony (177).

It is crucial that Caterina is described with gypsy imagery at moments in the text which are rife with sexual tension. Her "wild" presence in the household disrupts its smooth progression toward the union of two dynasties, intended to prevent the ancestral home from "getting into the wrong hands" (165). Like the gypsies in Grellmann and

Borrow's studies or like Heathcliff and Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*, the gypsy figure here is unwilling to align herself in a relationship determined by class boundaries and economic needs. Caterina is bright, sexual fire to her English competitor, Miss Assher's cool, acquisitive will. She cannot make her desire conform to the "family business" of marriage (202). Through Caterina, "nature was holding her calm, inexorable way, in unmoved and terrible beauty" (177).

Cool and white to Caterina's passionate darkness, Captain Anthony Wybrow is a specimen of a highly evolved but in-bred blood line. He is "languorous" and small. Something in the family, in its kinship or physical evolution, has gone wrong, something to do with blood. For "looking at Sir Christopher," the robust paterfamilia, "you would at once have been inclined to hope that he had a full-grown son and heir; but perhaps you would have wished that it might not prove to be the young man on his right," Captain Wybrow (135). The Cheverels' heir is "peaky" and "slight," his "small white hands" are the visible emblem of the weak heart which eventually kills him (136). The family's cheery vitality is only skin deep. It does not extend to their ability to reproduce themselves. Caterina is their only child. Their refusal to accept her as an heir, despite her obvious vitality, only underscores the fact that they are a dying breed.

Indeed, Caterina seems the only authentically living

creature in Cheverel Manor. An emptiness analogous to the absence of vital blood in the family pervades their very home. Nostalgic for an older, more vital moment in history, they are transforming their Georgian home into a "great Gothic" space" (34). It is as if, in replacing the house's neoclassical order and symmetry with the "rude, savage" vitality of the Gothic, they could also recapture the vitality and fertility which the style celebrates. But the renovations fail. Much family furniture is sold off to pay for them, leaving the house "bare of furniture" and its accompanying history (134). The English family pursues a romantic dream of gothicism, of their original, ancestral Englishness, but ironically are much too English to adopt Caterina as the authentically "rude" and "savage" Earnshaws will accept Heathcliff as an heir. Only Caterina, the other of "hot" foreign blood, seems alive in the chilly, unfurnished manor. Having moved beyond the anthropological moment of the Earnshaw family, which is less rigorously bound by codes of class and race, the Cheverels attempt to adopt the outside aspects of the Gothic without experiencing the racial contamination of exogamy. Cheverel Manor, like the family, then suffers from a fastidious, civilized distaste for blood. They have forgotten how to renew themselves, just as they have forgotten that the new dining room is, after all, a place to eat. Its "original purpose" has changed from a place of sensual pleasure to "a piece of space enclosed simply for the sake of beautiful outline"

(134). As their architecture is ultimately an empty shell, the Cheverels adoption of Gothic vitality is superficial. It does not extend to their blood. Eliot's irony is clear. While the Cheverels impose the rules of aristocratic culture on their dynasty, they reject its original foundations. Marriage has become a business and domestication has effectively replaced passion.

As a "wild" thing, similar to the "half-savage, and hardy and free" Catherine and Heathcliff of *Wuthering Heights*, Caterina is ultimately destroyed by this compulsory domesticity, which takes the shape of a passionless marriage and unwanted pregnancy. Eliot is utterly explicit on the agenda of the English people who surround Caterina in her illness after Anthony's death. "If she were domesticated for a time with [Mr.. Gilfil's] mild, gentle sister, who had a peaceful home and a prattling little boy, Tina might attach herself anew to life and recover" (237). Yet, what Gilfil desires, along with attaching Caterina anew to life, is that she attach and adapt herself to a new role in life, to the tradition of non-desirous femininity. Like Catherine in Brontë's novel, she is entrapped and infantilized by the process of nursing a sick woman with domesticity. As she is "domesticated," Caterina loses her own will and even, like the pregnant, dying Catherine in Brontë's novel, shrinks to child size. "She looked younger than she really was, like a little girl of twelve who was being taken away from coming instead of past sorrow" (233). The sexual, gypsy "tigress"

who would have stabbed the faithless Anthony is reduced to a prepubescent child. Ultimately, the "utmost improvement in Tina had not gone beyond passiveness and acquiescence" (239).

Newly acquiescent, in her newly girlish body, Tina marries Mr.. Gilfil and is expected to blot out her memories of her past desire by producing "a new 'little black-eyed monkey'" (242-243). But that element of herself, her ethnicity and its intrinsic link to her sexuality, has been permanently quelled:

> Her continual languor and want of active interest was a natural consequence of bodily feebleness, and the prospect of her becoming a mother was a new ground for hoping the best. But the delicate plant had been too deeply bruised, and in the struggle to put forth a blossom it died. (243)

Like the gypsy Heathcliff and his double, Catherine Earnshaw, Caterina finds domestication incompatible with her very nature. Once described as a "wild primrose," Caterina cannot survive a domesticity which is nothing less than captivity.

Deirdre David has briefly argued that "Mr.. Gilfil's Love Story," with its focus on an impassioned, uncontrollable Italian woman, foreshadows the rebellious female challenge presented in *Daniel Deronda* (*Creditable Warriors* 266). I argue that the story has further significance for Eliot's canon. In addition to her Italian heritage, Caterina is

invested with gypsy qualities that call up a realm of cultural and ethnic associations. Not the least of these is the dialogue which Eliot opens up between her story and Emily Brontë's novel. Knowing the particularly "rebellious female challenge" which the gypsy woman presented to the concept of Victorian domesticity clarifies Maggie Tulliver's struggle against that current in *The Mill on the Floss* and illumines the often obscure *Spanish Gypsy* where woman's domestic role is flatly exchanged for political power.

2.

In his review of *The Spanish Gypsy*, Henry James allows that the gypsies Eliot depicts there are not "real" but idealized, heroic figures. No doubt he would agree that the gypsies in *The Mill on the Floss* are the real thing. The impoverished, hungry English gypsies of Eliot's second novel complicate her connections between female rebelliousness and ethnic difference. Here we meet not a literary gypsy, adopted by British aristocrats and struggling aesthetically against domestication, but a ragged band of outcasts struggling to subsist on the underside of British culture. In this novel, moreover, the clash of cultures is reversed. Although most definitely English, Maggie imagines herself to be a gypsy and attempts to escape to them, her "unknown kindred," in the chapter titled, "Maggie Tries to Run Away from her Shadow" (168). Nina Auerbach has linked this episode to Maggie's demonic and witch-like qualities, both

of which are "entangled in her pull toward the smoky, noc-turnal underworld of the gypsies" (382).

In a novel which focuses from its very first page on natural life and evolution, Maggie is often figured as a natural or anthropological anomaly. Consistently, Eliot suggests that Maggie is anthropologically different from her "pink and white" English family, especially from her mother who is her model of correctly domesticated female behavior. Her physical characteristics, "a brown skin as makes her look like a mulatter," never "ran" in her mother's family (60), nor did her "gleaming black eyes" (61). Her actions, "like a wild thing" (60), do not conform to the English norm either. Maggie's play is also culturally anomalous. Her favorite doll, a fetish into whose head she drives nails, is bizarrely out of place in the attic of an English mill (79). With her wild dark hair and eyes, Maggie is herself, like the gypsies, an exotic figure in the civilized provincial landscape of her birth. Standing "at the edge of" the "muddy pond," with its teeming sense of life and activity, Maggie seems, from the opening of the novel, to be another species or race rising up out of the primordial mud (54).

Perceiving herself as dark and wild, Maggie believes that the gypsies and not her own family are her "kindred" (171). Most recently, Susan Fraiman has seen Maggie's flight to the gypsy camp as Eliot's flirtation with and then abandonment of the male, colonial *Bildungsroman* plot. While Maggie does fantasize that she might become queen of the

gypsies, her sense of entitlement stems less from British imperialism than from her sense of kinship with them. Throughout the novel, she experiments with identity, trying on one face after another as she seeks a way out of her provincial confinement. This episode is less an attempt to colonize than an attempt to escape. Maggie correctly intuits that in gypsy culture women have political opportunities which are absent from English culture. Viewed in the perspective of Eliot's canon, Maggie is a precursor to Fedalma of *The Spanish Gypsy*. The latter also grows up feeling strangely dark and different from the fair-haired Europeans around her. She also is entranced by music and dance, and is overtly sensual. Ultimately, however, she discovers the ethnic source of her deviance. She *is* in fact a gypsy, the queen of the gypsies no less! Like Maggie, she runs away from her comfortable, domestic life to become a reformer and political leader. Unlike Maggie, she does not come home. Thus, if Eliot does "lampoon" the colonial *bildungsroman* "narrative of self-definition through domination" in *The Mill on the Floss*, she had already embraced that narrative model by the time she wrote *The Spanish Gypsy* (Fraiman 142).

More importantly, Maggie Tulliver is far less interested in "civilizing" (Fraiman 142) the gypsies than in finding with them "a refuge from all the blighting obloquy that had pursued her in civilised life" (*The Mill* 171). Like Caterina and Fedalma, Maggie experiences the constant obstruction of her desire, which manifests itself in both

the political and sexual realms. Her encounter with the gypsies in Chapter 11 of the novel is best explored, then, in the context of Maggie's desire to escape the rigidly anti-sensual aspects of English society. Indeed, as in the "Brother and Sister Sonnets," Maggie's encounter with the gypsy camp constitutes a journey from the heart of encultured domesticity to a wild, free place populated by "half-savage" cultural others. Maggie's journey takes her from inside the culture to outside it. A brief overview of the events leading up to her escape reveals that rather than running away to bring civilization to the gypsies Maggie is running away from civilization itself.

The day that Maggie runs away "had begun ill," with elaborate "civilized" female rituals all of which involve the taming, control, and enclosure of her body (145). After Maggie and her "wild" hair are subjected to the contempt of Mr.. Rappit, the town hairdresser, she is dressed uncomfortably in exasperatingly restrictive clothing for her visit to Aunt Pullet's equally uncomfortable home. Once there, the men and women divide and the females participate in the lengthy, much-discussed bonnet-revelation scene which leads them deep into a domestic heart of darkness, Aunt Pullet's closet, the comic center of this domestic universe. After the reverential viewing of the bonnet, Maggie finds herself in the parlor with her aunt, uncle, mother and cousins. There, she and the children are instructed to hold carefully "tempting" pieces of smooth, brown cake in

their hands, not eating them until the maid brings a tray and plates. Eliot gracefully alludes to Homer to underscore both the anti-sensuality of the scene and Maggie's estrangement from her family. While holding her piece of cake, the nine-year old becomes "fascinated" by a print of Odysseus and Nausicaa. She is, of course, looking at a picture of Nausicaa who is standing in the water and gazing at Odysseus, who is nearly naked. The sexual politics of the moment from Homer are important:

> So was Odysseus about to mingle with the fair-braided girls,
> Although he was naked. For need had come upon him.
> Frightfully begrimed with brine did he appear to them.
> One ran one way, one another, on the jutting shores.
> The daughter of Alcinoos alone stayed; Athene
> Had put courage in her mind and taken fear from her limbs.
> She stood in one place facing him. (*The Odyssey* VI 135-141; Albert Cook's translation, Norton Critical Edition, 1974)

By alluding to this scene, Eliot introduces the idea of sexual revelation and discovery. Homer's tone, moreover, is celebratory of the body which is depicted as stately and graceful. It is particularly important that this moment from Homer celebrates a young woman's full vision of an unclothed male body, which, finally, takes place under the sanction and guidance of the matriarchal figure, Athene.

"Fascinated" by the naked Odysseus and the fearless Nausicaa, Maggie drops her cake to the floor in wonder and is soon covered in shame. The sensual moment ends in "conscious disgrace" (154); she has made a mess on Aunt Pullet's spotless floor. Her shame is compounded when next, in rapture over Uncle Pullet's music box, Maggie throws her arm around Tom's neck and spills his wine. Maggie's physical actions are "too rough," undemure, unladylike, for this civilised gathering. She is placed in direct contrast to the vigorous and athletic Nausicaa, who is favorably compared to the "arrow-shooting Artemis" and who is engaged in a vigorous game of ball when her shouts arouse the sleeping Odysseus (Homer l. 103).

Moving from inside to outside, Maggie and her cousins are then asked to leave the house and to play in the garden, an extension of the house. But "in so prim a garden where they were not to go off the paved walks there was not a great choice of sport" (162). Tom then leads Lucy out the garden gate to the pond in the meadow while the estranged, awkward Maggie follows. There a Victorian version of the encounter between Odysseus and Nausicaa is ironically re-enacted. Rather than the rigorous games on the beach, where Nausicaa and her maidens rush in and out of the water, the English children's play is marked by a sense of careful stillness, even rigidity, as they approach the water. Lucy is particularly fearful as she approaches the mud-ringed pond, careful not to soil her clothes. Unable to forgive

Maggie for spilling his wine, Tom excludes her from play as he sights not a naked man but a highly erotic substitute, "a golden arrow-head darting through the water. It was a water-snake" (163).

Eliot's play on Homer is subtle and ironic. Her changes reflect the sexual politics of her own day in which gods and goddesses are eschewed for one celibate male God and in which men, not women, set sexual boundaries. Tom, the miniature patriarch, sets the boundaries. He decides that the timid, fair, still Lucy, whom he later idealizes as an unattainable lover, is alone to be permitted to see the snake. She comes to the water "carefully, as she was bidden" by him (163). He defines what she sees. "It was a water-snake, Tom told her, and Lucy at last could see the serpentine wave of its body, very much wondering that a snake could swim" (164). Maggie is literally marginalized, told to "get away .... There's no room for you on the grass here. Nobody asked you to come" (164). The dignified moment of discovery, the sensual pleasure and stately physical grace which had fascinated her in Aunt Pullet's parlor, is wiped away. The scenes move from the epic to the mock heroic:

> There were passions at war in Maggie at that moment to have made a tragedy, if tragedies were made by passion only, but the essential τι μέγεθος which was present in the passion, was wanting to the action; the utmost Maggie could do, with a fierce thrust of her small

> brown arm, was to push poor little pink-and-white Lucy into the cow-trodden mud. (164)

It is this action of brown on pink-and-white violence which precipitates Maggie's decision to run away to the gypsies whom she is convinced will accept and embrace her as one of their own. After this moment at the pond, which contrasts so sharply with Homer's celebration of the body, it is clear to Maggie that she is an outsider and that there is "no room" for her. Much of the novel confronts Maggie's marginalization by just such explorations and movements from role to role. Her character remains consistently "on the brink" of life, alienated and excluded from her family, robbed of sexuality, finally robbed of life itself. Maggie tries on many faces in the novel, seeking refuge and acceptance. She becomes a small demon, a gypsy, an almost nun-like penitent, a lover, and finally a martyr. Ultimately each door closes to her, each closing reflecting her lack of options in her world. But Maggie's attempt at transforming herself into a gypsy is rarely discussed, and the sexual aspects of the chapter in which "Maggie Tries to Run Away from Her Shadow" (168), not at all. Dark and threatening, precipitated by Homer's scene of sexual arousal and awakening, they tell a troubling story of sexual initiation.

Maggie's escape to the gypsies follows Eliot's structural pattern from inside culture to outside culture. Leaving Uncle Pullet's fields, Maggie finds the high road and experiences both the pleasure and fear of her newly

unlimited path. As she leaves her English self and kin to take up with what she imagines to be her true family, she encounters her vulnerability to men for the first time. In the road, she is immediately frightened by two men, "formidable strangers ... shabby-looking ... with flushed faces" (169). In what will become a consistent pattern in the novel, she sees herself as they do. Internalizing their vision, she perceives herself as the dominant culture does. Suddenly, she feels naked. She realizes that "she had no sleeves on -- only a cape and a bonnet" (169). The men, smiling and winking at each other when she gives them a sixpence, are "less respectful" than Maggie would like (169). She walks on past them "hurriedly" (169). She "was aware that the two men were standing still, probably to look after her and she presently heard them laughing loudly" (169). It is a"humiliating encounter" which drives her off the high road to the hedgerows where she experiences "a delightful sense of privacy in creeping along" (170). Like Dickens' Little Nell, this unprotected, wandering female child is dangerously vulnerable to an exploitation which has specifically sexual overtones.

Maggie's encounter with the gypsies epitomizes her sense of otherness as she alternates between gypsy and English girl. Beginning her "adventure of seeking her unknown kindred, the gypsies," she brings with her the cultural assumptions so well expressed by Grellmann and Borrow. As Fee and Levy convincingly argue, the base of anthropological

prejudice against "other" women expresses cultural anxieties about the sex itself. As earlier evolutionary models, gypsy women embody the origin of woman herself, in all her perceived depravity. As soon as she acts on her desire to be a gypsy, Maggie immediately, and for the first time, feels herself to be a woman and a sexual target. Walking down this "strange lane" of sexual self-discovery she "hardly dared look on one side of her, lest she should see the diabolical blacksmith in his leathern apron grinning at her with arms akimbo" (171). Her journey to the gypsies then becomes fraught with unwanted sexual opportunities. Making her desire to escape her position in her own culture a reality, Maggie receives in return the punishment which her society doles out to female deviants. Eliot makes clear that the resulting sexual threat has its source in the cultural values which Maggie brings to her escape. When she finally arrives at the gypsies' camp, she is so disoriented that, like a Victorian anthropologist herself, she does not even recognize these others as human:

> It was not without a leaping of the heart that she caught sight of a small pair of bare legs sticking up, feet uppermost, by the side of a hillock; they seemed something hideously preternatural -- a diabolical kind of fungus; for she was much too agitated at the first glance to see the ragged clothes and the dark shaggy head attached to them. It was a boy asleep ... it did not occur to her that he was one of her friends the

> gypsies, who in all probability would have very genial manners. (171)

Again, the idea of sexual exposure is addressed here and is contrasted with the moment between Odysseus and Nausicaa. This scene of the sleeping boy's "bare legs sticking up," like the viewing of the water-snake, has none of the natural grace of Homer's scene of awakening and sensual arousal. Contrasted with the boy's unselfconscious, abandoned sleep, Maggie carries with her a deeply internalized fear of the body. Her vision of male "bareness" is disrupted, compromised by threats to her sense of security and safety. These moments are chaotic and literally messy, unlike the representation of Homer's "daughter of Alcinoos" who calmly "stood in one place facing" the awakened Odysseus. The sleeping gypsy boy and she remain separate as Maggie fearfully runs "along faster and more lightly lest she should wake him" (171). With no protective Athene, Maggie is very much alone and vulnerable. She is accompanied instead by the figures of her patriarchal religion, characters from her bible and *Pilgrim's Progress*, who are jumbled with secular images of threatening male figures in one hallucinogenic stream. Apollyon walks with a "highway man with a pistol, and a blinking dwarf in yellow with a mouth from ear to ear" (171). The devil himself watches her in the shape of a "diabolical blacksmith" (171).

Maggie's strong physical identification with the gypsies is made explicit when she recognizes her own face in the

face of the first gypsy woman she meets. "This face with the bright dark eyes and the long hair was really something like what she used to see in the glass before she cut her hair off" (172). She is "reassured by the thought that her aunt Pullet and the rest were right when they called her a gypsy" (172). The tall, young gypsy mother is the only woman Maggie physically identifies with throughout the novel. She will grow to be tall like her and as an adult will resume her long hair, wearing it in gypsy fashion, "in a braided coronet." With all other female figures except this, Maggie is a study in contrasts, brown to their whiteness, tall and large to their smallness. When Maggie looks at the gypsy's face, she sees herself. They are the first characters in the novel, moreover, to refer to her as a "pretty lady" (172)

Initially, Maggie's attempted escape seems to fulfill her fantasy of refuge and escape from civilization. But, as the chapter title suggests, Maggie can only try to run away from her shadow. She cannot actually escape the constrictions of her culture which are too deeply ingrained in her. She cannot stop being an English girl. The gypsies whom she has taken up with, moreover, are authentically wild. They are not literary gypsies from a "story," but are real, impoverished, transient, and hungry. They see Maggie as an opportunity of "earning half a crown" (179). Reversing the popular myth that gypsies kidnapped white children and the equally prevalent belief that they sought to entrap white

girl children to exploit them as prostitutes, Eliot's gypsies only intend to return Maggie to her home and hope to be compensated for their good deed.

Eliot's narrator, then, creates a clear division between the true nature of the gypsies and Maggie's perception of them. While Eliot depicts the band of gypsies as hungry and tired, Maggie's vision of gypsy culture is a nightmarish glimpse into the shadows within her self, particularly her sexual self. She perceives the gypsy camp as a terrifying and highly sexual place. In contrast to the high domestication of aunt Pullet's home, the gypsy camp encloses a loose and unstructured social group. They are described through Maggie's eyes as the old woman, the young female with a baby, the tall girl, the older man, and the younger man. She is unable to distinguish the components of a family within the group. Indeed, Eliot points out that Maggie's perspective here, as in so many other episodes in the novel, is compromised by her poor education. "Her thoughts generally were the oddest mixture of clear-eyed acumen and blind dreams" (177). But, the narrator adds, Maggie does know the meaning of the word "polygamy" (177). Ironically, the anomalous family setting turns threatening as the gypsies clear intent *not* to adopt Maggie finally becomes evident. Now "her ideas about gypsies undergo a rapid modification" (177). She perceives her Englishness and her vulnerability at once and fears that the gypsies see her as a commodity. She believes the gypsies may be savages, even

cannibals; they might "kill her as soon as it was dark, and cut up her body for gradual cooking" (177). She dislikes the earthy smell of their stew and fears that the older gypsy "was in fact the devil" who might be able to read her thoughts (177).

Ironically, Maggie's nightmare becomes most lurid when the gypsies determine to return her to her parents and to her "true" identity and ethnicity. Indeed, "no nightmare had ever seemed to her more horrible" than riding home on the gypsies' donkey behind the younger man. "I wish you'd go with me too," Maggie says to the gypsy mother (178). "She thought anything was better than going with one of the dreadful men alone" (178). The sexual fear Maggie experiences is made explicit through Eliot's allusion to G.A. Burger's *Leonore*, "a powerful, lively, and gruesome work about a bride taken on a long ride by her dead lover" (Byatt 675). Eliot compares Maggie's terror to Leonore's:

> Not Leonore in that preternatural midnight excursion with her phantom lover, was more terrified than poor Maggie in this entirely natural ride on a short-paced donkey, with a gypsy behind her who considered that he was earning half-a -crown. (179)

Maggie's visit to the gypsies foreshadows her far more dangerous transgression with Stephen Guest near the end of the novel. The episode suggests the dangers of acting on sexual desire which Maggie meets the next time she runs away and tries to return home. Here, as in much of Eliot's

fiction, the erotic female self is made an other. It is lost and wandering, seeking some place of safety, as Maggie is here. To this other culture, however, Maggie brings her own concepts of patriarchal sexuality. As she is being carried home to her father, she imagines herself an adult woman, a terrified, kidnapped bride, a virgin about to be raped by a strange, dark man whose body is threateningly real. Maggie's childish perception of the gypsies exactly fulfills the stereotypes of Grellmann and Borrow. Escaping domesticity, she encounters not the reality of gypsy life, but her own culture's distortion of it. Seeing her own face in the adult gypsy woman's face is only brief comfort as it ultimately confirms that she will experience what Victorian anthropologists suggested that women of other cultures actively sought. Encountering the gypsies, like encountering the water snake, only increases Maggie's agitated separation from the "natural" and from the sexual (179). At the end of the chapter, as she is traded from the gypsy's lap to her father's, Maggie is returned from gypsy to English girl, from bride to daughter, leaving off her assumed ethnicity and her sexuality, which she is never fully to resume.

Maggie's inability to protect herself sexually is endemic to her political position. Alone on the high road, she knows that she is perceived, as Grellmann and Borrow perceive gypsy women, as sexually available, unprotected by an "organized" coherent family system. Again and again in

her adult life, Maggie will confront the accusation that she is "unnatural" as well as sexually corrupt or morally loose because she chooses to forego male protection. For Maggie, to acknowledge her sexuality is to become seen as she, through her distorted, hallucinogenic vision, sees the gypsies. It is the fear of being perceived by her family and society as Grellmann and Borrow perceive the gypsies which prevents her from experiencing sexual pleasure; that experience carries heavy burdens in the novel. Try as she might, Maggie will never be able to escape the "shadow" of the sexual disapproval which she herself has internalized. Her desire to escape civilization is written over an internal text that shames her for experiencing that desire. Her attempted flight to the gypsies poignantly illustrates that double-bind which becomes the crux of the novel and the source of Maggie's painful stasis. While Nina Auerbach has illustrated the psychological aspects of Maggie's static role, it is clear that Maggie's psychological stasis is located in a culturally constructed system which defines and limits the behavior of women by rigidly placing them in an anthropological standard of "civilization."

As an English woman, Maggie Tulliver stands most often "on the brink" of waters she cannot enter. Her fantasy of becoming queen of the gypsies, of having free access to the expression of her "wild" nature, eludes her because of her nurture as an English girl. Lifting the heroine out of England, out of the English woman's body, its

nature and nurture, releases the heroine from the bonds of that stasis. Traditionally in Eliot criticism, Maggie's choice, her sacrifice of her sexual self, has been attributed to an Arnoldian concept of community and culture. That is, that Maggie, like all Eliot heroines, values community over the individual. She does not seek self-determination because she holds an idealized view of the value of community, preferring small private acts to large public ones. These ideals have been seen as universal and timeless, existing in an idealized realm of "pure political value" (Gallagher). Hence Eliot's characters avoid political action because they are adhering to a philosophy, not because they are relegated to a domestic role.

3.

Eliot's rarely discussed *Spanish Gypsy* poses a serious threat to this theory. There, Maggie Tulliver's fantasy of becoming queen, of becoming a political leader, becomes reality. In the process, Eliot reverses her reading of Arnold's theory. Once removed from nineteenth-century England, the heroine chooses "a great destiny" over domestic obscurity. This fascinating reversal permeates this epic poem which now, out of print, has been relegated to the back burner by Eliot scholars. When the poem is discussed, it is usually a cursory mention which considers the epic only to the extent which Feldalma, who seeks a homeland for her tribe, is seen as a precursor to the Zionist Daniel Deronda.

While there are important connections between both works, those do not preclude the importance of *The Spanish Gypsy* itself. Erotic and powerful, the work makes crucial statements about ethnicity, sexuality, women, and political power.

The Spanish Gypsy is paradoxical in Eliot's canon. Like all of Eliot's works, it involves the ideal of renunciation and ultimately embraces a rigorously ascetic destiny. But the substance of what its heroine renounces is just what all other Eliot heroines embrace, often to our dismay -- "the ordinary lot of womanhood" (Cross *Life and Letters* 42-43). Its gypsy heroine Fedalma has been adopted by noble Spaniards from early childhood and does not know her true ethnicity. As the poem opens, she is on the brink of marrying Don Silva, a blue-eyed, fair-haired Spaniard of Gothic heritage. "Suddenly" she has "announced to her that she is chosen to fulfill a great destiny, entailing a terribly different experience from that of ordinary womanhood" (42-43). She learns her true identity: she is the daughter of Zarca, the king of the Zincali, a gypsy tribe now imprisoned by her lover's army. Henry James' review of the poem, still considered authoritative, articulates its resulting conflict, "a struggle between nature and culture, between education and the instinct of race," as the heroine chooses between her tribe and her lover (*North American Review* 1868). But his assessment must be qualified by the particular way in which "nature and culture" clash here.

The poem clearly focuses on the pull between what anthropology termed woman's ordinary or "natural" domestic role and her desire for "a terribly different experience," an active, political role. Making Fedalma a gypsy both provides "the need for renouncing" marriage and the opportunity to be politically active. In gypsy culture, a woman could do just that. To Eliot, the choice of the political over the domestic role was "a great dramatic motive of the same class as those used by the Greek dramatists, yet specifically differing from them" (42-43). Finally, as Eliot releases her heroine's destiny from the bonds of civilized Europe, she seeks to release the female body itself from the bonds of sexual shame, seeing such a phenomenon in an older, tribal model.

Hence, the poem presents an ideological argument played out by Zarca, Fedalma, and Silva. Their struggle is not so much between "nature and culture, between education and the instinct of race," but between woman's place in European culture and her place in gypsy culture. As she explores the struggle between "education and the instinct of race," Eliot sharply criticizes European attempts to "educate" Fedalma or indoctrinate her into a figure of carefully controlled, house bound, bejewelled femininity, an ornament herself. Standing in sharp relief against the picture of the ornamental woman is the strong limbed, racially other gypsy woman. Clearly determined by contemporary anthropological accounts, the "instinct of race," as it

appears in the gypsy woman's body, becomes a vehicle through which Eliot articulates woman's desire for political power, a desire impossible for the unchartered George Eliot heroine to articulate and stay within the boundaries of Eliot's genre, the social-realist novel.

The effect of Eliot's research in anthropological texts is clear in her exotic poem. Like contemporary anthropologists, she is much concerned with physical description of the other. Like those pseudo-scientists, she makes an explicit link between physical body and moral character. Yet, strikingly unlike her sources, Eliot finds the gypsy woman's dark smile beautiful and morally wholesome. Where the anthropologists find the gypsy woman's body corrupt and threatening, Eliot finds it strong-limbed and beautiful. Indeed, much more so than any other work by Eliot, *The Spanish Gypsy* valorizes the female body. Here, Eliot has retained the sensuality which appears in Grellmann and Borrow without the shame which they project on the female body. While Fedalma possesses all the physical characteristics attributed to gypsies by European anthropologists, those characteristics are celebrated rather than denigrated. Seeking, like Maggie Tulliver, to escape the constraints of "civilisation," the first social element which Fedalma rejects is the cultural restriction of her body.

Fedalma enters the text as a dancer. While the degree of nudity or self-exposure she exhibits is equal to

that described by Eliot's sources, this gypsy is far from their "lascivious" or immodest model of the gypsy dancer. Rather, she recalls classical dignity and is compared to the "Trojan maids" (326). Ultimately religious, Fedalma's dance links her body to the body of the community and establishes their common humanity. The passage which introduces Fedalma dancing in the public square of Bedmar is one of Eliot's most erotic. Like Hetty Sorrel in Eliot's first novel, Fedalma is figured, "like some tall flower whose dark and intense heart lies half within a tulip-tinted cup" (*Spanish Gypsy* 326). But, unlike Hetty, Fedalma is allowed both a body and a soul. She unites sensual awareness with spiritual integrity and is a physical representation of Eliot's Feuerbachian religious humanism. Moving sensually in a "dance religious" (326), "swayed by impulse passionate" (327), Fedalma dances "in slow curves, voluminous, gradual, feeling and action flowing into one" (326). Her dance is

> Ardently modest, sensuously pure,
> With young delight that wonders at itself
> And throbs as innocent as opening flowers,
> Knowing not comment - soilless, beautiful.
> The spirit in her gravely glowing face
> With sweet community informs her limbs
> Filling their fine gradation with the breath
> Of virgin majesty; as full-voweled words
> Are new impregnate with the master's thought. (327)

Strangely paradoxical, the "ardently modest, sensuously

pure" Fedalma is a metamorphosis of the wild sensuality of Maggie Tulliver. Like Maggie, she is kept rigorously chaste, and yet her sense of sensual self-discovery, "wondering at itself," is released from Maggie's self-torment. Even as tendrils of her black hair stray and her clothes cling to her body, Eliot stresses a harmonious balance between her spirit and body. Both actions "gather expression -- a soft undertone and resonance exquisite from the grand chord of her harmoniously bodied soul" (327). Employing the conventions of Grellmann and Borrow, whose gypsy dancers were more often "young girls" than "married women" (34), Eliot subverts them entirely. Rather than exploitive and unseemly, Fedalma's dance is a reflection of a harmony between body and soul that is both erotic and spiritual.

The feminist tenor of the poem's spiritual discourse is clarified by its contrast with traditional Christianity. Set during the late 1400s, at the height of the Spanish Inquisition, the poem engages that period's strong current of ecclesiastical misogyny, embodied by Father Isidore, the prior of San Domingo and its chief Inquisitor. Guarding Silva as his nephew and advisee, he values that "blue-eyed" Goth as a white "flower of Christian knighthood" (366). Conservative even for his period, he insists that Silva follow his order's now defunct vow of chastity. He fears the sexual temptation and contamination which Fedalma's body presents and envisions her as an "infidel" whose soul is as

dark as her hair, skin and eyes (336). Having danced in public, Fedalma has convinced the prior that she is a "harlot" (377), a "bride of Satan in a robe of flames" (337). On her body "she bears the marks of races unbaptized, that never bowed before the holy signs, were never moved by stirring of the sacramental gifts (337).

The prior "reads" Fedalma's "skin" like a text and asserts that her "blood is as unchristian as the leopard's" (339). In her public dancing, "she has profaned herself," "flaunting her beauties grossly" (339). Within the European code, so aptly captured by Grellmann and Borrow's nearly phobic accounts of dancing gypsy women, a woman who "shows herself dancing" can only be a whore (345). Silva also reflects this ideology in his rhetoric, chastising Fedalma for shrinking "no more from gazing men than from the gazing flowers that, dreaming sunshine, open as you pass" (345). Fedalma is able to perceive her dance, however, as another expression of the "primal, passionate store which makes mankind whole." It is a transcendent experience through which her body "seemed new-waked to life in unison with a multitude" (344). Eliot's language is steeped in Feurbach at this point. But the Feurbachian content is rife with pointed feminist commentary. Fedalma asserts that she "should like the world to look at me with eyes of love that make a second day" (345). Those human eyes, like her lover's eyes, are "a little heaven" (345). Fedalma's ecstatic dance signifies her faith in the body, male and

female, as the only heaven she can know.

In contrast, the "Holy Inquisition's discipline" seems the more severe and the more phobic in its suspicion of the body (365). Christianity, represented here solely through the Inquisition, is painted as a cruel religion whose "love must needs make hatred" (367). Punishment of the body, the "shuddering, bleeding, thirsting, dying God ... scourged and bruised and torn" (367) is the central emphasis of the Inquisition's Christ. His image is contrasted with the "Immaculate Mother, Virgin mild" who "shalt see and smile, while the black filthy souls sink with foul weight to their eternal place" (368). Images of bodily purging flood the Prior's rhetoric. In accepting her gypsy identity, Fedalma rejects Christianity with its misogyny, male hierarchy, and its particular focus on chastity and value of the soul over the depraved body.

The gypsy faith which she embraces adds much to our knowledge of the body's role in Eliot's religion of humanity. Much more explicitly than any other Eliot text, *The Spanish Gypsy* creates a religion of the heart which refers quite literally to the body. Here the heart is not metaphor, but a "beating" flesh and blood organ. The gypsies possess "a faith taught by no priest, but by their beating hearts" (375). Their religion lies in "fidelity" between people. It believes in no heaven; its sole metaphysical element lies in the transmigration of souls. Having no "prophet" (376), the religion exalts "fellowship"

over hierarchy (376). Its "Holy Place" is not a church, but "the hearth that binds us in one family" (376). Rather than forsaking the body as profane, Eliot's version of gypsy religion finds its source there: "in the silent bodily presence feel the mystic stirring of a common life which makes the many one" (375).

The gypsy body, so fearful when seen through little Maggie Tulliver's English eyes, is here allowed to encompass both the reverent and the sensual as Fedalma's body does at the poem's opening. This other body can access the "mystic" essence, "which makes the many one," as the dark smile of the gypsy woman in Eliot's sonnets contains the "primal, passionate store which makes mankind whole." The poem's two perspectives on the body, white Christian versus dark pagan, are contrasted with an eye to releasing the body, particularly the female body, from orthodox notions of its profanity. As Fedalma's chief threat, the inquisitor Isidore seeks to punish her for her sexual desire. His punishment is explicitly linked to Fedalma's desire for Silva: "I saved you from their doom, your bridal bed had been the rack," warns her father (440). Once actually with the gypsies, Fedalma is surrounded by pagans who find no shame in the female body, only beauty. The "unrest" which is present in heroines from Dinah Morris to Gwendolen Harleth is replaced with composure (*Daniel Deronda* 1). Moreover, as Eliot writes of the gypsy woman's body, she treats it explicitly, using language which she retreats from

in other novels.

Fedalma is fully aware, for instance, that once married, her freedom of movement will quite literally be curtailed. When her fiance scolds her for dancing in public, Fedalma responds with her regret for what will come after she marries him:

> Now I am glad I saw the town today
> Before I am a Duchess - glad I gave
> This poor Fedalma all her wish. For once,
> Long years ago, I cried when Inez said,
> "You are no more a little girl"; I grieved
> To part forever from that little girl
> And all her happy world so near the ground. (348)

Rather than perceiving marriage as a beginning, Fedalma sees it as an end and describes it in funereal language: "Perhaps the wind wails so in winter for the summer's dead, and all sad sounds are nature's funeral cries for what has been and is not" (348). Like Catherine in *Wuthering Heights*, here Fedalma perceives marriage to the blue-eyed Silva as the end of her own free access to her body, to being a natural entity, "close to the ground." As the "half savage and hardy and free" Catherine emerges from Thrushcross Grange tamed and domesticated, wearing the trappings of domesticated womanhood and rejecting the gypsy within herself and her other self, Heathcliff, so will Fedalma need to reject the savage within herself if she marries her lover, the fair-skinned, civilized Duke Silva.

The choice between freedom and imprisonment is then made a choice between kin and ethnicities. While Fedalma is dancing in the public *placa*, a band of gypsy prisoners pass by "in dark file with grand bare legs and arms and savage melancholy in their eyes" (329). Leading them is Fedalma's biological father, Zarca. Unknown to each other, the two stare "as if the meeting light between their eyes made permanent union" (330). Fedalma experiences "a dilated new-fraught consciousness" (331) which is strongly reminiscent of the same moment of encounter in Eliot's sonnets. Maggie Tulliver's fantasy that she is a gypsy child living amongst aliens is here become reality. Eliot again reverses the popular culture's stereotype. Rather than a white child stolen by gypsies, Fedalma is a gypsy child who was stolen by "marauding Spaniards" (371). The discovery of her true ethnicity confirms her sense of otherness, the darkness of her hair and skin, as well as her longing to follow the "river traveling" away from civilization, to "spring from off the walls" of her home and "fly far, far away, until at last I find myself alone among the rocks" (353). Fedalma's love for Silva is consistently disrupted by this desire for freedom.

While Fedalma is often seen as a precursor to the Zionist Daniel Deronda, her position as a rebellious challenge to male authority may more appropriately be seen as laying the groundwork for that novel's equally rebellious woman, Gwendolen Harleth. For as much as *Daniel Deronda*

explores the issue of race, it also explores the issue of marriage within that context. A significant link between Gwendolen and Fedalma may be found in the wedding jewels which bind both of them to their fair-skinned lovers and masters. As in *Deronda*, so too in *The Spanish Gypsy* the act of ornamenting the bride's body with jewels is synonymous with placing both political and sexual chains on her body. In both works, jewels are explicitly identified as the chains which link women to new families. As she accepts Silva's marriage proposal, she "stands perfectly still, clasping her hands together while he fastens" the jewels upon her. "Suddenly a clanking noise is heard without" (351). The "jarring, cruel sound" is the sound of the gypsies being led in their chains to their jail cells. Fedalma, now clasped by her betrothal jewels, immediately identifies with the gypsy prisoners: "O horrible, to be in chains! Why, I with all my bliss have longed sometimes to fly and be at large; have felt imprisoned in my luxury with servants for my gaolers" (351). Her sense of imprisonment lingers. The rubies set in gold express her own sense of life and energy contained and confined to expression in one role, the ornamental role of wife.

> These rubies greet me Duchess. How they glow!
> Their prisoned souls are throbbing like my own.
> Perchance they loved once, were ambitious, proud;
> Or do they only dream of wider life,
> Ache from intenseness, yearn to burst the wall

> Compact of crystal splendour, and to flood
> Some wider space with glory? Poor, poor gems,
> We must be patient in our prison-house,
> And find our space in loving. (356)

As the blood-red rubies are imprisoned in their golden settings, so is Fedalma's blood imprisoned by her role as domesticated, European wife. But, unlike Maggie Tulliver, Gwendolen Harleth, Dorothea Brooke, or almost any other Eliot heroine, Fedalma does not "only dream of wider life," she seeks it. After realizing her true gyspy identity, Fedalma pursues a political destiny rather than marriage. The link to her true destiny and ethnicity is again made through ancestral jewelry. As Fedalma picks up her unknown father's stolen necklace included in her betrothal jewels, it feels familiar. She has a primal memory of its weight. At that moment, her heritage materializes. The escaped Zarca appears in her room and reveals that she is his daughter. Their ensuing discussion forces Fedalma to choose between families and ethnicities, between her "old, imperious memories" of her gypsy kinship and her attempt to enter into a new, European family with her "alien spouse" (378), Silva. Zarca assures her that to marry Silva is to "enslave" herself (377). To use her wifely influence with him to gain clemency for the gypsies would be to use her "freedom" to "enslave" herself (377). In direct contrast to many interpretations of Eliot's feminist writings which describe wife as help meet, as guiding political influence

within the home, here Eliot insists that Fedalma be herself a reformer rather than a reformer's wife. Zarca is contemptuous of the latter role; Fedalma must not lead through "easy prayers strong in a lover's ear, by showering wreaths and sweets and wafted kisses," whispering "languid pity for her race upon the bosom of her" husband (378). Rather, she must play the role of queen and reformer herself.

As Fedalma joins the gypsy camp in Book III of the poem, she finds them in a liminal position between the old world of Europe and the new-old world of Africa, the destination of their new nation. Establishing Africa and the East as the source of the primeval family of humanity, Eliot's narrator, who spans all generations, compares the gypsies' journey to that of her own European predecessors who came "westward past the Caucasus" (425). Camping in tents, like those ancient predecessors, the gypsies possess a primal physicality now lost in modern culture. They lead a "busy, bright-eyed, sportive life" (425). True to the anthropological accounts, the women work. "Tall maidens" are shepherds, their legs exposed. "Above the living curves" of their bodies, "the shoulder's smoothness part[s] the torrent strong of ebon hair" (425). Men and women contribute equally to the sustenance of the camp and to the physical life of the tribe:

> Most like an earth-born race bred by the Sun
> On some rich tropic soil, the father's light
> Flashing in coal-black eyes, the mother's blood

With bounteous elements feeding their young limbs. (425)

"Mother's blood" and "father's light" are here valued equally as they are traditionally believed in gypsy culture. "Barefooted girls not yet opened to womanhood -- dark flowers in slim long buds" -- are celebrated without the qualifying fear of seduction, betrayal, or exploitation which accompanies female beauty in other Eliot works. The gypsies have bodies, "knees," and "naked limbs," which "with beauteous ease bend, lift, and throw, or raise high signalling hands" (492). Fedalma herself is finally pictured as a "steadfast form" among her tribe (494). She becomes both queen and symbolic mother to its new generations.

As she once asked her father to protect the rights of the women of her tribe, the queen Fedalma is presented as a protector of young women herself. "Sent to guard her people and to be the strength of some rock-citadel," she is described as an Athene or protective "goddess." Mourning for her lover at the poem's end, she sits with a "slim, mischievous" gypsy girl. "Happy" and "bedecked with rows of berries," the adolescent girl flirts with an admirer who "clad in skins seemed the Boy-prophet of the wilderness escaped from tasks prophetic" (494). The girl seeks Fedalma's blessing, lifting her head to Fedalma's hand, "hoping to feel the gently pressing palm which touched the deeper sense" (494). Fedalma responds with her touch; "from out her black robe she stretched her speaking hand and shared the girl's content" (494). The moment of complicit

celebration of the mischievous girl's pleasure confirms that, in the new world Fedalma is constructing, woman's destiny will not include her separation from sexual pleasure and from her body. The latter, Eliot suggests, will be redeemed and nurtured as new evolutionary trends are born and nurtured. The physical nature of that evolution is feminine. "The birth of thoughts" seep along in an evolutionary "aerial ocean measureless" which "groans and travails with the painful birth of slow redemption" (494-495). As the mother and female leader of that destiny, Fedalma is a quintessential Eliot heroine. Her own sexual life is "subdued" by the "larger life" of the tribe she leads (500). Yet, her accomplishment in choosing to become an icon herself, a "temple" to her ideals, cannot be overlooked. Surrounded by "black-haired gypsies," Fedalma's "steadfast form" impresses as a figure of great if tragic power.

As a physical entity, the gypsy Fedalma opposes Eliot's English heroines whose bodies are so often literally dragged down with the heaviness, languor, and stasis of their sociopolitical restraints. One recalls Gwendolen Harleth, a study in repressed energy, who literally feels the invisible "locked handcuff" of her husband's "mastery" and whose body is marked by her clear frigidity (645). Maggie Tulliver, as well, is a study in contrasts to Fedalma's physical characterization. Her lack of belief in her own beauty is her first and most primal recognition of her powerlessness while

her cutting of her own hair is an act of physical or sensual self-denial or self-punishment which only confirms the incompatibility of female sensuality and female dignity in her world. Her childhood fear of patriarchal sexuality is here poignantly rewritten in the maternal scene between Fedalma and the gypsy girl. Indeed, while Eliot suggests that Fedalma's ethnicity draws her toward the acceptance of her body in what Eliot perceived as almost a genetic trait, she engages in a revolutionary subversion of Victorian anthropological stereotypes.

A strange and melodramatic work, *The Spanish Gypsy* has been misperceived as an exercise in "total self-abnegation" (Neufeldt 52). Fedalma's attempt to raise up her tribe from ignominy seems destined to fail. The generation she and Silva represent is steeped in human frailty while the epic endeavors of the past are buried with the two patriarchal figures, the Prior Isidore and the pagan Zarca. Contrasted with the memory of that past, Fedalma and Silva seem mere echoes. The gypsy queen, it has been suggested, experiences "no moment of tragic insight" as she crosses to North Africa with her people (Neufeldt 52). Such readings ignore the public accomplishments in Fedalma's private sacrifice. They also naively seek a "happy" closure to what Eliot termed an epic tragedy. Between *Romola* and *Middlemarch*, Eliot's *Spanish Gypsy* has been seen as denoting her "growing realization that the claims of public duty and responsibility must not be satisfied at the expense of per-

sonal fulfillment and happiness" (Neufeldt 44). Ultimately, the subtext of such readings suggest that "personal fulfillment and happiness" translate into the image of the "Madonna" found at the end of *Middlemarch* when Dorothea Brooke has found domesticated, properly gendered happiness as a new mother. But Neufeldt simplifies Eliot's texts. His reading does not address the immense dignity which elevates Fedalma at the poem's end. Nor does it address Eliot's renewed resistance to domesticity in *Daniel Deronda*.

Its unique attention to ethnicity allows *The Spanish Gypsy* access to a different experience from Dorothea Brooke, Romola, Maggie Tulliver, or Gwendolen Harleth. In the final "primal" encounter between gypsy woman and gypsy girl, Eliot again suggests an empowering connection to a different human family. To arrive there, she has subverted and rejected Christian and pagan fathers, her European lover, and the nurture in domesticity which is the hallmark of "modern civilization." The new model is not reached without the violent disruption of the old and without the equally violent disruption of Victorian anthropological perceptions.

End Notes

[1]Eliot researched gypsies in both George Borrow's *The Zincali; or an Account of the Gypsies in Spain* and H.M.G. Grellman's *Dissertation on the Gipseys*. Both writers considered the gypsies a "savage people" who still existed in the state "rude nature had formed them" (Grellmann 22-23). Their books are listed in *The George Eliot - George Henry Lewes Library: An Annotated Catalogue of Their Books at Dr. Williams' Library*, William Baker, editor. Eliot's notes on them are recorded in her *Writer's Notebook, 1854-1879*, Joseph Weisenfarth, editor.

[2]For my understanding of the ways in which the domestic woman was used as the symbol of evolutionary achievement during the Victorian period, I am particularly indebted to Elizabeth Fee's article, "The Sexual Politics of Victorian Anthropology," and Anita Levy's book, *Other Women: The Writing of Class, Race, and Gender, 1832-1898*.

Chapter III

The Giaour's Campaign:

Seduction and the Other in *Felix Holt: The Radical*

1.

In the novel, *Felix Holt: The Radical*, which interrupted the writing of her epic poem, Eliot continues to use the cultural other as a focus. There, writing the lives of English men and women, she again confronts the problem of race and desire. Indeed, as *Felix Holt* intruded on the writing of Eliot's *The Spanish Gypsy*, so does that "English novel" of reform politics contain an intruder itself (George Eliot's Journal 5 December 1864). "Someone is expected" from the East on the novel's first page (85). A child of the text's sexual secrets, prince and heir to its decidedly unstable underworld, Harold Transome, the Radical candidate who opposes Felix Holt, is an exotic outsider. A "Giaour" or an "Oriental, you know," he is clearly a representation and a subversion of the Western construct of Orientalism, particularly as it was created by Byron in his Oriental poetry (541, 194). An object of sexual and economic desire to Esther Lyon, Transome has not yet been weighed as a disruption or subversion in the novel now considered solely as Eliot's affirmation of the stability and benign "prosperity" of English culture. By the novel's end, Harold Transome wishes that "he had never come back to this pale English

sunshine" (582).

A Byronic "Giaour" and a political opportunist, Harold Transome wages two campaigns in the novel, one to win Esther Lyon and one to win a seat in the House of Commons (541). As the political alter ego and romantic rival of Eliot's retiring, Arnoldian radical, Felix Holt, Transome provides another link between otherness and desire in Eliot's canon. Anticipating the problem of miscegenation, which is to become a central focus in *The Spanish Gypsy* and in the following two novels, *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, Transome and his cloak of Orientalism is less an "interruption" of *The Spanish Gypsy* than a logical step towards that text's exoticism. Like Fedalma, he too possesses multiple allegiances to race, class, and culture. Indeed, it may be that Eliot's gypsy is absent only in name from *Felix Holt*. All the dangers inherent in writing her story -- the other's overt sensuality, her rejection of European values, her political ambition -- are substantially present in this novel of the Midlands where otherness rears its intricately threatening head. Ultimately, the excoriation and final redemption of Harold Transome might say as much about the difficulties of escaping the prescribed plots of English domestic fiction as about radicalism, Toryism, or Whiggery.

As in Eliot's earlier works, which create characters with allegiances to two races or cultures, in *Felix Holt* the exotic "other" figure is a half-caste. Harold Transome is an illegitimate Englishman who has come of age in the East

at Smyrna. He returns, like the Byronic Childe Harold himself, skilled in business, pleasure, and radicalism, from the East to his ancestral home. Like Eliot's half-blooded gypsies, the mysterious Will Ladislaw, and the half-Jewish, half-English gentleman, Daniel Deronda, Harold Transome complicates more conventional models of nineteenth-century others found in Dickens, Thackeray, or the Brontës. In again focusing on an "other" who is neither fully English nor authentically Eastern, Eliot introduces multiculturalism into Victorian racial stereotypes, complicating simplistic contemporary notions of race in provocative, unconventional ways. Making the object of desire an "Oriental" or a "Giaour," the novel studies not just the English self's connection to a provincial community but to the wider, multi-cultural world. The heroine's attraction to her exotic suitor and to the socially constructed mythology of exoticism then becomes a metaphor for the narrative drive toward the breaking of bonds with self and community as well as toward their reinvention. Often literally or metaphorically "savage," the cultural other becomes a repository of the violent energy involved in tearing down, and then "making up," society (Fisher).

Felix Holt's Orientalism and its connection between racial darkness or otherness and class have been ignored in favor of neat definitions of Eliot's political ideas in regard to the process of reform. Focusing exclusively on Eliot's conservative, Arnoldian view of a politics of cul-

ture and a legislation of human kindness, critical studies have failed to see that, like the two plots of *Daniel Deronda*, the miscegenistic romance plot of *Felix Holt* connects the problems of blood and race, and their metaphoric content of the self's conflict with community, to the plots of vocation and reform. As in Eliot's last great novel, her clean conservatism, or the "high mountain air" of her idea of reform, possesses a correspondent depravity, a "Red Deeps" of moral uncertainty (*The Mill on the Floss* 391). In *Felix Holt*, those depths are reached through Harold Transome's moral position as a slave owner and empire builder, his illegitimacy and that of his "savage" child, Harry. In contrast to the "Gothic" or Northern European superiority of Felix Holt and Esther Lyon's French-English aristocratic delicacy of feature and frame, Transome, Jermyn, and the child Harry are all posited as "savage" or of a lower order. As the metaphor of venereal disease permeates Eliot's "Address to the Working Man," so do nineteenth-century racial stereotypes permeate this novel. However, as the products both of otherness and Englishness, the stereotypes in *Felix Holt* undermine rather than stabilize the English community. The "Oriental" here is as tainted by his identity as an imperialist Englishman as by his participation in "barbaric" Oriental custom.

Some excellent readers have noted that the issue of reform in *Felix Holt* connects an individual's moral to his or her political awareness to such an extent that "family

politics" reflect national politics (Gallagher 258)[1] But in *Felix Holt* Eliot's notion of "family" extends beyond the national family of England, encompassing "the Oriental" within the colonial Englishman, and issues of race within the "family" of the English class system itself. The politics of race and class infiltrate the politics of Victorian national reform in the novel, much as they did through the career of Disraeli in actual Victorian politics. Through its melange of historical and literary "Oriental" figures, racial stereotypes, and reform politics, Eliot's novel very deliberately calls into play questions about the moral axioms of Englishness in both the political and domestic spheres. As many critics have noticed, she does not satisfactorily answer them in the "conservative" *Felix Holt* in which the willful heroine ends up married, chastened, and "punished" at novel's end. However, Eliot's questions themselves probe deeply into notions of national identity, deconstructing appearances of Englishness and otherness, deliberately confusing and subverting those values which other Victorians novelists, like Dickens or Thackeray, hold sacred. The questions about otherness which the "Oriental" Harold raises do not start from Edward Said's clean slate, where "positive ideas of home, of a nation and its language of proper order, good behavior, moral values," set a national standard by which others are measured (*Culture and Imperialism* 81). Instead, the moral values of Eliot's England are themselves apparently absent from all

but the narrator's supertext. That narrator, a voice for an author who is herself an outsider in a complicated, often paradoxical sense, is itself in conflict about the moral axioms of the English world.

Eliot's ideal England, her bright, organic, utopian community, then, has an underside that is often drawn in terms of race and class. Energized by sexual and political desire, like the "brown, determined lizard," Harold Transome, like Caterina Sarti, Fedalma, Maggie Tulliver, Will Ladislaw, or Daniel Deronda initiates the processes of reform and narrative progression in Eliot's canon. Torn herself between "disgust" and desire, Eliot's narrator depicts the lower realm such figures inhabit in paradoxical terms of repugnance and attraction. The lower realm in *Felix Holt*, of which Harold Transome is prince, is also the seat of sexual attraction, sensual pleasure, and temptation. Like Satan, Harold Transome is "far more interesting" than the rather hapless English Felix, whose angelic ascetism is partnered with a "belligerent pedantry" and a profound anti-sensualism, signaled mainly through his disapproval of Esther's taste for Byron (Thomson 110). Eliot is clearly intrigued by Transome's presence and by that of his heir, the incomprehensible polyglot child, Harry. These forces, intruding roughly, savagely into the novel's Arnoldian scheme, are ones to be reckoned with, not tossed aside in the desire to create a "moral" George Eliot with a narrative voice devoid of any troubling paradoxes. Indeed,

casting her candidate Harold Transome in the shape of Disraeli, who casts himself in the shape of the Orientalist Byron, Eliot's process of reform in her "political" novel, her "making up society," displaces our concept of her morality and brings new moral questions to the study of her canon.

Ascetic, pedagogic, and severe, the morals of Felix Holt himself have in the past been perceived as those of George Eliot. This is particularly crucial in the novel's play on a key moral article of faith, the reading of Byron. Recently readers of George Eliot have begun to argue that the narrative voice does not necessarily "identif[y] with Felix Holt" (Sheets 157). As Robin Sheets suggests, Eliot's identification with her protagonist ought not to be such a given. Eliot's "radical" is, after all, boorish, pedantic, and rigid. His naive, homespun speeches and gestures take place in a novel where "honest, direct discourse seems to have no place" and where "words themselves have become difficult to decipher" (Sheets 147). Ultimately, Felix is unable to master language, to "recover" it for his own and his party's uses. As a way of judging Felix critically, Eliot compares him to Joseph, "a sensitive, well-spoken, and politically acute figure from the Old Testament" (Sheets 157). The result, as Sheets convincingly argues, is that Eliot did not identify with her male protagonist and "his failings [cannot] be ascribed to her ambivalence regarding reform movements" (157). Certainly, the political cynicism

of Eliot's letters suggests that her ideas for reform live less in Matthew Arnold's utopia than in Disraeli's empire, and, correspondently, less in Felix Holt's political vision than in Harold Transome's.

2.

In the past, Eliot's narrator has been linked to Felix Holt's belief that, as a representative of moral depravity, Byron can only corrupt. The reading of Byron and the development of Byronic characteristics become an important test of moral correctness in the novel, and linking Eliot's voice with Felix has contributed to the critical construction of an earnest, morally conservative, politically idealistic George Eliot. Throughout, the young Esther Lyon is seen reading Byron with pleasure and is severely condemned for doing so by the pedantic Felix. Echoing Carlyle, he insists that she put down her Byron and replace it with a more instructive text. The conflict is a significant one throughout the novel. Esther sacrifices her Byronic text, particularly its tales of "Oriental love" and its acute "invective," when she marries Felix (*Letters* I:71). Again, hearing George Eliot in Felix Holt, critics have seen this rejection as firmly based in the biographical record. The mature George Eliot's distaste for Byron is plain for all to see in her letters. Equally plain, however, is the fact that the young Mary Ann Evans was herself a devotee of Byron

and that, indeed, he was as much a favorite as Carlyle or Wordsworth. It was only after the 1869 exposure of Byron's incestuous relationship with his sister that Eliot began to deplore him. Written in 1867, Eliot's novel predates that shift. In her letters, the record of her attachment to Byron, indeed her identification with his poetry, suggests an entirely different reading of *Felix Holt*. Deeply interwoven in the makeup of Harold Transome as a Byronic Childe Harold or a Giaour himself, Eliot's treatment of Byron becomes an important element in the novel and necessitates the critical re-reading of his poetry in Eliot's life as a writer and reader.

Clearly, the Byron who is discussed in *Felix Holt* is a familiar figure to Mary Ann Evans. In her adolescence, Evans formed close friendships at school with two girls, Martha Jackson and Maria Lewis. Addressing each other as Clematis, Ivy, and Veronica in the fashion of the sentimental "Language of Flowers," the girls often took, at Evans' suggestion, "assigned subjects for their letters, bones 'to pick together without contention'" (Haight 25). Usually severely Evangelical and didactic in tone, the letters are an apt illustration of adolescent religious fervor. Written during the "Holy War" period, as Mary Ann Evans defied her father's wishes and refused to attend a church she found theologically moribund, the letters' most significant, and most poignant, resonance is their depiction of a bright young woman living in "a *walled-in world*" that comes

vibrantly alive only through books (*Letters* emphasis Eliot's). Allusions to Carlyle, Byron, and Shakespeare break through the soporific constraints of the "Language of Flowers," coloring the girls' provincial Evangelical piety with the beginnings of an incisive literary sensibility. Clearly identifying with Byron's roving and Satanic impulses, Mary Ann Evans alludes to him frequently. Like Esther Lyons, she read Byron for pleasure and for affirmation of her own desire to wander, to leave home and its "walled-in" confines and limitations. Her rage often found its voice through the yearning and the anger expressed in Byron's poetry.

Lonely and depressed, in May 1840 George Eliot wrote to her friend Maria Lewis of her dissatisfaction with her "lot" in life:

> [To] tell you the truth I begin to feel involuntarily isolated, and without being humble, to have such a consciousness that I am a negation of all that finds love and esteem as makes me anticipate for myself -- no matter what; I shall have countless undeserved enemies if my life be prolonged, wherever my lot may be cast, and I need rigid discipline, which I have never yet had. Byron in his *Childe Harold* (which I have just begun the second time) checks reflections on individual and personal sorrows by reminding himself of the revolutions and woes beneath which the shores of the Mediterranean have groaned. We may with more effectual comparison

> think of the dangers of the Great Ark of the Church in these latter times of the deluge of sin. (*Letters* I 51-52)

The remarkable irony here is that Evans, for the moment, finds Byron a source of the "rigid discipline" which she both craves and chafes against. More pious than her letters to Martha Jackson, this letter to Maria Lewis nonetheless marks the special significance which Byron held for her. Thrown into relief against the background of the letter's weak allusion to the "dangers" now facing the "Great Ark of the Church," Eliot's allusion to the opening stanza of *Child Harold*'s fourth canto has the special ring of personal identification. The allusion to Byron, part self-affirmation, part self-derision, reflects not just the tenor of *Childe Harold* itself, but Evans' attempts to "check" her own desires which strongly resist containment. If in the opening of Canto IV Childe Harold assuages his personal sorrows by comparing them to those of the city of Venice, he also expresses his wanderlust. "I've taught me other tongues -- and in strange eyes have made me not a stranger.... I leave behind the inviolate island of the sage and free, and seek me out a home by a remoter sea" (IV vii). Though the young Mary Ann Evans could not yet actually leave England, as had Byron's Harold, clearly she had the desire to escape her "involuntary isolation" and the imprisoning quality of her domestic routine. Seeking escape, Evans found in Byron the ability to brighten "dull life" with "the

beings of the mind ... essentially immortal" (*Childe Harold* IV iv).

The allusions to Byron, and particularly to *Childe Harold*, continue to mark Evans' "flower" correspondence, especially during the crucial period of the "Holy War," the stand-off between Mary Ann and Robert Evans over church-going. At this time she inscribed the flyleaf of her copy of Petrarch with four stanzas from *Childe Harold*'s fourth Canto (those referring to Petrarch's tomb). She recorded her reading and re-reading of Byron in her journal and letters. Even more significantly, the Satanic-Byronic attitude is named and assumed in one of her angriest, most personally revealing, and, paradoxically, most "political" letters from this period. The letter clearly reveals that Byron had become an ally in Mary Ann Evans' personal rebellion or private war of independence. Moreover, its political metaphors have direct significance for Esther Lyon's own internal holy war in *Felix Holt* which also mixes politics, desire, fathers and daughters, and church going. Indeed, Evans' letters find politics an apt metaphor for this domestic dispute just as *Felix Holt* finds it a metaphor for the disputes within the larger family of humanity. As father and daughter attempt to redraw the boundaries of authority and obedience, the daughter's eloquent arguments are illustrated by images culled not from the language of Victorian family values but from an analogous political issue, Chartism. Apparently, Evans' felt her role as a daughter to be similar to that of

an unchartered artisan:

> Carlyle says that to the artisans of Glasgow the world is not one of blue skies and a green carpet, but a world of coperas-fumes, low cellars, hard wages, 'striking,' and gin; and if the recollection of this picture did not remind me that gratitude should be my reservoir of feeling, that into which all that comes from above or around should be received as a source of fertilization for my soul, I should give a lachrymose parody of the said description and tell you all seriously what I now tell you playfully, that mine is too often a world such as Wilkie can so well paint, a *walled-in* world. But I must check this Byronic invective..." (*Letters* 1:71; emphasis Eliot's).

This strikes the key note of Eliot's identification with Byron. Her enjoyment of him is clear. He is irresistible, read and re-read. But the pleasure is a guilty one. His "invective," so identifiable with her own rage and her own desire to break free of the rules of her father, must be "checked" and controlled. Like Esther Lyons, she indulges her desire to read, but always with the knowledge that the identification is less a communion with God than with a fallen angel. Reading Byron represents, to Mary Ann Evans, leaving home, a risky endeavor, much dreamed of in her adolescent letters in which she often quotes Byron: "both my heart and my limbs would leap to behold the 'great and wide sea,' that old Ocean on which man can leave

no trace" (Byron qtd in Eliot *Letters* I:101). Leaving "no trace," leaving identity, girlhood, family, and English society behind, sailing off, like Childe Harold, on the great ocean of independence and self-discovery, is at once terrifying and exhilarating.

After the publication of "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life" in August 1869, two years after the writing of *Felix Holt*, Eliot joined the English readership, scandalized by the revelation of Byron's incest, in a conventional and spasmodic reaction against his poetry. She wrote to her friend Cara Bray that

> Byron and his poetry have become more and more repugnant to me of late years (I read a good deal of him a little while ago, in order to form a fresh judgment). As to this story, I cannot help being sorry that it seemed necessary to publish what is only worthy to die and rot. After all Byron remains deeply pitiable, like all of us sinners. (*Letters* 23 August 1869)

It is clear from Eliot's journal that the "fresh judgment" of which she speaks was formed in January 1869, when she recorded reading the first four cantos of *Don Juan*. But earlier letters reveal a different appreciation of Byron and one which asks to be considered in light of the adolescent Esther Lyon's reading in *Felix Holt*. Eliot critics may well assume that her mature assessment of Byron is that he was "repugnant," but it is necessary to examine exactly what fears and concerns went into that judgment. Esther Lyon's

furtive, pleasurable reading and ultimate rejection of Byron is not likely to be merely attributable to the development of "good" moral taste. Esther Lyon, like Eliot, has a clear but troubled attraction to Byron's sensualism and to his Orientalist fancies, and re-examining Esther's reading and Eliot's re-casting of her political radical in the shape of a Byronic Childe Harold challenges the conservatism of the novel, and leaves us far less certain that Felix Holt *is* in fact George Eliot. In a novel written by a novelist determined both by temperament and political inclination to show both the overt and covert elements within an organically interwoven community, we cannot assume that the rejection of political radicalism is as clear-cut as it once seemed to Eliot scholars. As in Mary Ann Evans' perception of Byron's poetry itself, in her novel the repugnant and the irresistible are often one and the same. As they are aligned, so is the "moral" choice, here embodied by Felix Holt, often deeply resistible and as unappealing as the distasteful Casaubon himself in *Middlemarch*. As in that later novel, it is necessary in *Felix Holt* to distinguish true morality from ignorant ascetism.

Like Eliot's own reading of Byron, the novel's progress to Esther's ultimate rejection of Byronic ideology is morally and intellectually complicated. Infiltrating the web-like narrative on several different levels and acting as a controversial article of faith, Esther's appreciation for Byron initiates a violent "holy war" of sorts between

herself and Felix. In this sense, Byron's Orientalism and his accompanying sensuality inform those two characters' struggle with the experience of sexual desire. Anticipating and literalizing their struggle, the heavily Byronic "Giaour," Harold Transome, serves as a medium through which the pleasures and dangers of desire are acted out. Indeed, the resonances of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and his *Oriental Tales* help to shape the moral and political universe of *Felix Holt*.

As in *Childe Harold*, the setting of the physical, cultural, and moral universe in *Felix Holt* is a ruin. A metaphor of cultural ruination, Transome Court stands derelict at the novel's opening, ravaged by time. Transome's ancestral home recalls Childe Harold's "good hall" whose "hearth is desolate" and where "wild weeds are gathering on the wall" (*CHP* I 2). This pervasive sense of ruination extends, in Eliot's novel as in Byron's poem, beyond setting to modern man himself. "The wreck of modern man" is clearly symbolized in the half-witted "old" Mr...... Transome, the embittered, wasted Mrs. Transome, and her corrupt lover. Eventually, ruin of a sort will be visited also upon the young Transome heir Harold when he learns of his illegitimacy. But Eliot's allusions to Byron are marked by important deviations from his text. The middle-class Eliot introduces a class-consciousness which the aristocratic Lord Byron ignores. Here ruination is the pragmatic effect of poverty, class, or race, rather than the result of Romantic

ennui. Likewise, Eliot's pilgrim is not endowed with the fine cultural sense of Childe Harold. He does not mourn the loss of classical values represented in Byron's poem by his displeasure in the British alliance with the Ottoman Turks over Greece. Significantly, Harold Transome is one of the "barbarous hands" exploiting Greek culture (*CHP* I xciii). In Smyrna, then a center of the Ottoman Empire, Transome has bought a Greek wife, a slave woman who is the mother of his child Harry.

Clearly, Harold Transome's sojourn in the East and his self-identification as "an Oriental" is another ripple in Eliot's complex use of the cultural other. Interrupting *The Spanish Gypsy*, which was causing Eliot considerable trouble, *Felix Holt* seems to voice the very potent cultural forces which insist on the moral corruption of the cultural other. The usually "liberal" Eliot, wrestling with her most progressive female narrative in which a European protagonist becomes a gypsy and lives out Maggie Tulliver's fantasy-nightmare desire to escape "civilization," now looks through the mirror of English culture and affirms stereotypical cultural anxieties. Eliot's abrupt switch from *The Spanish Gypsy* to *Felix Holt* marks an equally abrupt shift in political orientation. She voices Anglo-centric "disgust" with the other. Like Fedalma, Transome exudes an intense eroticism that here proves as unmanageable as it is seductive.

Especially as suitor to the Byron-reading Esther Lyons,

Harold Transome evokes, as Will Ladislaw will later evoke through both Byron and Shelley, the Satanic Byronic hero as well as Byron's pilgrim Harold. Uniting her own creative vision with this element of allusion, Eliot seems to engage in a moral dialogue with Byron. Like Childe Harold, Transome is a figure of less than moral properties who, as an illegitimate child, has already "run" through "Sin's long labyrinth" (*CHP* I v). The novel's opening, like *Childe Harold*, evokes the tradition of the *romaunt*. Eliot's protagonist has also been "sent upon a mission, the fulfillment of which will prove his courage and other qualities needed for moral survival" (Marshall 36). Eliot's Harold shares with Byron's anti-hero his sense of "a crowded, pressing past -- not only the fullness of immediate pleasures but also those dense and obsessive memories which will always haunt such heroes" (Garber 9). The medieval tradition, as it is filtered through Byron's cynicism, fits Harold Transome. He is a strange, alien pilgrim returned to a strange home which is marked with the memory of sexual sin, remorse, and guilt. At Transome Court, first envisioned to the reader as an "enchanted forest in the underworld," the very trees bleed with "human histories" and "unuttered cries" (84). Emissary knight and captain of industry, Harold Transome has one foot in the blood-wet world of Byronic Romanticism and one in Eliot's Victorian world of real socio-political concerns. He is a strange hybrid monster of Gothic Romanticism and Victorian

efficiency and energy: "the lizard's egg, that white-rounded passive prettiness, had become a brown, darting, determined lizard" (98). Marking the evolution of literature itself, he is a hero or villain evolved to suit the spirit of his own age, a study in ruthless energy, a dangerous inversion of Childe Harold's Romantic *ennui* and *welschriften*. If the East represented spiritual revivification and sensual fascination to Byron and Goethe, it represented another opportunity altogether to the pragmatic nineteenth-century industrialist -- the opportunity to make a fortune. This Harold's mission was economic. At the opening of the novel, his moral nature is as bankrupt as his coffers are full.

Indeed, Eliot's Harold may share the experiences of Byron's Childe, but, like Disraeli, whose travels to the East in Byron's footsteps involved more the acquisition of the poet's old servants than his cultural understanding, he shares in the luxury of the East without even the usual Western absorption in its perceived mysticism. For Harold Transome also "the East is a career" (Disraeli *Tancred*). Much like public perceptions of Childe Harold and the protagonists of Byron's *Oriental Tales*, Harold Transome's sexuality is marked by his Oriental travels. He poses a political and moral threat to the England to which he returns, and the novel regularly relates politics and morality, beginning with Harold's announcement of himself as a Radical candidate, which strikes his mother "as if her son had said that he had been converted to Mahomentanism at

Smyrna, and had four wives" (92). Harold signals exactly what Eliot fears in the character of Fedalma, Caterina Sarti, Maggie Tulliver, or Daniel Deronda -- a tainted, dark, almost savage, sexual and political desire, unmitigated and uncontrolled by English perceptions of morality and vocation. When Eliot comes to represent those desires, she exoticizes, here Orientalizes, them in order to voice them. In the novel, a literary genre which "was becoming increasingly committed to depicting only the normative *bourgeois* values of industry, sobriety, and chastity" (Leask 20), Orientalizing the rebellious figure "permitted the representation of ...'transgressive' moral values" (Leask 20). Like Victorian Orientalists who translated the *Arabian Nights* into English, Eliot too is breaking the "Victorian taboo of masking sexuality" but is doing so by speaking only of sexuality "in a removed setting -- the East" (Leask 20-21).

In this literary exploitation of the East, however, Eliot engages less in redrawing the axioms of imperialism than in challenging them. Harold Transome is not the cheerily unexamined rubber-plantation owner of *Mansfield Park*. He is a lizard, a conscious representation of the fact that "desire and moral scruple merge in fascination with oriental luxury and its commodification in trade and literature" (Leask 21). But he is also an Englishman. Because his empire building involved slave owning and union with the Ottoman empire, he is made an immoral figure. His

past and future is part of the English absorption in an East "ripe for moral and economic appropriation" (21). Just as Byron casts Giaour and Hassan "in the same mold," so too Eliot's narrative stance towards Harold reverses (Brantlinger 61).

The fact of Harold's violation of the East is immediately apparent in the presence of his son, Harry. Waiting for Harold's return from Smyrna, his mother is full of anxiety:

> If Mrs. Transome had expected only her son, she would have trembled less; she expected a little grandson also : and there were reasons why she had not been enraptured when her son had written to her only when he was on the eve of returning that he had already had an heir born to him. (89)

The thinly veiled fact alluded to here will be confirmed by the child Harry's appearance and character and will make another woman "tremble." The shocked and affronted Esther Lyons learns that "Harry's mother had been a slave -- was bought, in fact" (954). Here Eliot suggests that "the Giaour concerned" is not a Romantic figure of "Oriental love," as Esther knew it "chiefly from Byronic poems," but an imperialist, even anti-Byronic figure (541). Harry's mother had been Greek. Buying a Greek wife in Smyrna, Harold Transome participates in the modern desecration of Greek civilization which so infuriated Byron. But the image, made so popular and controversial by Hiram Powers'

exhibition of *The Greek Slave* at the Crystal Palace exhibition in 1851, had even more resonance for the Victorians. Exhibited in America or England, the iconography of Power's statue spoke to feminists, who identified with slaves, to supporters of Greek independence, to Abolitionists, like Frederick Douglass, or to feminist poets, like Elizabeth Barrett Browning who condemned the statue's passivity in her poem, "Hiram Powers' *Greek Slave*." The "subjectivity and intensity" of responses to the statue, however, all share one element (Yellin 110). That is a deep

> hatred of the cruel TURK who does thus violate the sacred rights of human nature ... our sister with all her affections, aspirations, and high capacities, *sold* to the bestial TURK, whoever he may be, and he designs to cast her down from her god-given estate, into the dominion of *things*. (Douglass 110)

This is the company Harold Transome keeps in buying a Greek wife. Aligning himself with the "bestial" Turk, he is, of course, more closely associated with a grasping, ugly, dangerously vulgar acquisitiveness and cultural barbarism. But as Powers turns the image of slavery white, so does Eliot reverse the image of the slave-owner, who here is not authentically a Turk, but an Englishman tainted and colored by his associations with the practices of a "bestial" people.

As a Radical candidate, Harold Transome's decadent and corrupt history is always with him. He is less Byron's

Childe Harold than Disraeli's. The fictional politician returns to Britain just when the historical politician did, returning from Smyrna, where he had enjoyed the same lifestyle as had Harold Transome, learning to

> repose on voluptuous ottomans and smoke superb pipes, daily to indulge in the luxuries of a bath which requires half-a-dozen attendants for its perfection; to court the air in a carved caique, by shores which are a perpetual scene, and to find no exertion greater than a canter on a barb.... (Disraeli *Letters* I:174)

By creating a similarly luxurious political candidate of equally "voluptuous" morality and strongly imperialist tendencies, Eliot seems to be referring to the problematic morality of Disraeli's imperialist policies. She is indicting, as Byron did, Victorian Englishness itself. Peeling the layers away from the multi-layered character of Harold Transome reveals that his Byronic "Oriental" trappings are mere affectation. He is a bastardization of Byron, not the book of poems which Esther is reading against Felix Holt's advice but merely its cover. Here Eliot seems deliberately to be challenging Felix Holt's moral perception of Byron, differentiating between the genuine article and its usurpation.

The threat to Eliot's sense of country posed by this false Childe Harold is made clearly present in the new generation of Transomes. With the creation of the heir Harry, Eliot seems again to be stressing the generational

contamination of English culture and English family values from within English culture itself. As the Victorian Harold is no improvement on the Romantic, so the Victorian heir is no improvement on the father; he is a further bastardization of the Transome morality. The dangers of the post-1832, post-reform political world are embodied in him. Darkly "savage," gibbering his own incomprehensible polyglot language, the baby Harry literally consumes and is consumed by the forces which created him. He first appears as "a black-maned little boy" who is driving old, feeble-minded Mr...... Transome as if his grandfather were a horse and himself the master. The "little savage," whose speech is "a broken lisping polyglot of hazardous interpretation," cannot understand his grandmother's warning that he let her dog "alone - he'll bite" if Harry pulls his tail. But the advice is misconstrued. Harry is like an animal himself, unable to control his appetite or understand the difference between people and animals. In front of the aristocratic Sir Maximus and Lady De Barry, who have come to learn of his father's candidacy, Harry bites his grandmother. They immediately conclude that the savage boy with the "great black eyes" doesn't look like a lady's child" (179). "After living in the East so long ... he and his father may have become the sort of people one would not care to be intimate with" (119). Later, the child Harry, still unable to understand English, names his grandmother "Bite" (492). As the plot of *Felix Holt* thickens with the mixed blood of

racial and class difference, it clearly expresses an almost overdetermined anxiety over the "dilution" of blood and fusion of races.

Characteristic of Eliot's fiction, Harry's name for his grandmother suggests that it remains unclear who has bitten whom. The child Harry has, in a sense, been bitten or marked by his grandmother. It is to her, in the scheme of Victorian racial and classist stereotypes, that he owes his father's immoral influence. If he is not "a lady's child," his father is not a gentleman's child. Jermyn possesses, like his son and grandson, "latent savage elements" (115). Once unleashed amidst the aristocracy and chartered with political power, those elements have teeth. Baby Harry is then a metaphor for his father's "low" heritage and political radicalism. The visiting Sir Maximus and Lady De Barry never get to the question of "Harold's politics" and rush away only to have their suspicions confirmed. Harold "has become a regular beast among those Mahometans -- he's got neither religion nor morals left. He can't know anything about English politics" (182). The savage Oriental, a very "licentious man" (182), is both personally and politically suspect.

De Barry's condemnation is ironic. While the English aristocrats perceive Harold as an Oriental usurper, Eliot's narrator critically identifies his character with English imperialism and an empty, economic Orientalism. Not truly of the East in the sense that Fedalma or Daniel Deronda will

be, not truly different in the sense that Will Ladislaw, Dorothea Brooke, or Maggie Tulliver are, Harold Transome is a purely English entity. His illegitimate, biting child, confused in the very direction of his attack, represents the illegitimacy of his Oriental trappings.

Though Eliot condemns Harold Transome's imperialist exploits, his exotic sexuality still clings to him like the scent of "atta of roses" (601). Esther's "Giaour" becomes the object of her desire; her reading of Byron, which sensitizes her to the "Oriental love" she thinks Transome represents, becomes the stuff of her resistance to the ascetic, pleasure-denying Felix Holt. Indeed, the English lovers' stand-off over Esther's reading of Byron is explosive and violent. So intense is Holt's reaction to the poet that, ironically, this pacifist "should like to come and scold [Esther] every day, and make her cry and cut her fine hair off" (154). Willing to "live on raw turnips to subdue [his] flesh" (156), Felix perceives Esther and her Byron as a sensual, luxurious trap meant to keep him from his "fine" political "purpose" (156). Quite literally, he hates her:

> 'I could grind my teeth at such self-satisfied minxes, who think they can tell everybody what is the correct thing, and the utmost stretch of their ideas will not place them in a level with the intelligent fleas. I should like to see if she could be made ashamed of herself.' (156)

Felix's sadistic desires to punish, scold, and injure Esther are returned, like Dorothea's to Casaubon's or Romola's to Savonorala's, with something approaching love. Though she thinks "she could never love anyone who was so much of a pedagogue and a master," she also experiences "a strange contradiction of impulses"; sexual desire and sexual repugnance are clearly at issue in the flare-up over Byron (213).

For Felix Holt and Esther Lyon, the exiled Byron becomes an emblem of the sexuality which Esther must conceal or distance herself from as a lady and which Felix Holt labels "debauchery" and a distraction from his "fine purpose" (156). Discovering Esther's reading, Felix discovers her sexuality, and in the act of that discovery, Esther notes Felix's virility, his "massive" build and his "large clear grey eyes and full lips" (150). Discovering Byron in Esther's workbasket takes on the quality of violent sexual exposure when the large, rough Felix accidentally knocks over the basket, revealing her reading and her private thoughts:

> down went the blue-frilled work basket, flying open, and dispersing on the floor reels, thimble, muslin work, a small sealed bottle of atta of rose, and something heavier than these - a duodecimo volume which fell close to him....'Byron's *Poems*!' he said, in a tone of disgust, while Esther was recovering all the other articles. '"The Dream" -- he'd better have been asleep and snoring. What! do you stuff your memory

with Byron, Miss Lyon?' (150)

The basket, dressed in blue like Esther herself, goes down and spills its "small, sealed" feminine secrets, the "heavier" of which is the hidden volume.

Blundering and invasive, disapproving and pedagogic, Felix now acts the role of moral arbiter. As his voice has been assumed to be Eliot's own, traditional readings find this "first determining confrontation" with Felix central to the novel. "The theme of Esther's 'dreaming' consciousness, stuffed as it is with illusion, and her progressive awakening, is central to *Felix Holt*" (Coveney 655). Esther's "illusions," symbolized by her admiration for "The Dream," impede her moral progress. This reading is underscored by strict interpretations of George Eliot's aestheticism. How could the admirer of the Dutch realists also admire the literary tinsel of Byron's poetry? But such wholesale generic distinctions break down in the face of the novel's complexity. The rejection of Byron, consistently placed in aesthetic terms, is less a question of ways of writing than of ways of experiencing desire. Better to examine what so repulses in "The Dream" and exactly what Felix Holt would like to see left "asleep" (150).

In "The Dream," Esther is reading the narrative of what is later to "disgust" Mary Anne Evans, the story of a forbidden, perhaps incestuous love. Already repulsed by the sexual nature of the poem, Felix Holt is reacting not just to Esther's penchant for what he thinks is inferior poetry

but to sex. Overtly misogynistic, he cannot bear the poetry of seduction. Byron is an especially acute representation here because his poetry so often explores the male self under seige from predatory women. Ironically, Byron's male heroes express "what it might be like to be a heroine, compelled to negotiate and often to feign compliance in a world made by and for those who hold power" (Fischer 72). This type of threat is clear in "The Dream" in which the young male narrator is in love with a compelling woman who seduces him and then leaves him grieving and in "misery" (1.208). Felix's crude protests against women reflect the promise of Byron's "Dream" in which exactly what Felix fears from women happens to the protagonist:

> He had no breath, no being, but in hers:
> She was his voice; he did not speak but to her,
> But trembled on her words: she was his sight,
> For his eye follow'd hers, and saw with hers,
> Which coloured all his objects: -- he had ceased
> To live within himself: she was his life,
> The ocean to the river of his thoughts,
> Which terminated all. ("The Dream" ll.51-57)

When Esther's frilled work basket falls down and her private desires are made public, it is, for Felix, as if Pandora's box has been opened. That opening strikes a deep-seated fear that Esther's femininity is dangerously encompassing, capable of sapping the powerful man's strength, canceling his intellectual power. Like the lover in Byron's poem, the

"clear,grey eyes" will have no sight, "the full lips" no voice, and the massive body no life "within himself." His fear speaks in his misogyny: "Women," he tells Esther, are "a curse; all life is stunted to suit their littleness. That's why I'll never love, if I can help it; and if I love, I'll bear it, and never marry" (212). Felix is afraid that his mouth will become "stuffed" with love and that his political voice will be stopped.

That Felix will eventually accept Esther as his wife and that Esther will reject her Byron and pseudo-Byronic Oriental lover, Harold Transome, suggests that the novel is less interested in Esther's "moral" progress than in focusing on an explosive, nearly violent sexual negotiation which is mediated through Byron's poetry and through the Byronic resonances in Eliot's Harold Transome. After Felix Holt makes his feelings about women known, Esther trembles and actually "pinch[es] her own hand to overcome her tremor" in a "desperate effort" not to reveal the emotional wound inflicted by his words (212). At this moment, when physical self-punishment seeks to squelch sexual interest or desire, the novel's paramount concern with the denial of sexual pleasure rather than with "moral progress" and aesthetics becomes clear. Indeed, those elements are integrated here. It is no wonder that the text must bring Byron to life, calling upon an outsider, Harold Transome, to mediate desire between Esther and Felix. In their moral standoff, similar to that between Maggie Tulliver and Stephen Guest, Esther

and Felix are in an anti-progressive, static position. If anyone is to move toward marriage rather than death, "moral progress" of the type which motivates Maggie Tulliver or the young Dorothea Brooke must be replaced with the ability to experience and act upon sexual desire. Felix Holt must learn to dream.

3.

Indeed, from the opening of *Felix Holt*, we are asked to value dreams. In the concluding paragraph of her preface to the novel, Eliot makes an analogy between Transome Court and

> a dolorous enchanted forest in the underworld. The thornbushes there, and thick-barked stems, have human histories hidden in them; the power of unuttered cries dwells in the passionless-seeming branches, and the red warm blood is darkly feeding the quivering nerves of a sleepless memory that watches through all dreams. These things are a parable. (84)

The prince of this "enchanted forest in the underworld" is the dark pilgrim, Harold Transome. He is the "someone expected," returning from the East to his mother and ancestral home at the novel's opening (85). Harold, the illegitimate child of the aristocratic Mrs. Transome and her bourgeois solicitor, Jermyn, carries within his body a mixture of blood that "darkly feeds" his mother's omnipresent memory of her adultery with a member of the bourgeoisie.

The violation of that taboo, strong enough to be termed miscegenation, is reinforced by Eliot's constant references to Jermyn's brownness. Jermyn may as well, like Maggie Tulliver or Daniel Deronda, be a gypsy, a mulatto, or a Moor. His ambitions and sexual desire, like those of Maggie, Deronda, and Will Ladislaw, literally blacken him. His is an unchecked immorality that guilt and asceticism will never wash white. Harold Transome, his son, also literally marked by the "black seal," his father's darkness of skin, low birth, and immoral behavior, has naturally gravitated to the Orient (583). In Smyrna he becomes a merchant king much as little Maggie envisions herself as a gypsy queen. He returns a captain of industry, literally "plump" with Turkish money, rose satin cushions, and a round brown baby.

Indeed, as an "Oriental" British imperialist and a political radical, a member of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, Harold Transome is an ingenious fashioning of what much of Victorian England feared and desired in 1832 and in 1867. Created in 1866, when the country was focussed on the Reform Bill of 1867, Transome's alliance with the East, and particularly with Turkey, resonates with the idea of political despotism. Harold's Turkish fortune alone has important ramifications for the novel's feminism and its reform politics. In fact, in the early nineteenth-century, in part due to Byron's poetry, which detailed the treatment of women and the underclass in Eastern cultures, "Turkey was a byword for tyranny," particularly "in Whiggish political

jargon" (Franklin 34). Byron's speech in the House of Lords on the 27th of February, 1812, was in keeping with earlier tendencies to align western political conservatism or Toryism with Turkish "despotism." Comparing "barbaric" abuses in Turkey to the treatment of his own working countrymen, Byron said:

> I have been in some of the most oppressed provinces of Turkey; but never under the most despotic of infidel governments did I behold such squalid wretchedness as I have seen since my return in the very heart of a Christian country. (Byron *Selected Prose* 111)

In addition to criticizing the treatment of the male underclass in Turkey, Byron's Oriental tales often focussed on Turkish sexual politics, the tyranny special to the Turkish harem. Often, in the last days of the Ottoman Empire, the harem was populated by enslaved Greek women. As did the American sculptor Hiram Powers later in the century, Byron used the image of the Greek slave woman to dramatize the crisis of slavery, the usurpation of the classical ideals of democracy, and the universal sexual exploitation of women. Using the image of "barbaric" imperialist Turks to critique their own politics, Byron and George Eliot follow a western tradition established in the eighteenth-century. Mary Wollstonecraft and Montesquieu both found the sexual politics of the harem an appropriate analogy for their own political discontents. In her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft used the harem as a "con-

stant referent" (Franklin). Earlier, Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* were a "sustained and profound meditation on the interrelationships of familial and political life" (Shanley and Stillman 66). There, he "ironically parallels control of the seraglio with strategies of monarchical tyranny -- comparing France with Turkey" (35). Montesquieu's protagonist, Usbek, is a sultan visiting the West and corresponding all the while with his wife and eunuchs in the harem. In Montesquieu's treatment, "oriental love" becomes a metaphor for despotism and sexual tyranny.

> Under Usbek's rhetoric of love lies an absolutism based on mutual fear: he is both husband and prince; the eunuchs are both harem guards and political ministers. The denouement is shocking: his favorite wife writes defiantly that she has taken poison, her lover having been executed, and that she dies proclaiming her joy at release through death from Usbek's tyranny. (Franklin 35)

Franklin suggests that Byron begins his Oriental tales at this point in the Western tradition of the representation of the Eastern harem, with the death or mistreatment of a heroine at the hands of a Hassan. George Eliot is indeed concerned with the same Oriental narrative pattern through the triad of her heroines, the vulnerable Esther Lyon, the adulterous Mrs. Transome, and the half-exotic, half-familiar Harold Transome.

The resonances of Montesquieu, Byron, and

Wollstonecraft are clear in *Felix Holt*. However, Eliot's particular recasting of Byron's Giaour allows her to critique both domestic and sexual politics in an innovative way. In Byron's poem, or in any of his eastern tales, the western expatriate Giaour is in sympathy with the adulterous slave girl, not the Hassan, her Eastern captor. The Giaour is a tragic hero, a thwarted rescuer. This order is obscured in *Felix Holt* in which Harold Transome, "the Giaour concerned," is a slave-owner himself. Here Eliot appears to be criticizing her own society as much as that of the "barbaric Turks." In his *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said argues that the nineteenth-century Western writer sees his or her own world vision defined by "positive ideas of home, of a nation and its language, of proper order, good behavior, moral values" (81). That vision necessarily validates the western world and devalues other worlds. The vision of empire in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, for instance, does not "inhibit or give resistance to horrendously unattractive imperialist practices" (81). However, in *Felix Holt*, empire works both ways. The "barbaric" Turks are in league with the equally barbaric English. Moreover, Eliot's narrative is further complicated by the issue of gender and sexual politics. For George Eliot is an outsider to an extent that Austen never was. Maggie Tulliver, for example, would not head out for the gypsy's camp had she a "positive idea of home"; traditional Christian values become the Inquisition which Fedalma flees in *The Spanish Gypsy*; Dorothea leaves

Middlemarch with the object of her desire; and Daniel Deronda departs from the philistinism of England "to the East" at the end of Eliot's last novel. In Eliot's novels, it is often the familiar, white face that is barbaric, the "cruel Turk"; the dark face looks as if it could be mother to Maggie Tulliver. Here, in *Felix Holt*, the Westerner, who calls himself, paradoxically, an "Oriental," represents the white British male's potential for tyranny. Here, in an English society dominated by cultural philistinism, it is the Englishman who is a barbarian. By having owned a Greek slave himself, Harold signals his corruption of classical political values and the corruption of the British imperialist.

But, despite her radical criticism of Harold Transome's sexual politics, Eliot does ultimately in *Felix Holt* return to more conservative and mainstream standards. Her anxiety about her radical candidate's political and sexual desires are written not in the Victorian terms of race and empire, but in the Victorian terms of race and class. As in the seventeenth-century *Othello*, in *Felix Holt* race, immorality, miscegenation, and untempered and unregulated sexual desire are represented through color. Like his scheming father, Jermyn, Harold is "brown" rather than white (90). Indeed, the racial dimensions of this, perhaps Eliot's least sophisticated narrative, are almost cartoon-like. Thoroughly English, he is also thoroughly dark, somehow of a less-white breed than the "Gothic" Felix Holt. His secret

"low" birth, his sexual transgressions in Turkey, his radicalism, have all washed him dark. Here, as in the rest of Eliot's canon, darkness of hair and eye signal sexual receptivity. Always dangerous elements, they are even more so in *Felix Holt*. Placed so explicitly within the context of reform, the dark threat of Harold Transome and Matthew Jermyn represents Eliot's anxieties about the re-invention of English society itself. Transome, a study in paradoxes, represents political ambition and sexual desire; his alter ego, Felix Holt, opposes those desires. The ultra-white, ultra-Anglo, remarkably politically passive and misogynist radical Felix Holt is as much the bogeyman of English culture here as is Harold Transome. Esther's choice between the two reflects less the "positive ideas" of home and more Eliot's attempt to contain the threatening energy of reform.

A "white" dove, fettered to the nineteenth-century female narrative, Esther knows that "after all, she [is] a woman, and [can]not make her own lot" (525). That, she acknowledges, "is made for her by the love she accepts" (525). The practical problem of Esther's future clearly informs her decision to marry either hero. It is telling that the above realization is a memory. Esther first describes her predicament to Felix, then remembers it when she thinks of marrying Harold. Contrasting the anti-sensual Felix Holt with the luxurious Harold Transome, Eliot resists romanticizing Esther's difficult "final choice"; "on each side there was renunciation" (590). Like the dark Maggie's

death embrace of the blue-eyed Tom Tulliver, Esther chooses in Felix a disapproving, stern pedagogue and a nearly chaste brotherly love rather than Harold Transome's "passion" (590). That elusive element remains a danger to Esther Lyon, threatening the "supreme," "sublime" love that the didactic moral figure Felix Holt represents (591). To conquer passion, Esther must thwart her own "will" or desire (591). The higher moral love

> is not to be had where and how she wills: to know that high initiation, she must often tread where it is hard to tread, and feel the chill air, and watch through darkness. It is not true that love makes all things easy: it makes us choose what is difficult. (591)

"What is difficult," in the moral universe of George Eliot, is all too often what is chaste. Conquering desire rather than indulging it is the force that creates society in the image of heaven. Hence "the presence and the love of Felix Holt" make the "vulgarity" and "privation" of their married life "as if it were heaven" (591).

In contrast to that heaven is the "Utopia" of Transome Court, which is consistently described as an Eastern harem. Kept at the manor, Mrs. Transome ruminates about her secret adultery and her suicidal despair over its revelation, recalling the adulterous wives of Montesquieu and Byron's Eastern poems. Harold constructs "pleasure grounds," significantly built on the eastern side of the manor to amuse his mother and early on tells her that she's had to do far

too much in managing the household and worrying "about things that don't properly belong to a woman -- We'll set all that right. You shall have nothing to do now but to be grandmamma on satin cushions" (95). This entrapment in static luxury becomes explicitly named later as part and parcel of the "Oriental love" which tempts Esther Lyon.

This representation of the harem and of "Oriental love" is indebted to those of Byron, Montesquieu, and, especially, Mary Wollstonecraft. In the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft associates the harem with female sexual pleasure as well as with female enslavement. Like opium, the harem entices through its sheer immersion in sensibility. In Enlightenment or Rousseauian political philosophy of exactly the type which Felix Holt espouses, abandoning the self to sensibility promises the death of reason. Like Wollstonecraft's polemic, Eliot's novel uses the harem, a metaphor for the experience of female desire itself, to link "woman's pleasure" to her "dependent and deferential status" (Kaplan 32). The chains on Powers' *Greek Slave* after all "virtually guarantee" her sexual violation and the statue itself "was the subject of erotic Victorian fantasies" (Yellin 111). The frivolous, Byron-reading Esther is already, as Felix Holt has noted, an anti-model of Wollstonecraftian feminism, having begun "an early and corrupt initiation in the sensual" (Kaplan 35). The misogynistic Felix's asceticism warns that desire itself is counter-revolutionary.

The heroine in *Felix Holt* is faced then with a difficult choice, and Eliot accents the difficulty by lingering extensively over the pleasures of the enclosed harem that is Transome Court. She emphasizes its luxuries and its "small dignities" along with its vaguely "repugnant" air of moral laxity (547). It is described as Esther's "Utopia," and the longer she stays there as its possible mistress, the more she comes under its influence. Indeed, her visit becomes a metaphor for her capacity to experience pleasure. Quite unlike Maggie Tulliver or Dorothea Brooke, Esther Lyon feels "an exquisite kind of shame" at knowing that she is interested in two men at once (522). She is "susceptible" to her own desires (522).

> It comes in so many forms in this life of ours -- the knowledge that there is something sweetest and noblest of which we despair, and the sense of something present that solicits us with an immediate and easy indulgence. And there is a pernicious falsity in the pretense that a woman's love lies above the range of such temptations.... Esther began to think that her lot was being made for her by the love that was surrounding her with the influence of a garden on a summer morning. (524-25)

In the luxury of the manor, Esther is not above temptation. Eliot decries the Victorian belief that women are not tempted because "woman's love" lies above the erotic by referring back to the radical political theorists of the novel's pre-Victorian setting. Indeed, perhaps as much in

Mary Wollstonecraft's anti-sensual *Vindication* as in Eastern sexual mythology, it is just that near phobia of female sensuality which necessitates their enclosure in the harem. Esther responds to Harold's "gradual wooing" and finds him "alluring" in a way which Felix Holt is not (524)

Like Wollstonecraft, Eliot had great difficulty voicing female desire in the face of its role as an anti-rational, disruptive force. The need for the containment of that force causes the pleasures of the harem to be quickly displaced by the image of enslavement. During a crucial discussion, Harold draws Esther "down the eastern steps into the pleasure-ground" of Transome Court. His maneuverings reflect his own move from West to East and his troubling identification as both Hassan and Giaour, sultan and rescuer. Indeed, Esther has difficulty placing him in any "*genre*" (540). He is not "a tragic hero," "not a romantic figure," not "languishing enough," "not in danger of committing suicide" (540). Instead, Esther says, he is simply a widower. As his Byronic literary veils fall away and the talk becomes serious, Esther literally trembles. At the mention of his marital status, Harold says that his first wife never held the place Esther might. She asks, "How so?"

> "Harry's mother had been a slave -- was bought, in fact."
>
> It was impossible for Harold to preconceive the effect this had on Esther.... Hitherto Esther's acquaintance with Oriental love was derived chiefly from Byronic

> poems, and this had not sufficed to adjust her mind to a new story, where the Giaour concerned was giving her his arm. She was unable to speak. (541)

Eliot's heroine enacts Wollstonecraft's comparisons of English women to harem slaves as Esther makes the connection between herself and Harold's first wife, between his love and "degradation." The threat to Esther posed by Harold's sexual attention becomes immediately apparent. Like many of the other scenes of "love-talk" between Harold and Esther, this one too is immediately followed by a vision of little Harry's undisciplined play. "Like a barbaric prince," Harry is a "tyrant" who treats others as if they were animals, biting, hitting, and turning family hierarchy upside down in a chaotic swirl. Looking at Harry, who bears the mark of the harem and, paradoxically, that of the empire, "it is inevitable that she should think of his mother" (541). It is also inevitable that the child Harry should represent all the forces of untrammeled sensibility, the death of reason and the "degradation of culture" in his own genesis. It is a testament to Eliot's struggle to represent female desire that the sight of this child does not result in Esther rejecting Harold Transome. And indeed, true to their literary discussion, Transome is far from a villain. Sensitive to the delicacy of his position as suitor to the newly endowed Esther, he asks for her sympathy: "I am necessarily in a painful position for a man who has any feeling" (541). "At last Harold had stirred the right fibre" (541). "Feel-

ing" is, as in Wollstonecraft's text, strongly tied to dependency and passivity. The more emotionally solicitous and beseeching Harold becomes toward Esther, "the more passive" she becomes "to his attentions" (547). "A compromise with things repugnant to the moral taste" seems possible, even likely (547). Finally, Esther does not voice her rejection of Harold; he rejects her, out of honor, when he learns of his low birth. And indeed, in accepting a legacy from Transome, Esther, though she marries Felix Holt, participates in those "things repugnant" which his Turkish fortune can buy. Her refusal to be the object of her Giaour's campaign is less clearly motivated than the novel's simply crafted ending, the marriage of Esther and Felix.

That marriage is marked, finally, more by renunciation than by any embrace of the passion which distances Esther from Transome. It is complicated by the fact that Harold Transome himself has made moral progress. Facing "the most serious moment" in his life -- the failure of his political campaign, the possible failure of his personal attempt to win Esther, and the acknowledgement of his illegitimacy -- Transome rises to the occasion. "For the first time the iron had entered into his soul, and he felt the hard pressure of our common lot, the yoke of that mighty resistless destiny laid upon us by the acts of other men as well as our own" (587). Transome has, moreover, "acted so that he could defy anyone to say he was not a gentleman" (590). His passion and tenderness are real; in recognizing their

authenticity, Esther rejects him. "Harold Transome's love, no longer a hovering fancy with which she played, but become a serious fact, seemed to threaten her with a stifling oppression" (592). Indeed, despite Harold's reformation, marriage to him continues to fall into the harem paradigm. It is "silken bondage," "a fall and a degradation," "to be languid among all the appliances for pleasure" (592). Consequently, Esther tells him that she loves Felix, and that she "resigned all claim to the Transome estates. She wished to go back to her father" (599). Esther, like Maggie Tulliver, curtails her own ability to experience pleasure or freedom with an exotic outsider. Rejecting her Giaour, embracing the very English Felix Holt, she also marries his values and those of her ascetic preacher-father's. When, "not reading, but stitching," she meets Felix again, she tells him that she is there now ready to marry him and "needing to be scolded" (600). "Have you considered well what it would be? -- that it will be a very bare and simple life?" he asks. "Yes," she replies, " -- without atta of roses," and without the sensibility which distinguishes her attraction to Harold Transome (601).

Like other Victorian writers, Eliot wrote most readily of desire when she dramatized it as the property of other cultures, other classes, or other races. But, unlike Dickens, Thackeray, or the Brontës, Eliot's "long and assured development" of an interest in foreignness results less in sheer stereotyping than in an expression of her fascination,

often sexually based, in the other (Hardy 9). That fascination, to continue in *The Spanish Gypsy*, *Daniel Deronda*, and *Middlemarch*, makes a remarkable representation of relations between the English and others. For Harold Transome, the "Oriental," is a kind of fake, an English creation, a strange Giaour wrought by inverting the Byronic model. At once a Byronic sensualist and an anti-Byronic Ottoman or Hassan, Transome washes otherness over with Englishness until he is over-determined as a character. Representing the "sultanic habits" of the East, he nonetheless remains a criticism of British imperialism notwithstanding that his Oriental association with sensuality is defeated by Esther's choice of Felix. A strange melange of the East and West, Transome ultimately represents the desire which Eliot struggles to contain and control in her "English story" (Haight 381).

Indeed, Esther's choice of Felix Holt over Harold Transome only partially restores the novel's own ideals regarding moral compromise as it only partially restores the Victorian novel's generic conventions regarding race and class. Certainly, Esther's legacy and Felix's release from prison through Transome's intervention has over the years left Eliot's readers dissatisfied. Here the moral high road itself is obscured, as is identity itself. Esther finally settles down with Felix to produce, it seems, nothing. "There is a young Felix," who comes of their marriage, and "who has a great deal more science than his father, but not

much more money" (606). North Loamshire "does not yet return a radical candidate" (606), and, to thwart that possibility further, Eliot will not reveal where Felix Holt and Esther live: "As to the town in which Felix Holt now resides, I will keep that a secret, lest he should be troubled by any visitor having the insufferable motive of curiosity" (606).

Bent on protecting Felix Holt and, perhaps, her novel, from those who would ask too many questions in regard to his political or domestic future, Eliot's narrator reveals the pressures by which the novel itself is molded. Even the economics of the novel's end are strangely static, as if Esther's stipend, a cut of the huge fortune Harold made in Smyrna, will never multiply and increase, as if Felix Holt's son will not earn an income proportionate to his acquisition of "more science." The stifling of increase and political change, which marks the end of *Felix Holt* -- so inconsistent with the social realities of a novel in which we feel from its inception the steam of the Victorian locomotive veritably at our backs -- is even more effectively consistent with its attempt to contain, keep secret, and control both political and sexual desire. A view of both Englishness and otherness, *Felix Holt* leaves the "Oriental" other, Harold Transome, an outcast at the novel's end, wishing he'd "never come back to this pale English sunshine" (582). The strangely foreign Englishman foreshadows the arrival in Eliot's canon of another outcast of mixed

heritage, Will Ladislaw. His presence in *Middlemarch*, to be written after she had completed her portrait of Fedalma in *The Spanish Gypsy*, continues Eliot's dialogue between otherness and political and sexual desire. Finally, the marriage of Will Ladislaw and Dorothea Brooke as the consummate accomplishment of *Middlemarch* will release what is still so carefully and problematically contained in *Felix Holt: The Radical*.

End Notes

[1]Rosemary Bodenheimer's *The Politics of Story*, Catherine Gallagher's *Industrial Reformation of English Fiction*, and Suzanne Graver's *George Eliot and Community* have all studied her alliance of domestic and reform politics.

"A Queer Genealogy": Ethnicity and Sexuality in *Middlemarch*

1.

In *Middlemarch* the "dead hand" of provincial English culture is disrupted by an exotic outsider (315). Rumored to be of some "cursed alien blood, Jew, Corsican, or Gypsy" (527), Will Ladislaw threatens to "dilute" Middlemarch's anglocentricity through an act of comparative miscegenation, his marriage to Dorothea Brooke (441). Intruding on the provincial "Middlemarch tribes" (441), the half-exotic, half-"girl[ish]" Ladislaw acts as a figure whose ethnic otherness represents the problem of female desire and the desire for political and cultural change (446). So clear is Eliot's narrative attraction to the figure of the exotic intruder that she creates one where he may not, in fact, exist. In *Middlemarch*, the "story" or rumor that Ladislaw is Jewish becomes "the fact about Will Ladislaw" (526, 591), literally embodying Hillis Miller's realization that in the novel "no fact is in itself single, and no fact is explicable by a single relationship to a single cause" ("Narrative and History" 102). In the growth and revelation of the rumor about Ladislaw, the "fact" of ethnicity is revealed to be a social or cultural construction. That achievement, thought to happen much later in the history of the English novel,[1] contrasts sharply with D.A. Miller's

critique of *Middlemarch* as "no substantial challenge to the way things are" (122). The same achievement, moreover, marks a progression in Eliot's canon from her first novel, *Adam Bede*, a "gentle defense of the status quo" of gender and sexuality (Sedgwick 145). The owner of "a queer genealogy," Ladislaw and his queerness of gender and ethnicity cement Eliot's alliance between the imprisoned sexual self and the victimized exotic self (527). Through Dorothea's identification with and attraction to the strangely girlish "alien," Eliot seeks to escape both the dead hand of English provincialism and the traditions of the representations of otherness and desire in the English novel.

The narrative metamorphosis of "the fact about Will Ladislaw" charts the English community's process of bothering and even of racism itself in a remarkably subversive way which has yet to be examined by Eliot scholars (526). Discounting female erotic desire, stressing only Dorothea's vocational desire, D.A. Miller envisions her marriage to Ladislaw as "a surrender of desire or its reductive resealing" (149). His formalist vision of marriage as a traditional form of novelistic closure must also be re-examined in lieu of the novel's cultural narrative and its construction of an ethnic outsider who is androgynous feminine and charged with eroticism. Ladislaw is both the representation and the object of female desire. Indeed, far from "traditional," Dorothea Brooke's belief in "the fact" of Ladislaw's Jewish ancestry and her linking herself to him marks

Middlemarch as a culturally subversive text. Historically, the other is a figure who is expunged from the English text which carefully avoids miscegenation, especially between Jews and the English. The rope of otherness begun so early with Catering Sari in "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" culminates in Eliot's greatest novel in the heroine's violation of her community's, and the English novel's, standards of Englishness.

Indeed, in *Middlemarch*, Eliot realigns the use of both gender and ethnicity in ways which share, but ultimately question, the racial stereotype of the queer male Jew in fiction and his relationship to Englishness. The most notorious Victorian representation of this relationship, the lecherous Jew, Fagin and his ultra-Anglo catch, Oliver Twist, is present in the erotic and genealogical "queerness" of Will Ladislaw as both characters are present in Daniel Deronda.[2] As a renegade in 1830 London, Fagin re-invents his own "family," an arguably "pederastic" ken or "fence" of boys (Wills 595). The white orphan child, Oliver Twist, is drawn into this family in part through his fascination with Fagin. Fagin entertains the boys, mesmerizes them, and shares secrets with them. And when he is with him, Oliver laughs for the first time in the novel (Wills 595). Oliver, following what Gary Wills has described as the pattern of the nineteenth-century "boys book," is an orphan; "deprived of 'normal' socialization, [he] is forced to cope with society as an outsider.... The formula not only provides the

child with perilous adventure but throws a questioning light on those social ties the boy has been deprived of (or delivered from)" (Wills 594). Ultimately, Oliver finds a type of freedom in Fagin's "ken" (Wills 596). It is the same social freedom which the orphan Will Ladislaw, who is both English orphan and despised other, both fears and revels in. Like Oliver, he must also re-invent himself. He is also wrongfully disinherited, treated as an outsider, a distant "cousin," when he should be heir. He is clearly marginalized if not outcast by his own blood, Casaubon, and the very provincial English world of *Middlemarch*. Status as an outsider, an ethnic outsider like Ladislaw or Fagin, however, allows one to take liberties with the exclusive society. Moreover, Fagin's family

> is attractive because such a nest of rebels, having rejected the stratifications of respectable society, allows for a degree of familiarity suggesting egality. Rank and degree are jumbled.... There is a freedom at the top and the bottom of the social world that is squeezed out of those struggling for place in the middle, and Oliver only reaches the freedom of the upper world by falling first into the lower one. (Wills 596)

Because society excludes Will Ladislaw in *Middlemarch*, he too creates his own families, first with the rebellious Lydgate and his wife who even acts out, for her own entertainment, a sham adultery, then with the children of

Middlemarch. Both activities place Ladislaw in Fagin's role as "seducer" (Wills 598). However, his "troop of droll children" become a particular "matter of remark" along with his "dangerous" politics (339):

> He had a fondness, half-artistic, half-affectionate, for little children -- the smaller they were on tolerably active legs, and the funnier their clothing, the better Will liked to surprise and please them. We know that in Rome he was given to ramble about among the poor people, and the taste did not quit him in Middlemarch. He had somehow picked up a troop of droll children, little hatless boys with their galligaskins much worn and scant shirting to hang out, little girls who tossed their hair out of their eyes to look at him, and guardian brothers at the mature age of seven. This troop he had led out on gypsy excursions ... where he drew out a small feast of gingerbread for them, and improvised a Punch-and-Judy drama with some private home-made puppets. Here was one oddity. Another was that in houses where he got friendly he was given to stretch himself at full length on the rug while he talked and was apt to be discovered in this attitude by occasional callers for whom such an irregularity was likely to confirm the notions of his dangerously mixed blood and general laxity. (339)

Amidst this almost comic, almost Wordsworthian rendition of excursions at "nutting-time," the realization is

nonetheless clear that if Ladislaw does not conform with Middlemarch notions of blood he may not conform with other Middlemarch values (339). As in *Oliver Twist*, in Eliot's novel breaking the bond of ethnicity is more than a "cover" for pederasty, it is a breaking of some primal, tribal rule that in the logic of the community is a sign of all kinds of otherness (Wills 603). What follows is "general" moral "laxity," a crossing over of all sorts of boundaries. Recalling Fagin, Ladislaw also recalls another miser, Silas Marner, whose "deviation from the purity and order of traditional familial arrangements verges on forms of sexuality that both Victorian and contemporary champions of those arrangements apprehend as enemy number one" (Nunokawa 274). Ladislaw's "fondness" for the scantily clad poor children, for surely these are not the descendants of the Chethams or the Cadwalladers, is "one oddity" which particularly in *Middlemarch*, breeds the expectation of another "deviant" sexual oddity. Here, within the comedy and the healthy, outdoor fun, one senses a none-too-subtle eroticism and risky sensuality. Performing for the children, "feasting" them, exactly what is it that Ladislaw has a "taste" for? Linked to gypsies, who are a perceived sexual threat to children, Ladislaw is finally described as a sensualist who stretches out on the rug "full length" while he talks. Descending midway in the novel to this social low-point, Ladislaw escalates suspicion about his character.

It is just these suspicions, however, which, paradoxi-

cally, attract Dorothea, and will place Ladislaw, finally, in another unconventional family structure that includes a Jew, a disinherited heiress, and their child. As Oliver is attracted to Fagin's antics, and to his ability to create a family from a group of orphans, Dorothea is attracted to Ladislaw's "jumbling" of rank and degree. Like Fagin, the center of "a nest of rebels," he is "attractive," in his arrogance and his seductive play acting. Ladislaw makes the argument that he has been "delivered from," not "deprived of, 'normal' socialization." Always in the process of "metamorphosis," the feminine Ladislaw, with his "girlish complexion" and his close resemblance to his grandmother, offers Dorothea escape from that "'normal' socialization" which deprives her of the intellectual, spiritual, and sexual life she desires. Indeed, where Eliot's depiction of the deviant male body in *Silas Marner* once created a "'pallid, undersized' man isolated amongst full bodied strangers" (Nunokawa 274), now in *Middlemarch*, the deviant Ladislaw is a sex object whose attractiveness is multiplied by his exoticism and the rumor of his Jewish ancestry, an otherness which attracts.

The belief that Fagin's blood is warmer and quicker than Oliver Twist's is the unsubtle controlling idea of most Victorian texts on race which bear the definitive mark of narrative subjectivity, Hillis Miller's "tasteless seed of time" which flavors all historical narrative with the storyteller's own agenda (473). Recently, Edward Said,

Gayatri Spivak, and Patrick Brantlinger have studied the ways in which literary texts invent culture and the concepts of Englishness and otherness. Their analyses have focused particularly on the English novel's tendency to uphold English culture's value system, to be "the axioms of imperialism" on the global or domestic frontiers (Spivak 262). There paradigms of Victorian otherness contrast sharply with white virtue, Fagin to Oliver Twist, Bertha Rochester to Jane Eyre. In *Middlemarch,* these paradigms shift dramatically and it is difference that is virtuous and difference that attracts. The technique of comparison and contrast between Englishness and otherness is revised. It is no accident that the novel's chief representation of monstrosity, Rosamund Vincy, is also a vision of pink, white, and gold English femininity. Omnivorous and morally corrupt, she plays the role of Bertha Rochester, the dangerous wife and the exploiter of the young innocents, Ladislaw and Lydgate. Indeed, in *Middlemarch* the critique of English culture is the hidden assumption, the "tasteless seed of time" whose flavor permeates narrative. Within that narrative of ethnic value, however, is an even more interesting hidden assumption. That is the idea that the other is seductive and attractive, because he, like Fagin, questions the nature of social relationships, of the personal and the human families. The subtext of the novel is that if "here is one oddity," others, even more "dangerous" and unmentionable, may be at hand. It is this idea which feeds

the rumor that Will Ladislaw is Jewish. In the "fact about Will Ladislaw" Eliot seems to be criticizing the cultural process of bothering itself.

Despite the recent advent of the study of race and ethnicity in Victorian fiction, no one in the past thirty years has examined the rumor, begun half-way through *Middlemarch*, that Will Ladislaw is of Jewish ancestry. In the late 1950s and early 1960s the issue of Ladislaw's ethnic heritage was raised and debated by several Eliot scholars. Twice, argues Jerome Beaty in his 1959 article "The Forgotten Past of Will Ladislaw," Ladislaw is rumored to be "the grandson of a thieving Jew pawnbroker" (566). The rumor becomes the "fact about Will Ladislaw" and gains momentum when even the sober and kind Mr. Farebrother repeats it as gospel:

> 'So our mercurial Ladislaw has a queer genealogy! A high-spirited young lady and a musical Polish patriot make a likely enough stock for him to spring from, but I should never have suspected a grafting of the Jew pawnbroker. However, there is no knowing what a mixture will turn out before hand. Some sorts of dirt serve to clarify.' (527)

The ugliness of Mr. Farebrother's remark exemplifies Middlemarch's narrow vision as it exemplifies the narrative power of rumor. Truth, like ethnicity, becomes a social construct, malleable and morally ambivalent. It is not surprising that the issue once sparked controversy in Eliot scholarship. In his article, Beaty argues that "Eliot may

simply be indicating the kind of error which gets introduced into such gossip as it spreads" (162). He also suggests the possibility of the casual grafting of "Jew" and "pawnbroker" into one derogatory slur. Ultimately, Beaty is interested in Ladislaw's heritage only in so far as he may be a precursor to Daniel Deronda. He suggests that the rumor about Ladislaw's ethnicity is an error arising from Eliot's conflation of the Middlemarch notebooks with her separate plans for a novel titled "Miss Brooke." There, Beaty argues, Will Ladislaw "was to have been at least partly Jewish" (164). Ladislaw's past, he argues, was, like that of Daniel Deronda, to have been kept mysterious:

> Except for her abandoning "Miss Brooke" as a separate work and hitching it instead to the becalmed beginning of "Middlemarch," George Eliot would have introduced her longtime interest in the Jewish people into her fiction several years earlier than is now the case, and Will Ladislaw may have served in "Miss Brooke" in much the same way that Daniel Deronda serves in the novel named after him. (163)

Interesting and significant as Beaty's logical conjecture is for Eliot's attention to the issue of race and for *Daniel Deronda*, it does not explain the significance of the rumor in *Middlemarch*. His reading continued to provoke debate from Eliot scholars in the early 1960s. Robert Greenberg offered a counterpoint to Beaty's logical guesswork with his own reading. Concerned only with the "truth" of the rumor

rather than with its narrative power, he argues against Beaty's thesis by again referring to *Daniel Deronda*: "The moderately frivolous young man with curly locks that we first meet in *Middlemarch* does seem an unlikely model for the image of the Jew we might expect of George Eliot, if we can use as a measure her portrayal not only of Daniel but of Mirah and other Jews in *Daniel Deronda*" (358). But Deronda's mother, the Alcharisi, rebellious in ways quite similar to Ladislaw, disproves Greenberg's generalization of Eliot's portrayal of Jewish people. Less "frivolity" than a gender-bending femininity, Ladislaw's androgyny is also consistent with Eliot's career-long tendency to use otherness as a rope representing female desire and rebellion. Deronda, moreover, in his early flirtation with Gwendolen Harleth, mirrors the sensuality or even the frivolity of Will Ladislaw. Indeed, Deronda's sober "image" is itself an icy veneer concealing his own tumultuous will and desire. And Eliot's other portrayals of Jewish characters, Mirah's father for instance, represent a frivolity and sensuality dangerously untrammeled and threatening.

Thomas Pinney, in 1962, voiced another objection to Beaty's claims. The tenor of his argument lies in his belief that "whether Ladislaw was originally to have been part Jewish is not in itself an important matter" (69). Despite the "striking resemblance" between Ladislaw and Deronda (71), moreover, the former "shows merely that frequently noted family resemblance between many of George

Eliot's characters" (71). "If Ladislaw was originally to have had Jewish blood, that would be an interesting detail in the biography of George Eliot's novels" (73). In much the same tone, Suzanne Graver and D.A. Miller acknowledge Will's "outsider" status and that Eliot locates "the desire for reform in characters who are outsiders."

As part of a consistent phenomenon in Eliot's canon, the strange, vague, rumor of Will Ladislaw's origin is more than a detail in *Middlemarch*. Such otherness is a controlling metaphor in Eliot's canon, one which teaches us not just about the desire for reform but about the construction of nationalism and xenophobia and about the links between other peoples and the status of women. In reading Eliot's "other" characters, we learn about Englishness and a community's need to create a mythology of otherness. Eliot, in particular, as a covert woman writer and a type of outsider herself, conceals and yet voices her own subversive desires by placing them in the minds of "others." In 1958, Beaty argued that Ladislaw's origin, perhaps of "Jewish blood," is "charged with significance in lieu of her final novel, *Daniel Deronda*." But the question of Ladislaw's origin also plays a significant role in *Middlemarch* where it is used to subvert the traditional narrative relationship between race and desire.

The community of Middlemarch and the novel itself thrives on the passage of rumor and misinformation. Its "famous web" is also "an information network" (Welsh 223).

That network feeds on the "universal propensity for misinterpretation which infects all the characters in *Middlemarch*" (Welsh 224). There, as Hillis Miller argues, "the concepts of origin, end, and continuity are replaced by the categories of repetition, of difference, of discontinuity, of openness and of the free and contradictory struggle of individual human energies, each seen as a center of interpretation, which means misinterpretation of the whole" (224). It is this web and its propensity for rumor and misinterpretation which jealously guards the secret "fact," the truth of the complicated matter of Ladislaw's heritage. Sorting that fact from rumor can never be completely accomplished. Rather the novel develops Ladislaw's heritage through the passage of rumor, through individual and finally communal sanctions of the rumors that his genealogy is "queer," Jewish or alien. The queerness of Ladislaw serves to increase and disparage the community's anglocentric or xenophobic standard of otherness. Within the everywhere of Middlemarch, where community defines self, any deviation becomes a significant force that matters in the novel as it matters in English culture itself.

Indeed, the recategorization of "origin, end, and continuity" has a powerful cultural dimension in the novel. The community of *Middlemarch* freely violates the facts or realities of race and ethnicity. Ladislaw, the Polish Englishman with the fine English accent, is easily seen by the community as "a cursed alien," a "Jew, Corsican, or

Gypsy." As a microcosm of a universe whose sun then rose and set on the British empire, the rumors of Middlemarch make the "ugly secret" of the English process of bothering, of recategorization visible. In doing so, the novel erodes the standard of English ethnicity itself, charting the origin, end, and continuity of "Middlemarch tribes" through rumor which often becomes hysterical or outrageous exaggeration like Mr. Hawley's equation of the Polish Will Ladislaw with any other "cursed alien, Jew, Corsican, or Gypsy."

In this sense, Eliot's novel of the midlands, what she called, after writing *The Spanish Gypsy*, her "English novel," is remarkably subversive of what critics like Edward Said or Gayatri Spivak have come to term the stable or traditional values of the English novel. Instead of validating the pattern of English superiority and colonialism that Said sees as beginning with Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Eliot devalues the world of Englishness and engages with the outsider, here Will Ladislaw and, to a lesser extent, Tertius Lydgate. Barbara Hardy acknowledges that the last words of *Daniel Deronda* "are given up to that foreign reach and outlet" (15). Nonetheless, she argues that "Eliot does not erase the image of English home but puts in its place (sic), geographically and physically. It is not rejected, but valued and revalued" (15). That is a hard line to hold in the face of Dorothea Brooke's expatriation from Middlemarch with an exotic outsider and Daniel Deronda's journey "to the East" with his Jewish wife. What

is "put in place" of a vision of domesticity in the wake of his departure is an image of the solitary, wandering, grieving Gwendolen Harleth. The content of what is "put in place" of the image of English domesticity is more radically engaged in the problem of race and national identity than Hardy allows. Eliot's *Middlemarch* refuses to banish other characters or avoid miscegenation to preserve and affirm a paradigm of Englishness that finds its expression in the gentle domesticity which marks the ends of *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, or *Oliver Twist*.

2.

Middlemarch, as Alexander Welsh has noted, is a "novel about opinion" which focuses on a community's ability to define reality through its own network of talk, gossip, and slander. The novel's most inclusive theme is "knowledge ... and the theme keeps resolving ... into statements of the limitations of knowledge" (221). The methods of communicating that knowledge are imperfect and random. Eliot's "wariness" of the human web of communication extends "both to the grounds for knowing anything and to the social implications of the theme" (Welsh 223). Like Dorothea Brooke, we are never quite sure if we as readers ought to believe what we hear, and it is only by engaging in the novel's process of affirmation, denial, and revelation through talk, letters, and narration that we are able to construct a truth about

any of the problems which the novel presents.

The process, then, by which Will Ladislaw's Jewish heritage is gradually revealed and sanctioned by Dorothea Brooke is intriguing on many different levels. Each ripple in the slow spread of rumor, innuendo, and "fact" furthers the impression of Ladislaw's exoticism which ultimately is neither denied nor confirmed. In *Middlemarch*, as in *The Mill on the Floss*, *Felix Holt*, *The Spanish Gypsy*, or *Daniel Deronda*, the alliance between English and other selves forges an alliance between the cultural objects of racism and sexism. As the rumor of Will's heritage grows, it becomes powerful indeed, raising more and more empathy in Dorothea's heart, and stirring more and more attraction. Linking the problem of gender and otherness, Ladislaw is often described as being like a "girl" (446). The descendent of a rebellious woman who ran away, he is intrinsically linked to female rebellion and desire through his often remarked femininity of voice and mien.

Indeed, the initial encounter between Dorothea and Ladislaw allies otherness with femininity. She meets him first through the portrait of his grandmother, Julia, which hangs in the other-world of Dorothea's blue-green boudoir. Julia's "peculiar face" continues the tradition of rebellious female otherness in Eliot's canon (55). She does not resemble her "own" family (55).

"Those deep grey eyes rather near together -- and the delicate irregular nose with a sort of ripple in it --

> and all the powdered curls hanging backward. Altogether it seems to me peculiar rather than pretty. There is not even a family likeness between her and your mother." (55)

The narrator will later adopt Dorothea's words to describe Ladislaw, whose curls also hang backward, and whose nose shares the same sensuous "ripple"(59). By linking Ladislaw to his grandmother's female features, the viewing of the portrait also compels Dorothea's discovery of his intriguing and unmentionable heritage which at once becomes the topic of discussion and an anti-topic. "You did not mention her to me," Dorothea tells Casaubon. He replies:

> 'My aunt made an unfortunate marriage. I never saw her.' Dorothea wondered a little, but felt that it would be indelicate just then to ask for any information which Mr. Casaubon did not proffer, and she turned to the window to admire the view. The sun had lately pierced the grey, and the avenue of limes cast shadows. (56)

At this very early moment in the novel, the web surrounding Ladislaw's heritage has already begun in earnest. The information of some misalliance coupled with Aunt Julia's peculiar face does not clarify Will's background but opens it as a mystery. Like the sun piercing the grey, that information "casts shadows" about Ladislaw. Joking a little later about what is unsaid but understood in the rhetoric of kings to their peoples, Casaubon asserts that words often

"[drop] out of the text, or perhaps [are] *subauditum*; that is present in the king's mind, but not uttered" (57). It is clear that Ladislaw's heritage, the fact of his grandmother's unmentionable sexual rebellion and "peculiarity," must also drop out of the text but are present in the reader's and the narrator's mind *subauditum*. What made Julia's marriage "unfortunate" is never exactly specified -- it is some miscegenation of class, culture, or race, or of all three. That profound, mysterious difference is now present as the object of Dorothea's "wondering." When very soon after viewing the portrait, she meets Will, his face intensifies his otherness and his connection to female rebellion through his resemblance to Aunt Julia's portrait:

> when [Will] lifted his hat, Dorothea could see a pair of grey eyes rather near together, a delicate irregular nose with a little ripple in it, and hair falling backward; but there was a mouth and chin of a more prominent, threatening aspect than belonged to the type of the grandmother's miniature. Young Ladislaw did not feel it necessary to smile.... (59).

An amalgam of "prominent, threatening" sexuality and the memory of his grandmother's rebellion, Ladislaw, Dorothea learns, has also rejected Englishness itself. He "declined to go to an English university ... and now he wants to go abroad" (59). Now "too ignorant to feel" the "relation between pictures and nature," Dorothea will later look on the feminine version of Will's face, Aunt Julia's portrait,

as a representation of him.

On the cusp of Englishness and otherness, Ladislaw also elides maleness and femaleness. Always mobile, his features have the power to "change their form; his jaw looked sometimes large and sometimes small; and the little ripple in his nose was a preparation for metamorphosis" (155). At the novel's crisis of "disenchantment," when Dorothea returns from her Roman honeymoon, and all else is "deadened as an unlit transparency," Will's face, interchangeable with Julia's portrait, is imbued with vitality, overtly linking "pictures with nature" (202). In her boudoir, Dorothea contemplates Julia's portrait along with the "gentlewoman's oppressive liberty" and identifies with the portrait's "headstrong look, a peculiarity difficult to interpret" (203). Once recognized as the face of woman's rebellion, Julia's face metamorphosizes into Ladislaw's face, a representation of the question and the answer to the problem of female sexual desire:

> Here was a woman who had known some difficulty about marriage. Nay, the colours deepened, the lips and chin seemed to get larger, the hair and eyes seemed to be sending out light, the face was masculine and beamed on her with that full gaze which tells her on whom it falls that she is too interesting for the slightest movement of her eyelid to pass unnoticed and uninterpreted. The vivid presentation came like a pleasant glow to Dorothea: she felt herself smiling,

> and turning from the miniature sat down and looked up as if she were again talking to a figure in front of her. (203)

Clearly, in the separate "world" of the blue-green boudoir, the private, feminine refuge of Dorothea's married life, the slippage between fact and imagination which *Middlemarch* encourages extends its range to an almost Gothic transmutation of gender. Sitting in "a room where one might fancy the ghost of a tight-laced lady revisiting the scene of her embroidery" (55), Dorothea shares that lady's desire to "upset" her lot (55). Female rebellion then comes to be written over Ladislaw's masculine face. Ladislaw himself becomes a figure of ambiguous gender, slipping in and out of maleness and femininity as he slips in and out of a variety of ethnic and class identities, cementing Eliot's alliance between the imprisoned sexual self and the victimized ethnic self.

Far from having made an "error" of consistency in the creation of Will Ladislaw's ethnic heritage, Eliot seems to keep his origin deliberately vague, establishing and enhancing an air of mystery that makes Ladislaw's character ripe for narrative invention. Indeed, Eliot seems to link the problem of origin to literary creativity and the development of narrative itself, as she does in all her works which develop narrative through the search for ethnic origin. As in *The Spanish Gypsy*, *Felix Holt*, *Daniel Deronda*, and even *The Mill on the Floss*, in *Middlemarch* Will Ladislaw's

mysterious origin and strangely foreign air necessitate that he seek a vocation undetermined by heritage. Ladislaw "prefer[s] not to know the sources of the Nile" because "some unknown regions [should be] preserved as hunting-grounds for the poetic imagination" (60). Likewise, the mystery or origin in the text of *Middlemarch* acts as Eliot's own creative "hunting-ground." Ladislaw's "cold vagueness" towards his past is paired with his deliberate exoticism. An internationalist in the *Middlemarch* community, his cosmopolitanism is used to criticize Englishness. Highly critical of the provinciality of "much English scholarship," Ladislaw identifies the flaw in Casaubon's *Key to All Mythologies* (154). It is that Casaubon is "not an Orientalist.... He does not profess to have more than second-hand knowledge there" (164). Much of the work which Casaubon is conducting might as well be "thrown away.... If Mr. Casaubon read German he would save himself a great deal of trouble" (154). Ladislaw refers to nineteenth-century German Orientalists whom Casaubon will not read out of prejudice. Flaunting his own lack of a national identity and "caste" in his critique of Casaubon, Ladislaw intensifies his sense of otherness as he becomes more and more attractive to Dorothea. As he becomes embroiled in Middlemarch politics, the heavily mysterious narrative of Ladislaw's exoticism is made more sexually and politically threatening to the community, raising the stakes of plot.

What Dorothea cannot say about Will Ladislaw's

heritage, the rumor-mongers of Middlemarch have no difficulty saying. Outrageous, exorbitant, a feat of narrative invention, the rumors about his background and ethnicity begin with his public visibility as secretary to the reform candidate Mr. Brooke. Ladislaw is "said to be of foreign extraction" (262). That half-fact immediately makes him "a revolutionary sort" (262). An "emissary ... he'll begin with flourishing about the Rights of Man and end with murdering a wench" (262). The rumor that he is the child of a "*mesalliance*" begin and proliferate in part because it may be true, in part because Ladislaw will not refute it (268). His reticence is owed to his shame at having the "dirt" of ethnic difference thrown at him. Like Fedalma or Daniel Deronda, he is the more vulnerable for not knowing the full story of his own origin. What he does know of his mother, who is almost identical to Deronda's mother, invites the notion of a shadowy ethnic difference. Ladislaw's information does not clarify but mystifies and opens venues for further aspersion. He says:

> My mother, too, ran away from her family, but not for the sake of her husband. She would never tell me anything about her family, except that she forsook them to get her own living -- went on the stage, in fact. She was a dark-eyed creature, with crisp ringlets, and never seemed to be getting old. You see, I come of rebellious blood on both sides. (269)

The story of Ladislaw's origin and his self-

mythologization as the descendent of "rebellious blood" is intensified by the narrator's indirect discourse and the community's gossip. Both use the analogies of ethnic difference in the language of Victorian racial stereotypes. Lydgate says that Ladislaw "is a sort of gypsy" (319). Affirming that "his nature warmed easily" and, like his rebellion, is "easily stirred," the narrator agrees with Lydgate that Ladislaw "was a sort of gypsy, rather enjoying the sense of belonging to no class; he had a feeling of romance in his position, and a pleasant consciousness of creating a little surprise wherever he went" (338). Ladislaw's foreign face, with sensual nose and mouth and slightly "threatening" mien, has also been a set-up for the image of otherness. He creates the impression of sensuality, linked to ethnic otherness and hence to cupidity. That Ladislaw likes to be caught stretching "full length" on the Lydgates' rug confirms for Middlemarchers "the notions of his dangerously mixed blood" (339). These "notions" flower in the rumor that his grandfather, the patriarch of the family which his mother abandoned and would not discuss with him, was "a thieving Jew Pawnbroker."

The groundwork of difference already laid, this "fact" about Will Ladislaw's Jewish heritage is constructed out of loose talk begun late in the novel by Raffles. The irony here is that the despicable, loose tongued Raffles, as immoral a purveyor of information as might be, is the medium through which Ladislaw learns the truth of the past which

his mother would not share with him. The drunken Raffles tells Ladislaw that his grandfather's line of business was pawnbrokering or "what you may call the respectable thieving line" (446). The knowledge of his ancestor's business, considered unfit for a gentleman or a Christian, is strangely "confirmed" by Ladislaw's own ignorance of his mother's heritage. The doubt and fear instilled by her silence, that she "never would tell him the reason why she had run away from her family" (447), leaves him free to "wonder," like Dorothea, about the nature of his heritage. Information, like the "star lit darkness" in which Ladislaw and Raffles walk, does not illumine, but creates a shadowy anxiety (447). "Supposing the truth about the family to be the ugliest," Ladislaw "felt as if he had dirt thrown on him amidst shouts of scorn" (447). As Farebrother will later affirm, "certain forms of dirt," the knowledge that the "mercurial Mr. Ladislaw has a queer genealogy," serve to "clarify." Ultimately, the novel does not attempt to wash Ladislaw of that "dirt," so named by one of the staunchest members of its community. The rumor, like the source of the Nile, continues as a central intrigue. What is made clear is the corruption of the Middlemarch community itself, a corruption that is signalled through its weakness for ethnic prejudice.

Indeed, as a distillation of community, Raffles, the originator of the "story" about Ladislaw, represents the ugly underside of Eliot's much-celebrated organic web. Like

a spider at its center, he is connected to the entire cast of characters. They all contribute to his story until it becomes "the fact about Will Ladislaw with some local colour and circumstance added" (526). The narrative voice which once played metaphorically with the notions of Ladislaw's gypsy-like, quick blood is careful never to distinguish "local colour" from "fact," and, while it uses the very word and concept of "fact" ironically, it also validates the idea that there is, indeed, an "ugly secret" in Ladislaw's genealogy. The "ugly secret" is taken up by all the segments of the community as "fact":

> Now with the disclosures about Bulstrode came another fact affecting Will's social position.... 'Young Ladislaw the grandson of a thieving Jew pawnbroker' was a phrase which had entered emphatically into the dialogues about the Bulstrode business. (566)

"Dialogues" is here a euphemism for Middlemarch gossip. The web, community itself, then becomes suspect and devalued. When the eminently respectable Mr. Farebrother sanctions that gossip with his belief, and his prejudice, the community has undermined its own ostensible moral values, paving the way for Dorothea and Will's rejection of Middlemarch morality and values.

Defying the authority of community in their marriage, Dorothea and Ladislaw have provoked the "intense disappointment" of the contemporary community of literary critics and scholars who read George Eliot (Zimmerman 210). Dorothea's

life, Gilbert and Gubar suggest, is "absorbed in another's"; she will never be satisfied through any "great work" of her own (530). "Still the most subversive act available to" Dorothea, marriage is not subversive enough. Ten years later, D.A. Miller finds that the novel's "traditional settlement (marriage, family, career) is not an adequate solution ... the problem has been to find a settlement transcending those conventional arrangements" (149). Dorothea's epic vision has "shrunk to the dimensions of mere monogamy" (188). Her "desire for Will is a reduction of her original desire, and, in the end, perhaps even a destruction of what its original value had been" (187).

In addition to seeing marriage as "the site and source of women's oppression" (Kaplan 52), other critics have objected to Ladislaw's "frivolity." Implicit in those arguments is an undercurrent of suspicion toward his feminine qualities. If "Stephen Guest, in *The Mill on the Floss*, is, at least sexually, a man to complement Maggie's womanhood, Will is consistently characterized as childish and effeminate" (Barrett 134). Eliot's "recurrent images of him 'shaking his curls,' his frequent blushes, and his transparent girlish complexion," all "create a figure who cannot be seriously contemplated as the appropriate partner for a heroine of Dorothea's scope" (134). Along with a "queer genealogy," Ladislaw possesses a queer sexuality. He is deliberately invested with feminine qualities that may repulse some critics but which clearly attract Dorothea

Brooke. Wishing for the much straighter, and much less complex, Stephen Guest, Barrett sidesteps the issue of Dorothea's overt and formidable desire for Will, a desire so strong that it leads her to sleep on the floor to subdue her pain at the loss of him.

Like Daniel Deronda, whose gender is also overtly male but who is represented in the "language of heroines" and infused with Eliot's "description of a soft, lovely creature whose clothes enhance his attractiveness" (Munich 23), Ladislaw combines the otherness of ethnicity with the otherness of femininity. It is a combination which Dorothea Brooke, like Gwendolen Harleth, finds as attractive as light itself. Indeed, the lightning bolt which startles Ladislaw and Dorothea into their first embrace, like the clear rays of light Ladislaw seems to shake from his head of curly hair, serve to awaken Dorothea, who sleeps like Persephone in a state of repressed sexual desire. Like Deronda, who embodies "the Jew and the Woman's marginality" in his persona, Ladislaw attracts in part because Dorothea identifies with him (Munich 23). Taking the portrait of Julia down from the wall, Dorothea lik[es] to blend the woman who had

> been too hardly judged with the grandson whom her own heart and judgment defended.... She took the little oval picture in her palm and made a bed for it there, and leaned her cheek upon it, as if that would soothe the creatures who had suffered unjust condemnation.... There was something irrevocably amiss and lost in her

> own lot, and her thoughts about the future were the more readily shapen into resolve. Ardent souls, ready to construct their coming lives are apt to commit themselves to the fulfillment of their own visions. (399).

Dorothea, identifying with Julia and Will, can sense what is "amiss and lost in her own lot." Their otherness, a rope for her own marginalization, attracts her.

Indeed, when Dorothea learns of "this ugly bit of Ladislaw's genealogy" and confronts the contempt of her fellow aristocrats, the knowledge "only [gives] more of enthusiasm to [her] clinging thought" (566). As when she first saw his grandmother's portrait and "wondered" about his heritage, the subject remains too "indelicate" to be spoken of; but it is nonetheless becoming the center of their conversation. In their final meeting, when the two agree to marry and make their own "world" or "everywhere," Will is sure that Dorothea has heard "a painful story about my parentage" (591). He seems to own the rumor of a Jewish heritage: "I did not believe that you would let any circumstance of my birth create a prejudice in you against me, though it was sure to do so in others" (592). "The disagreeable story" is never denied (591); it remains "a fact in his destiny" that is "altogether painful" (592). Dorothea, though, embraces Will and his heritage as "a new hardship" and thus a "new reason to cling" to him (592). The narrator continues to refer to Ladislaw's problematic, possibly Jewish, heritage as a "fact" in both earnest and

ironic terms, leaving Ladislaw's heritage mysterious. Near the end of the novel, the ironic Mrs. Cadwallader remarks that "it is difficult to say what Mr. Ladislaw is, his blood is a frightful mixture" (599). Ladislaw's and Dorothea's marriage affirms, in a remarkably untraditional way, the desire to leave the sameness of Middlemarch Englishness behind, to dilute through new blood that of "the Middlemarch tribes" who cherish their Englishness and despise Ladislaw's foreignness though "they were themselves of a breed very much in need of crossing" (441). On the brink of miscegenation, Eliot never distinguishes "fact" from rumor, leaving the rumor to resonate in the imagination like the source of the Nile which Ladislaw prefers to leave unknown and mysterious.

The dual progressions of political reform and sexual desire, which had been so difficult to articulate in *Felix Holt: The Radical*, unfold more explicitly *Middlemarch*, Eliot's great "English novel" whose Englishness has, in this context, obvious ironic overtones. Constantly using the image of otherness, the novel's keynote is the idea of release, the escape from the "dead hand" of an Englishness typified by the ignorant internationalism of the world-travelled Mr. Brooke, the dim intellectual and sexual "gropings" of the aged bridegroom Casaubon, and the provincial narrowness of Sir James Chettam and his pack. Leaving Middlemarch for London, Dorothea Brooke and Will Ladislaw enact the myth of Persephone leaving the underworld for an

over world of "warm activity and fellowship"(348). Their marriage and their dual missions of reform are a comment upon their intention to create their own "world" and to reinvent culture with, quite literally, "new blood."

In Eliot's first novel, *Adam Bede*, such a progression is impossible:

> The main locus in the novel for the reproduction and conservation of gender roles and of male ascendancy is the question of female sexuality. Female sexuality itself, however, is meaningful in the novel chiefly within the context of the exchange of power and of symbolic goods between men; and the scene of female sexuality, whether it be that of the virgin or the whore, seems regularly and fittingly to end, with the banishment of the woman, in an 'affair of honor' between men. (Sedgwick 146).

In *Middlemarch*, Eliot fuses the virgin and the whore, the abstinent and the desirous woman into one, much more complex figure. There is no "affair of honor," but a breach of honor, Dorothea's marriage to Ladislaw in defiance of her dead husband and Middlemarch community, a defiance of other would-be, but powerless male figures, Sir James Chetham and Mr. Brooke. Equally remarkable, Eliot's violation of gender roles acts to erode the heavily conventional masculinity of the early Adam Bede and Arthur Donnithorne who are the male versions of the virgin and the whore, Dinah Morris and Hetty Sorrel. By the time she wrote *Middlemarch*, Eliot, who in

her earlier work seemed so careful to always keep "a lookout for three feet on the floor" (Nunokawa 277), seems able to express desire.[3] Making the strangely foreign, "girlish" Ladislaw the object of Dorothea's desire, and thus aligning the marginalization of otherness with that of feminine sexual desire, Eliot, finally, comments in her most sophisticated way on the ability of culture to invent itself and to invent others. Revealing less the "fact" of ethnicity and more the power of culture to create it, she uses the concepts of exoticism and alterity to expand and re-envision the sexual and political confines of provincial English life. She will attempt to sustain that vision and escape again the underworld of Englishness in her next novel. There the unresolved, unspeakable attraction between the English Gwendolen Harleth and the Jewish Daniel Deronda attempts the overt act of miscegenation which is foreshadowed, perhaps achieved, in *Middlemarch*.

End Notes

1. In his *Rule of Darkness*, Patrick Brantlinger dates the beginning of the English novel's ability to critique empire with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

2. Deronda, much as he presents himself as a keeper of Victorian family values, also identifies with the other's capacity for sexual exploitation. His scrupulous morality toward the abandoned child-woman Mirah resonates with the knowledge that others may think that he, like Fagin, is exploiting her. Attracted by her beauty, he is nonetheless "full of fears about the issue of the adventure which had brought on him a responsibility all the heavier for the strong and agitating impression this childlike creature had made on him" (*Daniel Deronda* 235). While his lust for the "childlike creature" resembles the lust of Fagin, his

anxiety is pure Oliver Twist. This dialogue between otherness and Englishness is early established in the novel when the obviously foreign Deronda returns Gwendolen Harleth's pawned necklace wrapped in his own handkerchief from which he has removed his initials. Like Oliver who is ordered by Fagin to "pick the marks out of the pocket-handkerchiefs" he deals in, Deronda also tries to remove the problematic "mark of origin from his soul" (Jordan 592). Here Jew and vulnerable English orphan are one. Deronda's Fagin within, the desiring, voyeuristic other, tears at himself, creating an irresolvable conflict of desires in the novel.

[3]. Nunokawa, envisioning a more sexually conservative Eliot than I do, stresses that conservatism in his article "The Miser's Two Bodies:*Silas Marner* and the Sexual Possibilities of the Commodity." He argues that all Dorothea Brooke wants to do is "look" at Will Ladislaw and quotes their early encounters as proof (278). He does not read their final scene in which the two are drawn together and embrace during an erotically charged thunder storm.

Chapter V

Arabian Nights:

"Make Believe," Exoticism, and Desire in *Daniel Deronda*

1.

In its attempt to arrive at two states of marriage in which desire is safely regulated or even replaced by spiritual vocation, *Daniel Deronda* journeys through the dangerous and unregulated experience of sexuality represented by two exotic texts, *The Thousand and One Arabian Nights* and *Othello*. Dependent upon "the make-believe of a beginning," the discovery of his ethnic origin in order to light his way "to the East" and vocation (1, 882), Deronda is also placed in the context of a make-believe exoticism as he wrestles with the discovery of his true and "best self" (Arnold 99). Like Goethe's "Hegire," Eliot's novel alludes to a powerfully regenerative East that can "disintegrate" the thrones and empires of North, West, and South (203).[1] There, like the poet, Deronda might "fly away" from the rationalism of the West; as a pilgrim he may achieve "the Romantic idea of restorative reconstruction

(natural supernaturalism)" (Said 168). The rejuvenating effect of this "reverse orientalism" on Daniel Deronda is well known (Brantlinger 272). It is less well known that as Deronda's past identity "trembles" before the powers of the East and exoticism, so does the "empire" of domesticity (Goethe 203). Using exotic allusions, Eliot includes the troubled position of women in the process of "restorative reconstruction." Consequently, the novel's act of natural supernaturalism, of self-invention through several exotic and sensual "make-believe" ethnicities expresses a conflict between the plots of desire and vocation. By the end of *Daniel Deronda*, evocations of the *Arabian Nights* and *Othello* disturbingly haunt Deronda's dual vocation of reform and marriage and Gwendolen Harleth's permanent, virtuous widowhood.

Shakespeare's passionate Moor and an amorous Arabian prince are not easily domesticated into the figure of an earnest, nineteenth-century Jewish reformer. Comparing her sober Victorian young man to a fantastic Arabian prince who is a "temptation unto lovers, a paradise to the desirous," Eliot disrupts her eventual vision of Deronda as a disciplinary moral figure who is contrasted with the desperately immoral Gwendolen Harleth (*Arabian Nights* 73). Once perceived as aesthetically "wooden," "ethereal," and "effeminate," an "angel" with a "seraphic face," Daniel Deronda is also an exotic Hotspur who is compared to both Othello and the beautiful but sexually reluctant Prince

Camaralazan of the *Arabian Nights* (Stephen 187-188). The presence of this exoticism and its suggestions of sexual pleasure and danger, fantasy and nightmare, speak to the rigid control, the absence of sexual "make believe" in English life, as well as sexuality's potentially disruptive qualities. Indeed, in a novel which fragments into two plots while attempting to speak of a woman's "lot" and a man's vocation, the presence and absence of exoticism is another link between both. In contrast to the exotic life of the Jewish Deronda, Gwendolen Harleth's English, Christian life with her white-handed husband indicts the absence of pleasure, the anti-exoticism and anti-eroticism of a nineteenth-century gentlewoman's life. Interrupting and fragmenting the novel of vocation, Eliot's exotic subtext challenges that absence.

Studies of *Daniel Deronda*'s "Orientalism" have ignored Eliot's references to the *Arabian Nights* and to *Othello*. Some critics, particularly Steven Marcus, Cynthia Chase, and Catherine Gallagher, have confronted the aesthetic problems of the novel's construction of Judaism. Patrick Brantlinger and Anne Aresty Naman have examined the position of the Jew in *Daniel Deronda*'s political and social context. In his study of George Eliot and Judaism, William Baker has painstakingly tracked Eliot's research for the novel. Recently, a debate in *PMLA* interprets the novel's fragmentation into two plots as a metaphor of the contests for powers between states -- hence Deronda's Zionism "excludes and

marginalizes Harleth much as Zionism has continued to exclude and marginalize the Palestinians" (Robbins 44). And, of course, *Daniel Deronda* has been the focus of much recent feminist criticism which often envisions the separation between Gwendolen Harleth and Deronda, as well as Grandcourt, as freeing Gwendolen "from the confining plots both of romance and marriage" (Lassner et al 1282). Few studies, however, have attempted to examine the novel's construction of a "make-believe," exoticized Judaism which is narrated in the domestic realm through the issues of sexuality, marriage, and courtship. Indeed, Eliot's allusions to exotic and sensual "other" texts provide us with a way of decoding the unspeakable content of sexual desire which theological or political approaches alone cannot unlock and which in *Daniel Deronda* involve a kind of miscegenation in the relationship between Gwendolen Harleth and Deronda.

In perceiving the ethnically different as exotic and sensual, and in generalizing about the characteristics of all Oriental peoples, Eliot mirrors her culture. While our own televisions blare highly defined images of Arabs and Jews in conflict in the Middle East, actually nineteenth-century Europeans envisioned Jewish and Muslim culture as remarkably similar. Both the Jew and the Muslim were perceived as essentially "Eastern" and exotic. Eliot's comparison of a Jewish protagonist to a Muslim Arabian prince is far stranger to us than to her. Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*,

one of George Eliot's central resources, demonstrates the orientalizing of the Jew in contemporary culture in the collection of visual, Eastern, eroticized stereotypes in which Rebecca, "the lovely Jewess," is depicted, her "turban," her "Eastern dress," and "Persian silk," are less Jewish, than an essentially Eastern fantasy (83). Rebecca is pure "make-believe," the type which Eliot, like Dickens or Shakespeare was to use in her depictions of cultural others. Her warmth was used to create contrast, physically and morally between herself and Rowena. Scott's portrayal of Rebecca clearly reflects how easily such stereotypes could be interchangeably transferred from the Arab to the Jew. Arab or Jewish, exotic Orientalism is traditionally used to contrast with the cool chastity and sexual virtue of white heroines and heros, like Rowena and Ivanhoe. Ultimately value is placed on their chastity and on the absence of sexual desire from their lives. It is these ideals which Eliot resists, disrupts, and subverts in her novel which blends characteristics of Englishness and otherness into one character, the Jewish Deronda.

As a Jew who was, like the gypsy, a resident alien in Victorian England, Deronda can readily bear the burden of exoticism. Stereotypically believed to be universally dark of hair and eye, the Jew as a cultural other was subjected to pariah status and to the sexual stereotyping which accompanied otherness in the Victorian mind. They all bore "the stamp of identity. None can mistake the aquiline nose,

dark eyes, pale forehead, and raven locks; they all bespeak the Jew" (Hartley *Memories of Gospel Triumphs* 344). Like the gypsy, he was seen as an economic exploiter of Christians. Gwendolen Harleth, expressing a widespread Victorian anti-Semitism, states the prejudice quite clearly: "these Jew dealers were so unscrupulous in taking advantage of Christians unfortunate at play!" (49). And, as with the gypsy, the leap from economic exploitation to sexual exploitation is quickly made. The Jew as pimp and sexual exploiter of children is a lurid presence in *Daniel Deronda* where Lapidoth Cohen seeks to sell his child-like daughter to a wealthy gentile as his mistress. The Fagin-like Lapidoth has the capacity to reappear in the most unlikely places. As a stereotyped figure of ethnicized perversion, Fagin lurks not just in Mirah's father but in Deronda himself.

The literary precedent for Lapidoth is strikingly established by Dickens in *Oliver Twist* (1838). No character perverts Victorian family values more or better than Fagin with his "family" of little boys and fallen young women. As Gary Wills suggests, "Fagin intrigues us precisely because of his sexual dominance over children" (598). Originally referred to in the first edition as often by ethnicity as by name, "the Jew" is clearly predatory and exploitative, perverting his favorite genteel "form of address - 'My dear'" -- and the values that term espouses, exploiting English women and children as prostitutes and

pickpockets, and, in Oliver's case, as an object of desire. In *Oliver Twist*, as in *Daniel Deronda*, "the Jew's searching look" falling upon the Christian's "pale" pink and white face and body is distinctly sexual. While Dickens' construction of Fagin's Jewishness may have been intended as a "cover" for the latter's pederasty (Wills 603), a Victorian audience could easily align both as perversions of deeply held values. Much as Deronda presents himself as a keeper of those values, his identification with the other's capacity for immorality is omnipresent in the text of the novel. His scrupulous morality towards the abandoned child-woman Mirah resonates with his knowledge that others may think that he, like Fagin, is exploiting her. Deronda has "a shuddering sense" of the Mallinger household's reaction to his return home with Mirah. He foresees "chilling suspicious manners from lady's maid and housekeeper" (235). Attracted by Mirah's beauty, "he was full of fears about the issue of the adventure which had brought on him a responsibility all the heavier for the strong and agitating impression this childlike creature had made on him" (235). A protector of Victorian family values and "innocent need," Deronda is nonetheless "full of fears" about his moral responsibility. Deronda's singing from Rossini's "Otello" while he is rescuing Mirah speaks to the difficulty of his managing and controlling his desire for her.

While Deronda is never quite the English gentleman he appears to be, Mirah Lapidoth, because she is an other, a

Jewish woman, is also invested with exotic properties which also complicate her virtue and childish innocence. Indeed, like the Jewish man, the Jewish woman also bore the burden of exoticism and served as a target for English fears. Naman notes that the Jewish woman was often allowed a seductive beauty, but that beauty is always qualified by the idea that she is an exotic. As such, her sexuality contains deeply threatening, disruptive, even violent forces. Charles Lamb voices this fear explicitly in his anti-Semitic essay, "Imperfect Sympathies." "Some admire the Jewish female-physiognomy. I admire it - but with trembling" (54). Like little Oliver, who "felt that his pale face and trembling limbs were neither unnoticed, nor unrelished by" the Jewish Fagin, Lamb himself senses the threat of an unregulated and dangerous sexuality in the Jewess's gaze. Darkness of hair and particularly of eyes, believed to be a universally Jewish trait, signalled otherness. Otherness, as in *The Mill on the Floss*, where the anomalously dark Maggie Tulliver is also a comparative exotic, likened to Jael, signals a destructive, potentially contaminating or castrating sexuality.

When applied to the gentle Mirah, this exotic sexual stereotype has a paradoxical effect. While she is figured as tiny and childlike, Mirah is also compared to the voluptuous Queen Budoor of the *Arabian Nights* whose lush body and capacity for desire are described at length in the tale to which Eliot alludes. If many critics have found her a

virtuous bore, that is because they have not asked why it is necessary that Mirah be so good. The answer is that she has inherited an erotic history well-established in English literature. Sartre summarized that history when he wrote that "There is in the words 'a beautiful Jewess' a very special signification.... This phrase carries an aura of rape and massacre.... [The Jewish woman] has a well-defined function in even the most serious of novels. Frequently violated ... those who keep their virtue are docile servants or humiliated women in love with indifferent Christians who marry Aryan women" (Sartre 48). Eliot's Mirah fits Sartre's specifications exactly. Deronda's future wife is a paradox of inviting and reticent sexuality who has only recently escaped rape and defilement through the agency of her own father. While her body is tiny and child-like, it is also voluptuous and seductive, as if she is both the stereotyped Victorian Jewess and the Victorian angel in the house. Gifted with a passionately beautiful singing voice, Mirah remembers never to voice her attraction to Daniel. Like Scott in his depiction of the virtuous-erotic Rebecca, Eliot speaks to Mirah's exotic, threatening sexuality in the sheer force she exerts to obliterate Mirah's will and cloak her sexuality with moral virtue. Indeed, the strict regulation of Mirah's will, the inflation and idealization of her virtue to the exclusion of her sexuality, speaks volumes to how desire must be reckoned with and controlled in the world of the novel.

As Deronda's dual sexuality of passion and reticence speaks to the repression of desire, so does his dual attraction to Gwendolen Harleth and Mirah Lapidoth speak to ethnicity's role in the control and regulation of sexual passion. It is true that *Daniel Deronda* attempts, as many other nineteenth-century texts do not, to show a "prejudicial sympathy" towards the Jew (Naman 161). Beyond Eliot's "sympathy" with racial or ethnic others, however, lie politically delicate questions of racial and ethnic purity and of the consequences of miscegenation. While Naman holds that the novel supports interracial unions through its depiction of Herr Klesmer and Catherine Arrowpoint, the problems of interracial unions are addressed in the subtle, unfulfilled flirtations and sexual tension between Deronda and Gwendolen. Many of Eliot's writings, particularly her letters to Harriet Beecher Stowe, reflect the type of liberality which Naman sees in Eliot. But she also frequently expresses her xenophobia and her concern over the demoralizing effects of minority status. It is clearly a subject about which the author herself is in conflict.

Fortunately, the conflict is more interesting than its resolution, particularly when that conflict manifests itself in Eliot's concern over the simultaneous allure and fear of exogamy in the interracial plot line, "the great source of romantic interest" as in "*Ivanhoe*" ("Dred" 380). This anxiety manifests itself in the novel's initial scene of the multicultural crowd with its central figure of temptation,

Gwendolen, dressed in her "*ensemble du serpent*" and observed by the un-knowingly Jewish, knowingly eroticized Deronda. More subtle than Scott's Rebecca or Dickens' Fagin, Eliot's Deronda embodies a complicated and exotic sexuality. When that exoticism meets Gwendolen's English frigidity, Eliot addresses the idea of sexual repression. Their ultimate failure to meet sexually is resonant with the culture's need to eradicate sexuality in favor of courtship and domesticity. This same impulse is evident in Deronda's deep sense of sexual shame as he perceives that his origin did not stem from the sanction of those patterns. Again, Eliot joins this discovery, the make-believe that he is illegitimate, with the subtle implication that he is physically, stereotypically exotic.

Using the exotic figure of *Othello* to link Deronda's attraction to both Mirah and Gwendolen Harleth, Eliot wades into the troubled issue of miscegenation. In Shakespeare's play, the "dark" cultural other is used to express inhumanity, rage, passion, and an overtly dangerous sexuality which is contrasted with a virtuous white woman. *Othello* reflects the link in western culture "between blackness and the monstrous and particularly a monstrous sexuality" (Newman 148). The play seems to act out stock prejudices, using white to represent virtue, black to represent a moral "descent into hell... duplicity and lust" (Newman 152). But literalizing those moral ideas with Othello's blackness is only a stepping-off point in the

play. Desdemona's attraction to Othello and defiance of her father create a willing link of miscegenation between the threatening, sexual other and the white figure. Subverting the stock characterizations, in Shakespeare's play "femininity is not opposed to blackness and monstrosity, as white to black, but identified with the monstrous, an identification that makes miscegenation doubly fearful" (Newman 145). As Deronda and Gwendolen secretly exchange a handkerchief at the novel's opening and as he sings from 'Otello' shortly before he meets Mirah Lapidoth, the novel's characters mirror these same issues, and the other, who is contrasted with a female figure, is also identified with her, as if both are alien. Like Desdemona's desire for Othello, Gwendolen Harleth's desire for Deronda subverts the "patriarchal privilege of disposing daughters" for patrilineal or economic profit (Newman 152). As Gwendolen pawns her father's necklace, creating a secret bond with Deronda that is symbolized by his returning the necklace wrapped in his handkerchief, she affirms her defiance of her father. Her link with a cultural other is repeated in the unions of Catherine Arrowpoint and Herr Klesmer, in the broken union between Mirah and Lapidoth, and in her union with the partly exotic, partly English Daniel. Reversing and mirroring the traditional role of the exotic in literature, all these characters employ ethnicity as a way of articulating the problem of sexual desire. In *Othello*, his ethnicity divides the Moor from court life and "links him to

the play's other marginality, femininity" (Newman 151). In *Daniel Deronda* the problem of ethnicity also speaks to the position of women.

Indeed, rather than splitting the experience of desire between the white and the exotic figures, Eliot, like Shakespeare, presents Gwendolen Harleth as a desiring figure who is ultimately disciplined and, some have said, condemned by her exotic other. Seeking the "restorative reconstruction" of self through a purified, untainted mission of vocation, Deronda fears his own desire as a process of self-destruction that is linked to the "past effect" of his tainted, sexually suspect origin. Eventually shunning Gwendolen and the prospect of intermarriage, Deronda avoids Othello's rage, but it is at the cost of Gwendolen's desire. Indeed, despite the change in gender, Deronda's actions mirror those of Maggie Tulliver who longs to affirm her dark, exotic gypsy self. But when façed with the opportunity for affirmation of that self by running away with the gypsies or with Stephen Guest, Maggie becomes mired in sexual fear and guilt. She is unable to reinvent herself as a sexual being. Facing Gwendolen, Deronda too perceives marriage and sexual experience as not the wonder of regenerative natural supernaturalism but as the vanishing of the self in a strange and suffocating otherness that is mirrored by the plot of *Othello*.

It is fitting, then, that Eliot's allusions to the exotic, sexually disruptive Moor are interrupted by a strik-

ing examination of Deronda's historical sense of sexual guilt. Like many other nineteenth-century novels (*Oliver Twist*, for example), *Daniel Deronda*'s "peculiar plot [is] a systematic disruption of narrative principles and temporal structures" all of which match the novel's disruption of discovery of the self and ultimately of the concepts of cause and origin (Chase 217). As Cynthia Chase has noted, the story unfolds "not only as a history of the effects of causes but also as a story of 'the present causes of past effects'" (215). Ultimately, Deronda's discovery of self will be as implausible and as plausible as Oliver Twist's, implausible from the perspective of realism, plausible from the perspective of character. With his fine speech, fair skin, good manners, and good heart, how could Oliver be other than middle class? In subtly evoking Deronda's natural affinities with Judaism and other Jews, his dark hair and beard, his easy brotherhood with Mordeicai, Eliot also indicates Deronda's other ethnic origin before the plot finally reveals. But her early indications of Deronda's Judaism are as dark and sexually suspect as Oliver Twist is white and innocent. Thus, it is between the novel's two allusions to *Othello* that the "past effect" of Daniel's actions at the novel's opening is explained. The "present cause" of Daniel's sexual reluctance is, paradoxically, what he perceives as an overabundance of sexual feeling the original cause of which is located in his origin. At the liminal age of thirteen, Daniel Deronda guesses that he is a

bastard. The moment of his discovery is described as a fall of Edenic proportions. Seated in a cloistered garden with his tutor, the thirteen-year old Daniel, while reading Sismondi's *History of the Italian Republics*, enjoys a prelapsarian "moment full of July sunshine and large pink roses shedding their last petals on a grassy court" (203). "In purest boyish tones" he asks his tutor, "Mr..... Fraser, how was it that the popes and cardinals had so many nephews?" (203). Upon learning that the nephews were actually illegitimate children, Daniel becomes certain that he too is a bastard, truly the child of his "uncle," Sir Hugo Mallinger. Feeling "the deep blush" of sexual shame, he immediately envisions himself as sexually suspect. "Having read Shakespeare as well as a great deal of history, he could have talked with the wisdom of a bookish child about men who were born out of wedlock" (205). "The ardour which he had given to the imaginary world in his books suddenly rushed towards his own history" (206). Daniel's fall from grace "had been burnt" into him (202). Eliot's language consistently returns to heat and fire, recalling Hotspur, Shakespeare's embodiment of passionate illegitimacy. The shame from "these new thoughts seemed like falling flakes of fire to his imagination" (206). The "purest" moment of childhood is over; the frightening stigma of a sexual sin now marks him.

Deronda's knowledge of his own sensual beauty becomes synonymous with the knowledge that "there was a tinge of

dishonor in his lot" (218). Eliot stresses that the secret, internalized shame of his illegitimate origin is a mark, like Byron's "deformed foot doubtfully hidden by the shoe" (215). Deronda seeks early to divorce himself from the sexual taint of his illegitimacy; he becomes curiously "aloof from conspicuous, vulgar triumph, and from other ugly forms of boyish energy" (219). "Burn[ing] his fire" on other, intellectual heights, he successfully manages to avoid women. Doubly displaced by the mother he resents and by Lady Mallinger and her brood of girl children, he remains distant from women throughout the novel. He enjoys a moral purity which contrasts with that of his best friend, the artist Hans Meyrick, who is subject to "fits of impish recklessness" and does "things that would have made the worst habits" (221). In contrast, Deronda prefers self-control, "the beauty of the closed lips" (213). Leslie Stephen rightly complained that Deronda "is so ethereal a being that we are a little shocked when he is mentioned in connection with entrees. One can't fancy an angel at a London dinner party" (188). What Stephen overlooks is that the content of Deronda's anti-sensuality is sexual desire, guilt, and anxiety.

As he matures, Deronda grows to hate his own attractiveness as the stamp of his illegitimacy, as the mark of illicit passion and the moral depravity of his parents, particularly of his unknown mother. As much as Oliver Twist's pinkness and fairness are the living proof of his

middle-class origin and virtue, Deronda believes that his own physical beauty is the mark of his mother and father's illicit passion. Thus praise of his face or body makes him "angry" (226). For "his own face in the glass had during many years been associated for him with thoughts of some one whom he must be like - one about whose character and lot he continually wondered" (226). In her physical depiction of Deronda Eliot clearly delineates his virility. Deronda's "lithe, powerful frame," his "long, flexible, firmly-grasping hands ... show the combination of refinement with force" (226). He is " thoroughly terrestrial and manly," more like a handsome, heterosexual "workman" than an effeminate "tenor" (226). Eliot presents Deronda as an object of desire and Gwendolen feels his gaze as disturbing, even "dreadful" (226). Further underscoring Deronda's handsome exoticism, Eliot ends her chapter, the last chapter to precede his introduction to Mirah Lapidoth, with an emphasis on his physical appearance: the Meyrick girls, having "so thoroughly accepted Deronda as an ideal," set to work "to paint him as Prince Camaralzaman" (224). The history of this Arabian prince and his queen, like the history of *Othello,* will bear significantly upon the history of Deronda, Mirah Lapidoth, and Gwendolen Harleth.

Eliot represents Gwendolen, like Scott's Rowena, as almost preternaturally white, an under-water creature or Nereid rather than a human being. As in *Othello,* here whiteness is not necessarily non-desiring nor virtuous. As

Gwendolen's eyes meet Deronda's for the first time, "it did not bring the blood to her cheeks, but sent it away from her lips" (38). Gwendolen's complexion is a "warm paleness" that suggests sensuality and humanity rather than frigidity. Nonetheless, the contrast between Deronda and Gwendolen is exaggerated until Deronda becomes an exotic. Gwendolen must ask if the dark-haired young man is English; he seems "not like" the "young men in general" whom she finds "not in the least" admirable (42). His "delightfully" exotic name adds to his mysteriousness. Gwendolen "can't at all guess what Mr.... Deronda would say. What *does* he say?" (42). Clearly an unknown quantity, Deronda is a challenge, another country which she, on her grand tour, might explore and conquer, an alternative to the relatively tame geography of the Matterhorn. While "every single player differed markedly from every other, there was a certain uniform negativeness" shared by all, "as if they had all eaten of some root that for the time compelled the brains of each" (37). Even ethnicity is diluted in the salon. In a "striking admission of human equality," all are dross (36). Only Deronda amongst these different "species" is authentically exotic and "different," distant and removed from the human dross surrounding Gwendolen. Only Deronda, in his differentness, intrigues her.

While the novel's contrast between a dark, exotic male and a fair, white woman recalls *Othello*, so does its subtext of a woman thwarting convention. Like Desdemona, the dis-

obedient daughter, Gwendolen asserts her own capacity for desire by gambling, an activity which inevitably exposes her to considerable male conjecture about her sexual virtue and availability. Her actions make her body visually accessible to the male crowd of watchers; she becomes sexually suspect just as Desdemona does by loving a Moor. The latter act alone makes Desdemona's virtue suspect in *Othello*. The beginnings of sexual jealousy are indeed planted by her father who warns, "Look to her, Moor, have a quick eye to see: She has deceived her father, may do thee" (Iiii 292-293). Clearly also a disruptive figure, Gwendolen thwarts the advice of her "friend and chaperon who had wished her not to play" (39). Her "eager experience of gambling" becomes a metaphor for the dangers of sensual pleasure. As Gwendolen adjusts her coins with "taper fingers, delicately gloved in pale grey," she becomes more and more a figure of temptation. For Deronda, sexual desire, "the glow of mingled undefined sensibilities forming admiration," is replaced, like Othello's, with "scrutiny" (38). Deronda senses that Gwendolen is out of control. "She was in that mood of defiance in which the mind loses sight of any end beyond the satisfaction of enraged resistance" (39). Gambling becomes a metaphor for the risk involved in exercising female lust. As lust made both Othello and Desdemona monstrous, so does it now make Gwendolen a sylph, a sea creature, a serpent, a Lamia or Melusina. Her desire to play ["why should not a woman have a like supremacy" to

"male gamblers" and be "followed by a *cortege* who worship her as a goddess of luck"] represents her sexual perversity (39). The disapproving Deronda watching Gwendolen gamble mirrors the jealous Othello as he wonders "Was the good or the evil genius dominant?" in her (1). Like the Moor, Deronda guards Gwendolen's virtue with a "scrutiny" that can only be described as sexually intimate.

Deronda's attention and sexual interest in Gwendolen Harleth also mirrors the Moor and Desdemona in that it is markedly disciplinary. As Othello denies that his love for Desdemona is "to please the palate of my appetite, not to comply with heat ... but to be free and bounteous to her mind" (Iiii 262-265), so does Deronda pretend to be the improver of Gwendolen. Like Othello, Deronda is a powerful and virile male who nonetheless rigorously restrains his own desire even as, during the novel's handkerchief scene, he sends Gwendolen an intimate token suggestive of a sexual liaison. Returning Gwendolen's pawned necklace "wrapt in a cambric handkerchief" (48), Deronda has "taken an unpardonable liberty" (49). He establishes a secret bond between them while at the same moment he defaces, even castrates the image:

> A large corner of the handkerchief seemed to have been recklessly torn off to get rid of a mark; but she at once believed in the first image of 'the stranger' that presented itself to her mind. It was Deronda. (49)

Despite his attempts to preserve his identity, Deronda can-

not "get rid" of the mark which makes his action so recognizable to Gwendolen. His return of the necklace is simply "another way of smiling at her ironically" and of indicating his sexual interest, his desire to be intimate with her. Here, as in *Othello*, the handkerchief is a reminder of his masculinity, a substitute for his physical presence. Desdemona who "so loves the token" because Othello "conjured her she should ever keep it," "reserves it evermore about her to kiss and talk to " (III iii ll. 293-296). "The first remembrance from the Moor" (291) is a transitional object representing him.

Though Deronda's token functions in the same role here, it reflects his desire to purge himself of the sin of desire between separate ethnic groups. Moreover, since Deronda is both the other and the white-handed English gentleman, the message is dual, an invitation to sexual intimacy that reminds a daughter of her responsibility to virtue. With the handkerchief comes a note: "A stranger who has found Miss Harleth's necklace returns it to her with the hope that she will not again risk the loss of it" (49). Establishing himself as an intimate "stranger," Deronda paradoxically reminds Gwendolen of her "virtue" and, in returning her father's necklace in the handkerchief, of her place within patriarchal culture.

Clearly, the handkerchief in *Daniel Deronda*, like the one in *Othello*, represents "the forces" of "sexual jealousy" (Jordan 590). This is complicated by the equivo-

cal remove of Deronda's mark, which suggests the ambiguity of his desire to be literally in touch with Gwendolen. Deronda's removal of his name from the sexually significant handkerchief, however, suggests that his origin or identity is also problematically linked to his sexuality. In her study of narration in Eliot's novel, Cynthia Chase observes "the distortion of causality" in the novel's plot. "What a reader feels, on the basis of the narrative presentation, is that it is *because* Deronda has developed a strong affinity for Judaism that he turns out to be of Jewish parentage" (217). Thus, "origin, cause, and identity are linked in the plot structure" and the "cause of Deronda's character" seems to be character itself rather than "the myth of origin, the view of origin as having a unique generative power" (217). Yet Eliot's allusions to the myth of "other" origins and the effects of those origins on sexuality suggest that Deronda's affinities for otherness have a primal heritage. Hence, from early in the novel, we have a sense that Daniel is genuinely other, "different," as Gwendolen Harleth perceives him, and "marked," as he perceives himself.

In removing his mark of origin from his handkerchief, then, Deronda resembles Dickens' Oliver, who is ordered by Fagin to "pick the marks out of the pocket-handkerchiefs" he deals in. Daniel Deronda also tries to "remove the mark of origin from his soul" (Jordan 592). Here Jew and English boy are one. The forces of both turn in on each other. Rather than being forced, like Oliver, to remove his own

identity, here Deronda's Fagin within, the desiring, scrutinizing other, tears at himself. As in both *Oliver Twist* and *Othello*, a gentleman's personal handkerchief and its signature marking raise the "question of 'marks' and 'stains,' of genetic traits and environmental determinants" (Jordan 592) which are ineffaceable despite Deronda's "reckless tearing" at their presence. The intimate gesture, the personal symbol of his handkerchief, immediately identifies him and his strangely conjoined overtly sexual and overtly moral presence, his exotic/English identity. Like Othello, when Deronda sends Gwendolen his handkerchief, he also sends his body, and she responds by feeling "entangled" and "helpless" before his exotic attractiveness and rigorous morality. Wrapping her dead father's necklace in his handkerchief, moreover, Deronda underscores his authority as a man and the patrimony which she wishes to rid herself of. Striking a keynote for all the exchanges to come between Gwendolen and Deronda, this exchange is informed by a basic equivocation between the desire to reveal and conceal identity, self, and sexual interest. Neither character is sure that the other is a suitable object of desire. The confluence of patriarchy, sexual interest, and ethnicity are wrapped in the overdetermined bit of cambric.

As a metaphor for Deronda's alignment with two women, *Othello* suggests the idea of "monstrous difference" and the alliances of both the feminine and the dark "imagined monstrous sexual appetite" which is such a potentially

destructive force in the novel (Newman 152). Like Deronda, Othello ""internalizes alien cultural values, but the otherness which divides him from that culture and links him to the play's other marginality, femininity, remains in verbal and visual allusion" (151). In introducing Deronda to a member of his own culture, then, Eliot slides back and forth between ethnic sameness and difference, again using allusions to *Othello* to speak to Deronda's profound fear of his own and female sexuality. As "Othello fears Desdemona's desire because it invokes his monstrous difference from the sex/race code he has adopted," so does Deronda approach Mirah Lapidoth with a simultaneous tension between sexual attraction and the reticence needed to control that disruptive force. The resulting encounter is a series of paradoxes.

Singing from Rossini's "Otello," as he rows on the Thames and comes upon Mirah, Deronda is depicted as a rescuer, though his song recalls the crime the play enacts, intensifying the dangerous quality of Deronda's combined sexuality and ethnicity. Deronda is now, as he rows upon the river toward Mirah Lapidoth, singing the "gondolier's song," carefully linked to the physical aspects of the Moor's character (227). In *Othello*, the "lascivious Moor" is first described as "a knave of common hire, a gondolier," to underscore the sexual virility and strength which Iago envies (Ii 124-125). While he rows on an English river, Deronda is physically compared to a "workman" to underscore

the same qualities. The Moor's body then haunts Deronda as Rossini's opera "haunted his throat all the way up the river" (227). Deronda sings

> *Nessun maggior dolor*
> *Che ricordarsi del tempo felice*
> *Nella miseria* (227)

The sorrow that he is contemplating, as he sings of Othello's murder of Desdemona, is his physical appearance. Like Othello, Deronda feels profoundly that he is not, "in Cinthio's words, 'da no,' one of us" (Newman 153). His belief in his own sexual corruption has led him to hate his exotic appearance. Ultimately, "Othello reveals ... a complicitous self-loathing for blackness is as loathsome to him as to ... any male character in the play, or ostensibly, in the audience" (153). Similarly, Deronda, perceiving his own face reflected back by those who sense his differentness, is full of "anger" toward himself and toward the culture which separates him from full inheritance and vocation. Singing of his sorrow, as he rows upon the river, Deronda regretfully ponders his appearance:

> Often the grand meanings of faces as well as of written words may lie chiefly in the impressions of those who look on them. But it is precisely such impressions that happen just now to be of importance in relation to Deronda, rowing on the Thames in a very ordinary equipment for a young Englishman at leisure, and passing under Kew Bridge with no thought of an adventure in

> which his appearance was likely to play any part. In fact, he objected very strongly to the notion which others had not allowed him to escape, that his appearance was of a kind to draw attention; and hints of this, intended to be complimentary, found an angry resonance in him, coming from mingled experiences, to which a clue has already been given. His own face in the glass had during many years been associated for him with thoughts of someone whom he must be like - one about whose character and lot he continually wondered and never dared to ask. (226)

Like little Maggie Tulliver, Daniel Deronda is deeply perplexed by "his own face in the glass." Like hers, his appearance "was a kind to draw attention" in its attractiveness and its anomalous darkness, "his uniform pale-brown skin" (226). While Deronda fears that his appearance links him to the immorality of his mother, his physical exoticism calls visual attention to what he fears. Even rowing on the Thames in "a very ordinary equipment for a young Englishman," he stands out. "Unconsciously" he calls upon Shakespeare's other to give voice to his alienation (226). Like Maggie, who is called a little "mulatter" amidst the pink and white Tullivers, Deronda might as well be a Moor, so different and alienated is he from the English community. "Rowing fast" to avoid the Londoners sauntering over Kew Bridge, heard and understood "only to one ear" [that of the Jewess, Mirah Cohen], Deronda is a vision of alienated, eth-

nic otherness. And Mirah's face and body, subtly described as similar to his, "might have been an impersonation of the misery he was unconsciously giving voice to" (227).

The meeting between Daniel and Mirah simultaneously embodies the lure of race to race and other to other. Daniel, of course, is both: English by culture, Jewish by ethnicity. Often his Englishness is established by his manners, education, and speech. As often, his physical qualities are those of the Jewish physical stereotype, with brown skin, penetrating dark eyes, luxurious dark hair and beard. Like Maggie, who is not a gypsy but feels as if she is and imagines a gypsy mother's face to be like her own, or like Fedalma, who instantly perceives her kinship with her unknown father, Deronda experiences a parallel moment of identification with Mirah. That moment may even be described, as it is in the "Sonnets," as "primal," for it returns Deronda to his very origin. "Perhaps my mother was like this one," he thinks as he approaches her (231). Eliot now with great subtlety subverts cultural standards of difference and sameness. In the guise of the most "ordinary ... young Englishman," Daniel collapses endogamous, ethnic prejudice with familiar English manners while he establishes sexual attraction on the basis of an ethnicity which is culturally exogamous and biologically endogamous. Otherness and sameness become strangely one. Othello, the Ethiop, is suddenly "washed white," as Mirah perceives him as a rescuer, not as the "dreadful" sexual figure that Gwendolen

Harleth does. "You look good," she says, unable to see him as he sees himself.[2] Deronda's sense of Jewish identity, like the novel's dual exploration of sexuality and desire, origin and vocation, is inseparable from his identity as a sexual figure and as such is established as early as his first meeting with Mirah.

Continuing to reverse the moral color code of *Othello*, Mirah Lapidoth, whose face is "an onyx cameo," is goodness incarnate, a child-woman whose "small, small features and dark long-lashed eyes" wash the darkness of her otherness with moral virtue (228). With her "small, small features," Eliot intensifies the idea that Mirah is a child-victim as she represents Deronda himself as the child-victim of a fallen mother at this moment. He exclaims, "Great God!" that "exclamation in which both East and West have for ages concentrated their awe" (231). Like Zarca [Fedalma's lost father in *The Spanish Gypsy*] immediately identifying the adult daughter he has not seen since infancy, Deronda's intense identification with Mirah conflates the cultural boundaries of "East and West" like a prayer (231). The empathic "awe" becomes a universal identification which "makes mankind whole" ("Brother and Sister Sonnets" 429). He feels a profound, immediate familial connection and an intimate relation to Mirah. Like the little English girl encountering the gypsy in Eliot's "Brother and Sister Sonnets," Daniel's first encounter with Mirah reminds him of his humanity and his very origin. What he suspects as her

sexual sin touches him deeply as similar to the one he imagines brought him into the world.

However, what Daniel and Mirah experience, until the very end of the novel, is a moral and spiritual, brother and sister union that is so washed clean of otherness as to be devoid of desire. The novel's eroticism continues to focus on Daniel and Gwendolen rather than on Daniel and Mirah. As Deronda continues to sing from the "Otello," "unconsciously giving voice to "his misery," so does Eliot's subtext suggest an aching search for both self and a sexual partner. Singing from "Otello," Deronda mourns the death of Desdemona and Othello and the suicide of his own desire, his "reckless tearing" at his own suspect sexuality. In the terms of Shakespeare's play, a monstrous perversion of desire destroys itself as Othello murders Desdemona. The lines from Rossini mourn that event. But it is significant that a similar perversion of desire has destroyed Mirah Lapidoth's sense of self and sexuality, leaving her a child victim rather than an erotic entity. Thus as Mirah with her "little woman's figure' leans toward Deronda, she moves "a step backward" (231). Putting "her tiny hand into his which closed round it," she "draws back," hesitating and timid (231). Mirah echoes the sorrow of Desdemona's murder. Her first words to Deronda repeat the gondolier's song: "At last she said in a low sweet voice, with an accent so distinct that it suggested foreignness and yet was not foreign, 'I saw you before' ... and then added dreamily, after a like

pause, 'nella miseria'" (230). Embodying the words, a small funereal image of female tragedy, Mirah "paused and then went on dreamily, - 'Dolore - miseria - I think those words are alive'" (233).

And, indeed, Rossini's words are alive in Mirah. Because of her exploitation and abandonment by her father, Mirah must kill her own appetite as Othello murders Desdemona for hers. When Deronda offers the obviously hungry, suicidal Mirah food, she responds, "No; I cannot eat" (232). She too is an angel at a dinner party. She has no appetite for life itself, no desire: "I cannot see how I shall be glad to live" (233). Her suicidal desire parallels Deronda's self-loathing. In their capacity for misery, Deronda and Mirah are mirror images, brother and sister of a tainted origin. Their relationship is marked by a sexual reticence so guarded by the most rigorous, socially upright morality that it seeks to displace eroticism entirely. As he drifts down the river, for Deronda "thinking and desiring melt together imperceptibly." As a Jew and an Englishman, he must "habitually shift his centre till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape" or risk encountering himself and his own desire (230). In this realization of Deronda's drifting, in his attempt to question and characterize both his Englishness and his otherness, his moral self and his sexual self, Eliot identifies the problem with the character and her novel. Neither Daniel Deronda nor *Daniel Deronda* can be "centered." Both

retain an abstract quality that results from their infusion with a duality of selves and repressed desires. Deronda and his story violates our aesthetic expectations also because of his desire to displace himself continually. Desire then remains abstracted in the realm of suicidal brooding, of thought rather than action. In an attempt to reconstruct the damaged sexual self and thus to continue the plot's progression, Eliot brings Deronda and Mirah from Othello's murder of Desdemona and Desdemona's desire to a "make-believe beginning" of the sensual. Becoming Scheherezade, she finds that beginning in the exoticism of *Arabian Nights*.

2.

Daniel Deronda contains worlds within worlds to a fault. A plot of English county life is interrupted by a man's search for his Jewish self. A story of a woman's search for self-determination becomes a man's story, based on the classic "nineteenth-century plot of the hero's search for his origins" (Pell 426). Nancy Pell has successfully suggested that both these "obvious, actual worlds" and their stories function as a continuing metaphor through which Eliot addresses the great contrast between "the separate, conventional virtual worlds of young men and women, regardless of geography" (427). Yet the sexual politics of Eliot's allusions to the exotic, violent, and sensual world

of the *The Thousand and One Arabian Nights* complicates these claims. If Eliot mourns the repression of desire in the meeting of Deronda and Mirah, her attempts to awaken that dangerous, disruptive, but regenerative element are troubled by her dual attraction to sexual abandon and productivity, desire and vocation. In her fiction, these issues are consistently represented by dual characters, Dinah Morris and Hetty Sorrel, Arthur Donnithorne and Adam Bede, for instance. In the later, arguably more complex novels, the conflict occurs within characters themselves -- in Gwendolen's warm brown hair flowing over the icy chill of her body, in Maggie Tulliver's belief that there is a gypsy within her. Similarly, in *Daniel Deronda*, by alluding to a powerfully erotic prince and his consort, Eliot attempts to give sexual life to her icon-like reformers. The experiment is not entirely successful. Eliot's novel ends with the funereal image of Gwendolen Harleth's vocation as an eternal widow, aided and abetted by Deronda's rejection. An irresolvable loose end which has been interpreted as both a political liberation and a tragedy, Gwendolen's presence and her unresolved, unsatisfied desire for Deronda leave the question of his and Mirah's union permanently troubling. Indeed, the novel's ending has eluded critical interpretation as neatly as the vanishing jinn of the *Arabian Nights*.

Like another Aladdin's palace, Scheherezade's stories set themselves down anachronistically and anomalously within the "grim-walled slices of space in our foggy London" (237).

Eliot's allusions to the East and the *Arabian Nights* begin with Daniel's rescue of Mirah and his sequestering of her within the Meyricks' harem-like house of women. Her epigram to the first chapter of Book III, "Maidens Choosing," evokes the special allure of the East, positing it as a "place of original opportunity" (Said 167). She quotes Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*, "I pity the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba and say, 'Tis all barren; and so it is and so is all the world to him who will not cultivate the fruits it offers" (245). Eliot suggests that the richness of the East, of Dan and Beersheba, is so great that it can only be left uncultivated by those who have no imagination or creativity at all, who see all the world as "barren." But her allusion is especially innovative in that she links the East's intellectual and creative fecundity with human fecundity, with the "fruits cultivated" through courtship and marriage. If exoticism sparks the cultivation of intellectual and cultural riches, it also sparks attraction between Daniel and Mirah and between Daniel and Gwendolen Harleth. The Arabian tales, soon to be alluded to again in Book III, have a special power to expand the imagination and sharpen sensibility. Eliot's perception of the East's power and its literature's capacity for intellectual and sensual nurture articulates what is usually kept silent in contemporary perceptions of the *Arabian Nights*.

As fairy-tales for children and travel companions for adults, the *Arabian Nights* enjoyed immense popularity during

the Victorian age. Translating the *Nights* was a competitive business, dominated by E.W. Lane, the translator of Eliot's personal edition, published in the mid 1850s (Carraciolo 22). While recognized as fables, the *Nights* were also believed to be representative of Arab people and culture. The translation by Antoine Galland which Charles Dickens used from childhood was advertised as a book in which "the customs of Orientals and the ceremonies of their religion were better traced than in the tales of travellers.... All Orientals, Persians, Tartars and Indians ... appear just as they are from sovereigns to people of the lowest condition" (Moussa-Mahmoud 95). Travelers to the East sought to "verify the authenticity of the *Nights*" and wrote home, as did Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, that the tales "(excepting the Enchantments) are a real representation of the manners here" (96). Hence, much of eastern life, its customs and manners, were popularly believed to be "as fabulous as the *Nights*" (Moussa-Mahmoud 95).

The English brought Arabian culture to life through an act of the imagination that invested the tales with a special, creative provenance. Victorian allusions to the *Nights*, then, have a magical quality, a "mingling of the exotic and the actual" (130) which, particularly for the Victorian novelist, celebrates the imaginative power to create through the structure of Scheherezade's narration. Seeing a copy of the *Thousand and One Arabian Nights* in a bookstore lights "that wonderful lamp within" and creates "a

crowd of phantoms" and "new delight" for Tom Pinch in *Martin Chuzzlewitt* (Ch. 6). Likewise, the Meyrick residence in *Daniel Deronda*, full of talented, creative people who paint, sing, and play music, is also full of references to the *Arabian Nights*, as are Eliot's and her contemporaries' letters, reviews, and fictions.[3] Amidst the chilly parcity of reduced circumstances, the eastern tales lend a magical glow to the small house and its open-minded, tolerant inhabitants. Even the Meyricks' domestic cat evokes the magical east. The cat is named for Hafiz, the poet whose work, for European readers like Goethe, envisioned the Orient as "a form of release, a place of original opportunity" (Said 167). "Hafiz the Persian cat" -- the "only large thing of its kind" in the house -- adds an air of poetry and possibility, as well as grandeur and exotic, sensual luxury to the otherwise frugal home. In a home which so carefully strives to be a place "spotlessly free from vulgarity" and eschews "all the grand shows of the world" in favor of high artistic culture, the big Persian cat is a promise of imaginative ability and possibility. But the cat is also a signifier of the erotic East. Only Hafiz can express feelings which, for Deronda, are inexpressible and unmentionable. "Hafiz, who had been watching the scene [of Mirah's introduction to the Meyricks] restlessly, came forward with tail erect and rubbed himself against her ankles. Deronda felt it time to take his leave" (242).

Indeed, while Eliot may agree with Dickens in her use of the tales to represent the magic of creativity, one important difference marks her use of the *Arabian Nights*. While many Victorian writers shared her sense of the "magical transforming power" of the Arabian tales, many, like Dickens, shied away from the tales eroticism (Slater 132). "The strong erotic element in the *Nights* tends to disappear in Dickens" and other contemporary writers, as do the tales' violence, unconventional sexual liaisons, and misogyny (133). This is not the case in George Eliot and particularly not in her use of "The History of Prince Camaralzaman and Queen Budoor" in *Daniel Deronda*. Eliot's allusions to this tale, framing Daniel's introduction to Mirah toward the close of Book II and the opening of Book III, refer to a story of sexual passion and physical attrac tion between two lovers who are themselves physical paradigms. Sterne's epigram to Book III then has a double entendre to which Prince Camaralzaman's story as a source of both ingenuity and erotic celebration is cleverly suited. Urging the reader to "cultivate the fruits" of an imagined east, to replace barrenness with sensibility, Eliot -- also in Book III -- addresses the problem of desire and sexuality. Her allusions to the tale lend further complexity to the "simplified characters of Daniel, Mirah, and Mordecai" (Pell 432). Its erotic subtext is in direct conflict with Eliot's rigorous Victorian super-text of moral virtue and sexual repression. Scheherezade can articulate

the desire which the Victorian novelist cannot.

In Lane's translation, "The History of Prince Camaralzaman and Queen Budoor" easily speaks of both the male and female body, of "the violence of passion" and "the flame of desire" (90, 116). As easily, the tale describes frigidity, violence, cross-dressing, polygamy, and both male and female defiance of the father. The tale begins with the long-awaited birth of a boy, Prince Camaralzaman. Sole male heir to King Shah-Zeman's kingdom, the Prince is lavished with every attention and exquisitely tutored by the wisest men in the land. Unfortunately, the educated Prince emerges from his studies a confirmed misogynist. When urged to marry so that he may carry on Shah-Zeman's ancient lineage, the boy responds, "Oh my father, my soul inclineth not to women; for I have found books with narratives of their fraudulence, and miracles have been occasioned by their cunning" (71). A generous and loving father, Shah-Zeman tolerates his son's obstinance for several years but eventually tires of the Prince's refusals. The King is shocked at his son's distaste for women, a shock which is exacerbated by the Prince's heterosexual beauty. "He became a temptation unto lovers, and as a paradise to the desirous" (73). Finally, enraged, the King locks up his son in a tower.

Meanwhile, in an Oriental kingdom far away, a princess finds herself in much the same situation as Camaralzaman. She worries her father very much because, despite her legendary beauty, she has no interest in marriage. "O my

father, I have no wish to marry; for I am a princess, and a queen, ruling over men, and I desire not a man to rule over me" (82). Budoor's father, sadly assuming that she is insane, places her in a harem, to be looked after and guarded by *kahramaneks*, a group of trustworthy and responsible women. Like the prince, however, Budoor is also guarded by a winged jinn or an 'Efreet who is much impressed by her beauty. As he flies through the night sky one evening, the 'Efreet fortuitously collides with the Prince's guardian, an 'Efreetah, a powerful female jinn who is also much taken with her human charge's beauty. The two compare both human paragons and argue over which is more beautiful. Only a direct comparison will settle the argument. The Efreet returns to the Orient for his princess, carrying the sleeping girl to the Shah's kingdom. They plan to settle the contest by magically waking first the Prince, then the Princess, one at a time. Each will see the other sleeping. Whoever displays more passion upon waking will win the 'Efreets' contest. However, upon placing the princess next to the prince, the genies make a startling discovery: despite the difference in gender, the two are identical. "They bore the strongest resemblance to each other, as though they were twins, or an only brother and sister; they were a temptation to the abstinent" (86).

Identical in beauty, the Prince and Princess are also identical in the passion they feel for each other when each is woken, fleetingly glimpses the other, and is returned to

an enchanted sleep. The Prince is overcome by the beauty of Budoor's face and "her body softer than butter" (87). He quickly places his ring on her finger to make her his own before he is compelled to sleep. Budoor is equally overcome. "When she beheld him, distraction and ecstasy and desire overcame her, and she said within herself ... my heart is almost rent by ecstasy of love for him, and by the violence of passion excited by his beauty and loveliness" (90). She too places a ring on his finger before the genies return her to an enchanted sleep.

Having resolved their argument, the jinns return Budoor to her kingdom a great distance away. When the royal couple awake, they are separated by deserts and oceans, smitten by each other, and alone. "The slave of love, the victim of passion, persecuted by desire," each appeals to the father only to have his suspicion of insanity sadly confirmed by what is perceived as a new delusion (116). Each grieving father promises that whoever can cure his child will be rewarded -- the prince's father will provide wealth, the princess's will give her hand in marriage. All who try and fail are to be decapitated. Eventually, after many fail, Budoor's brother, Marzawan, travels to Camaralzaman's kingdom and brings the prince back with him to Budoor who is now in chains in her own palace. The two are secretly reunited and begin their journey back to his kingdom After much travail, during which they are separated and Budoor assumes the identity of a male prince, even marrying a royal prin-

cess, Hayat-en-Nufoos, the prince and Budoor are reunited. "Not jealous" of Hayat, Budoor allows Camaralzaman to take her as his second wife. So the Prince "resided with his wives in enjoyment and happiness, and fidelity and cheerfulness, behaving towards both of them with impartiality" (136). Finally, the only son of an ancient line "forgot his father, the King Shah-Zeman, and the glory and power that he had enjoyed under him" (136).

"The History of Prince Camaralzaman" has important implications for Eliot's novel. As a frame for the introduction of Daniel and Mirah, the tale brings to the novel a negotiation between passion and sexuality which has long been thought absent from the liaison between Daniel and Mirah. Moreover, illuminating that supposedly simple marriage of cultural and novelistic convenience, the tale adds a political and psychological dimension to the pairing which is suggestive less of the "clannishness of Jewish endogamy" (Scrivener 540) and more of the cultural management of the experience of desire. The two royal children's resistance to marriage expresses their anxiety at joining their lives with a member of the opposite sex and their dream-like enchantments and escape across the desert speak to their desire to enjoy the physical aspects of heterosexual love without the social bargain of marriage and courtship. Indeed, both feel compromised in ways which are startlingly relevant to *Daniel Deronda*, the prince fearing the corruption of his soul by women, the princess fearing the loss of

her sovereignty through marriage. Their discovery of sexual passion, which is heightened and exaggerated as part of their enchantment by magical figures, takes place far out of the human reach of either powerful father-figure. Indeed, it occurs in the realm of the supernatural, without the sanction of any "real" social figure. Like her allusions to *Othello*, Eliot's evocation of the *Arabian Nights* in *Daniel Deronda* speaks to the difficulties in expressing desire within a universe which idealizes the chaste and the moral. The Arabesque tale resists the novel's omnipresent moral whiteness which seeks to wash away the threatening, disruptive desires of the body. The erotic tale of "Prince Camaralzaman and Queen Budoor" is particularly evocative of this battle. Sharing so many aspects of idealized Victorian domesticity and of sexual desire displaced or evolving into conventional, productive domesticity, the whimsical tale frames the introduction of Deronda and Mirah as well as the fragility of desire within a world of real social concerns.

Like Camaralzaman, whose father has previously sired only girls, Deronda is the sole male child of a powerful and wealthy patriarch. While Deronda is not a son of Sir Hugo's body, he is clearly the spiritual and cultural heir to his legacy of good-hearted gentility. Deronda's cultural and moral legitimacy is contrasted with the absence of either quality in the legal heir, Henleigh Grandcourt, who is, moreover, "the absolute incarnation of the illegitimate father" and heir himself (Pell 442). Like the bookish

Camalrazaman, the intellectual Daniel Deronda is a flower of his culture. He is educated in princely style, and that education, including reading Shakespeare on the lawn with his tutor, results in his discovery that he is the product of a fallen woman; he then resents all women and their attention. While the prince fears that women will prohibit his search for excellence, Deronda knows that a woman's folly has already damaged his future and may have planted a seed of immorality to match her own. Ultimately, Deronda too will reject his known father and country for another inheritance. He will begin life in a new, eastern kingdom, forgetting the "glory and the power" he enjoyed as a Christian and an English gentleman.

Deronda's journey or vocation begins in tandem with courtship and marriage. Like Budoor and the Prince, both Mirah and Deronda are shy of the opposite sex, speaking to the same adolescent fears of sexuality which are addressed in the Oriental tale. As Budoor must be serendipitously placed next to her sleeping twin or other sexual self, so does fortune place Mirah in the path of Daniel Deronda, who is warily drifting and dreaming on the Thames, imagining himself in the role of Othello. The two European lovers evoke the same sense of grieving, punished solitude as do the lovers in the *Arabian Nights* tale who are brought together while the multitudes sleep. Amidst the throngs crossing bridges over the Thames in the city of London, Daniel's singing is heard as song "only to one ear," to

Mirah's (227). Like the Prince imprisoned for his hatred of women, Deronda himself is imprisoned by "thoughts of some one whom he must be like - one about whose character and lot he continually wondered, and never dared to ask" (226). The Arabian Prince's vision of women visualizes the lack of female "character" which Eliot cannot: "with their fingers dyed with henna; with their hair arranged in plaits; with their eyelids painted with kohl," Camaralzaman knows that women's sexuality will hinder him "from attaining perfection in his excellencies" as Deronda knows that one woman has hindered him from attaining his inheritance and has blotted his moral character. This question of his origin, inventing a degrading and damaging "make believe of a beginning" for himself, has prevented him from starting his adult life. Like Camaralzaman, he is imprisoned still in childhood, abused and victimized. Acting in the role of the 'Efreetah of the *Arabian Nights*, Eliot can only spark her protagonist's sexual desire by interrupting his dreams.

As he drifts on the river, contemplating his anomalous appearance, feeling like Shakespeare's Moor, "thinking and desiring melt together imperceptibly, and what in other hours may have seemed argument takes the quality of passionate vision" (229). Into this abstract vision, Eliot introduces Mirah who speaks and acts "dreamily" herself in a trance-like state of despair (230). Like the unwilling lovers of the *Nights*, the resistant conscious mind must be overcome by appealing to what Eliot terms the "unconscious"

(227). Rather than an enchanted sleep, Eliot employs the image of Daniel and Mirah drifting on and into the great Thames as a metaphor for consciousness and unconsciousness, for sexual awakening and the awakening of vocation. Like the two sleepers in the eastern tales, the two characters drift towards each other on the river. Eliot uses the words "unconscious" and "half conscious" three times as Deronda approaches Mirah (227, 228). She appears to him much like the sleeping Budoor to the prince:

> A girl hardly more than eighteen, of low slim figure, with most delicate little face, her dark curls pushed behind her ears.... Her hands were hanging down clasped before her, and her eyes were fixed on the river with a look of immovable statue-like despair ... apparently his voice had entered her inner world without having taken any not of whence it came.... It was but a couple of moments, but that seems a long while for two people to look straight at each other.... It seemed to Deronda that she was only half-conscious of her surroundings (227-228).

Increasing the sense of childish innocence abused and exploited by the dangers of sexuality, Daniel identifies Mirah as small, tiny, "her little woman's figure" a miniature of adult feminine beauty but vulnerable and innocent as a child (231). Indeed, like the twin lover of the oriental tale, Deronda sees himself as victimized by a sexually suspect woman. Mirah, with her "small, small features," is

"an impersonation of the misery he was unconsciously giving voice to" as he sings from *Otello* about his despair over his origins. The sleep that awaits Mirah, however, is not enchantment but death. This revision of "The History of Prince Camaralzaman" is in keeping with Eliot's realism, an aesthetic vision which places "make believe" in a harsh, social context (1). As Gwendolen Harleth is a mythical Diana or Melusina, a serpent goddess, standing in the harsh, artificial glare of gas-lights at the novel's opening, so Queen Budoor becomes a pretty little Jewish girl who must choose between prostitution or poverty. The Arabesque fairy-tale, as it is re-envisioned in *Daniel Deronda*, encompasses both the exotic, romantic fantasy and the dark nightmare aspects of sexual initiation.

The Arabian tale assists Eliot in further outlining and evaluating "the limitations within which the struggle to achieve personal legitimacy goes on for the fathers' daughters" in late Victorian England (Pell 451). In defying patriarchal authority, Mirah Lapidoth shares more with Queen Budoor than just her slender feet. Like the Arabian princess, she too resists being traded to a man by her father. Mirah is, like Budoor, an intelligent woman whose "tongue is put in motion by an ample intelligence and a ready reply" (Lane 81). Budoor's punishment for refusing to marry her father's choice is to be chained to a window in the palace and declared insane. She can look out and observe the world, but she cannot master it. In Eliot's

social-realist novel, so concerned with the daughter's position in patriarchal culture, those romantic elements are realized. Here the father's attempt to partner the errant female child with an aristocrat is an ugly business. Mirah "began to feel a horrible dread of this man" whom her father has chosen for her. "He worried me with his attentions, his eyes were always on me" (258). Neatly fulfilling the promised dangers of Gwendolen's gambling and the games's association with "insatiable desire" and "appetite" (847, 843), Mirah's father is "continually at a gambling-house" where his lust for money erodes and perverts his human relationship to his daughter (258). Her beauty is first made a commodity and soon her body is to follow, twisting the romance plot into sexual slavery. Mirah's father would sell her to a wealthy Count who would take her to "his beautiful place, where I might be queen of everything" (259). Like the Queen Budoor, who found herself in a very similar situation, Mirah "locked [her]self up" to protect herself from her father. She becomes convinced that she too will be declared insane for going against her father's wishes. "It had sunk into me that my father was in a conspiracy with that man against me" (25). She believes that there "is a plan to take me to a madhouse," a place for "despised women" (260). Like Budoor, then, Mirah resists becoming her father's commodity and seeks to create, through a new marriage and family, an authentic, uncontaminated love affair, far removed from the sins of her father's.

Eliot's allusions to the "make-believe" of the *Arabian Nights* expresses the importance she gives to the ability to re-invent the self, to create a new self and vocation, and to find a new family. Her opening injunction that "Men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning" suggests the need for self-invention which both Daniel and Mirah, like Camaralzaman and Queen Budoor, achieve. But, though they separate themselves, as do so many of Eliot's characters, from the corruption and folly of preceding generations and work toward a vocation of political reform, Eliot's characters remain irrevocably touched, even damaged, by their own earnest denials of folly and vice, of sexual desire and passion. Consequently, the pursuit of sensual pleasure is a very fragile and risky endeavor in the world of Eliot's novels. No Eliot character more powerfully manifests this risk than Daniel, who embodies both the sober English gentleman and the Moor, the "beauty of the closed lips" and the beauty of an Arabian night.

As the introductory sentence to Book III forewarns, Deronda is not "romantic; but under his calm and somewhat self-repressed exterior there was a fervour which made him easily find poetry and romance among the events of everyday life" (245). Hence, shortly before he meets Mirah, he is susceptible to seeing "the light of the sunset" through the eyes of "some Oriental poet" who makes him feel more intensely the mystical element of "the glory of the sky" (229). As Deronda comes closer to Mirah, he comes closer to

the East itself. Just as Eliot conflates the distance between cultures and races in the "Brother and Sister Sonnets," here she conflates the distance between cultures and races. Soon after he meets Mirah, Daniel is urged by the narrator to embrace "the sense of fellowship which thrills from the near to the distant, and back again from the distant to the near" (245). This will be Deronda's spiritual fellowship with Mordecai, but it will also simultaneously be sexual fellowship and union with Mirah. As he resists his own capacity to find "the poetry and romance among the events of everyday life," so does he resist the temptations of sexuality.

Deronda's hesitance, like Camaralzaman's, is based on his fear of an inappropriate, immoral liaison with Mirah. Her clear position as an exotic, sexual temptation is underscored by Mab's comparison of her to Queen Budoor which precedes Mirah's story and the development of her character. The epigram of the chapter has encouraged us to see virtue in Mirah's body. Eliot uses Alexander Knox to remind us that "even in this frail and corrupted world, we sometimes meet persons who, in their very mien and aspect, as well as in their whole aspect of life, manifest a signature and stamp of virtue" (248). Eliot's sober evangelicalism here acts like her allusions to *Othello* which also seek to wash both Mirah and Deronda clean of sexual desire. The epigram, from Southey's *Life of Wesley*, precedes a description of Mirah's body that reveals the narrator's difficulty with her

as an erotic figure. As Mirah is described awakening in the Meyrick home, each accession to her exotic beauty is balanced by an affirmation of her status as a non-sexual virtuous "creature." While her "dark hair curls in fresh fibrils," it is scrupulously clean from it "plenteous bath." The beautiful complexion and dark eyes are not lively erotic signifiers but are marked and ringed by fatigue. Nonetheless, the eroticism which the narrator so carefully suppresses slips through in Eliot's allusion to the *Nights*:

> 'Oh, if you please, mamma!' cried Mab, clasping her hands and stooping towards Mirah's feet, as she entered the parlor; 'look at the slippers, how beautifully they fit! I declare she is like the Queen Budoor - 'two delicate feet, the work of the protecting and all-recompensing Creator, support her; and I wonder how they can sustain what is above them!' (249)

Eliot's representation of an attractive orientalism in conflict with its threatening sexual aspects is remarkable here. If Fagin and Othello lurk within Deronda as images of reckless or perverse sexuality, those images of the other are now, in the shape of Prince Camaralzaman and Queen Budoor, present in both idealized images. Neither can be divorced from the body or from sexuality. This is particularly true of Queen Budoor's presence in Mirah. In alluding to the oriental princess, Eliot gestures toward a woman as essentially other and erotic as Othello is essentially sexually threatening. The phrase Mab quotes directly

from Lane's translation discusses one of the few body parts mentionable in the Victorian code of propriety, Mirah's "two delicate feet." As a Victorian common reader would know, Scheherezade's description of Budoor only ends with the Princess's feet. It covers the fullness of her body:

> As to her hair, it is like the nights of emigration and separation; and as to her face, it is like the days of union.... She hath a nose like the edge of the polished sword, and cheeks like deep-red wine, or like anemones; her lips resemble coral and carnelion, and the moisture of her mouth is more delicious than the best wine, and would quench the fire of the inflamed ... she hath a bosom that is a temptation unto him who beholdeth it ... by the side of which are too smooth and round arms; and as the poet hath said,-
>
> She hath hips, connected with a slender waist
> which tyrannize both over me and her:
> They confound me when I think upon them
> and weigh her down when she would rise. (86)

In the *Arabian Nights*, this description immediately precedes Eliot's allusion. Her audience's knowledge of the *Arabian Nights*, testified to by Mab's repetition of the text from memory, allows them to include what for Eliot is unmentionable. Like Daniel Deronda, Mirah Lapidoth has her sexuality and thus her capacity for desire increased and exaggerated through her comparison to an even more exotic ethnic other. The novel's subtext dramatically denies the

explicit text which strives to infantalize Mirah. Looking at "her own feet in a childish way," Mirah makes it difficult for anyone to "imagine this creature having an evil thought" (249), and the Knox epigram, suggesting that Mirah's "mien and aspect" reflect her virtue, conflicts with the lush exotic body Eliot recalls through her allusion to Queen Budoor. Here again, the novel attempts to whitewash the exotic, to cleanse the Princess of her sexual desire.

As Eliot censors but still implicates the erotic elements of Mirah's body, indeed as she tries to excise all of Budoor's body but her feet, so does she also attempt to suppress sensuous and erotic elements in the relationship between Deronda and Mirah. Their courtship becomes a series of retreats and evasions, all of which must be carefully maintained because of what they perceive as their ethnic differences. Rigorously moral, Deronda avoids Mirah because he is sure she will not marry a Christian. Moreover, he is aware that there is a history of compromise in relationships between unmarried Jewish women and Christian men. Yet the revelation of Deronda's Judaism and hence his availability as a suitable lover occur simultaneously with Mirah's own fears of untrammeled desire. As Deronda meets his mother in Book VII, Mirah reports that she has "more reason for being anxious.... I am quite sure I saw my father" (713). The return of the errant father is conjoined with her increasing "anxiety" over her shameful experience of desire, her own attraction to Deronda. Mirah's pain

> must remain as exclusively her own, and hidden ... it was something that she felt to be a misfortune of her nature - a discovery that what should have been pure gratitude and reverence had sunk into selfish pain, that the feeling she had hitherto delighted to pour out in words was degraded into something she was ashamed to betray.... It was as if her soul had been steeped in poisonous passion by forgotten dreams of deep sleep, and now flamed out in this unaccountable misery. For with her waking reason she had never entertained what seemed the wildly unfitting thought that Deronda could love her. (801)

Here Eliot's language reflects Lane's translation of the *Arabian Nights*. The evocation of poison, burning flames, and "pincers in her flesh" all describe the torments of passion represented in Queen Budoor's experience of the absence of her prince. Moreover, the experience of awakening from deep sleep by a tormenting glimpse of a passionate lover is evoked from Lane's translation, investing the tiny, gentle Mirah with a quality of "wild," uncontrolled, unregulated passion. Like Budoor and Camaralzaman, the once sexually unmoved Mirah "had been used to a strong repugnance towards certain objects that surround her, and to walk inwardly aloof from them while they touched her sense" (802). "The poor child," now experiencing adult passion is tortured, like the Arabian princess. "I used not to have horrible feelings!" cries Mirah (802).

The "horrible feelings" of sexual desire are never fully resolved in the novel. As Deronda and Mirah meet in the novel's last book, "Fruit and Seed," Eliot is careful to stress fecundity, filial love, and patrimony over desire. Approaching Mirah, who appears, like Budoor to Camaralzaman, "a just-wakened child," Deronda "imagined that the feeling of which he was conscious, had entered too much into his eyes, and had been repugnant to her. He was ready enough to believe that any unexpected manifestation might spoil her feeling towards him and then his precious relation to brother and sister would be marred" (815, 818). As Mordecai sanctions Deronda's Judaism, he locates Deronda not as a lover but as "performing the duties of brotherhood to my sister" (819). Eliot stresses the brother-sister connection, "the marriage of our [Mordecai, Deronda, and Mirah's] souls," over the desires of the body (820). Indeed, Deronda and Mirah's wedding scene is quickly followed by Mordecai's death. "With Mirah's and Deronda's arms around him," he dies, the ephemeral quality of the life of the body marking the only embrace Mirah and Deronda share in the novel.

Shortly before that embrace, Deronda receives Gwendolen's letter, which reveals that she "does not yet see how" to take as her vocation being "one of the best of women, who make others glad that they were born" (882). Her letter, like the embrace between Deronda and Mirah, signifies the presence of duty and the absence of desire. The latter remains a force to be managed, cultivated, turned to

"fruit and seed" by the novel's end. In the union of Deronda and Mirah, a fragile memory of desire, of "just-awakened" glimpses of the body and dreams of passion, exists. But it is clear that for Gwendolen no "sort of Moslem paradise would quiet the terrible fury of moral repulsion and cowed resistance" which courtship, marriage, and sexuality have become for her (733). With her icy white skin and her "poisoned diamonds," she is beyond the repair, beyond the touch, of the warm, regenerative East and certainly beyond the touch of the novel's Eastern figure, Daniel Deronda. The erotic dreams of the *Arabian Nights* cannot figure in the nightmare of her experience. The final representation of Gwendolen, as she writes to Deronda of their shared "grief," is funereal.

End Notes

[1]Patrick Brantlinger in "Nations and Novels: Disraeli, George Eliot, and Orientalism" has commented on the effect of the "reverse orientalism" of Eliot's novel (273). He writes that "romantic liberation from provincial confinement comes in the paradoxical form of Judaism and 'oriental' mystery" (268). These are the elements which Brantlinger suggests lure Deronda to the "choir invisible."

[2]In "The Decomposition of the Elephants: Double-Reading *Daniel Deronda*," Cynthia Chase argues that "the question of Deronda's own Jewishness" first becomes apparent not with his rescue of Mirah, but with his meeting with Mordecai (220). "Mordecai's identification of Deronda as a Jew and Deronda's acceptance of their resultant relationship mark the first step in the establishment of Deronda's Jewish identity" (221). I argue that the identification happens earlier, in the meeting between Deronda and Mirah, Eliot's attempt to conflate the plots of marriage and vocation.

[3]Eliot's letters reflect her easy familiarity with the tales. A first-class train passage "is almost as good as having Prince Hussein's carpet" (II 65). While trying to write without distraction, she needs "Princess Parizade's cotton wool in my ears" (VIII 239). An English derivation of a tale from the *Arabian Nights* is greatly admired in her reviews of Meredith's *The Shaving of Shagput* in the *Leader* and the *Westminster Review*. Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Tennyson, Elizabeth Gaskell, and the Brontës joined George Eliot in their admiration for the exotic tales. As different from European fairytales as an Ottoman palace is from a Victorian parlor, they present the dark, cultural other within an intriguing, culturally accurate context. This provided the Victorian reader with a rare glimpse into the social structure, morals, and values of a non-western, non-Christian society. If the jinns and the magic carpets were fancy, the culture being represented was real. The family relationships, class stratification, and sexual roles were perceived as fact. "Everything was exotic, yet somehow believable too, for the stories and all their trappings came out of a mysterious East where soft fountains and hanging gardens, harems and pleasure domes, sultans and scimitars, did most veritably exist" (Stone 25).

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