



## BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Burdett, Carolyn (2020) Sympathy - Antipathy in Daniel Deronda. 19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century (29), ISSN 1755-1560.

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/30908/>

*Usage Guidelines:*

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html>  
contact [lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk).

or alternatively

## Sympathy–Antipathy in *Daniel Deronda*

Carolyn Burdett

Is there anything left to say about sympathy in George Eliot's work? Scholarship on the topic runs into hundreds of items. Certain passages — from Eliot's essays, letters, and novels — are etched into the story of mid-century English liberal intellectual culture as it grappled with formulating adequate ethical goals. Denouncing rigid and rules-based philosophical and religious systems, Eliot championed particularity, grafting the moral task of close attentive responsiveness to others onto or into literary realism.<sup>1</sup> Sympathy is the methodology of Eliot's realism as well as its intended moral outcome. But as many readers and critics have noticed, something surprising and unsettling happens to it in her final novel, *Daniel Deronda* (1876).<sup>2</sup>

However, while critics broadly agree on the fact of this shift in Eliot's treatment of sympathy in *Daniel Deronda*, there is no consensus about what it denotes and why it happens. Some try to preserve sympathy's importance, while others believe Eliot abandons it as a guiding ethic.<sup>3</sup> I argue here that Eliot is indeed forced to rethink the moral and psychological sympathy she did so much to promote in the 1850s and that sympathy is not abandoned but is instead reconfigured in relation to its twin, antipathy. In *Daniel Deronda* Eliot foregrounds qualities that belong to the most archaic sense of sympathy, dating from classical and Renaissance writing, that understand it as a force that draws together and connects non-adjacent things. Its causes are not visible, its effects can be instantaneous, and it presupposes some form of likeness (or, in antipathy, unlikeness) that may be hidden or obscure. These features of sympathy were originally understood as occult or magical. In *Daniel Deronda* this occult sympathy is mirrored or echoed in the novel's dense reference to supernatural energies and mysterious psychological states. From its opening epigraph, warning readers of

---

<sup>1</sup> 'The Natural History of German Life' (1856), in *Essays of George Eliot*, ed. by Thomas Pinney (London: Routledge, 1963), pp. 266–99 and Chapter 17 of *Adam Bede*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), pp. 177–81 are most often cited.

<sup>2</sup> There is general critical consensus that there is 'something very different, radically heterogeneous' about *Daniel Deronda*. It has been judged her 'wildest, and savviest' novel. See Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 96; and Neil Hertz, *George Eliot's Pulse* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> There is a wide variety of accounts but see, for the former, Carole Jones, 'Introduction', in George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (Ware: Wordsworth, 2003), pp. v–xxxix; and for the latter, Isobel Armstrong, *Novel Politics: Democratic Imaginations in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 167.

vengeance, pestilence, and death, the novel's realism is punctuated by the pervasive presence of Gothicism, mysticism, magical motif, and allegory. Eliot made sympathy integral to her earliest theorizing of literary form in the 1850s, but in *Daniel Deronda* sympathy and realism together take a turn towards more turbulent and unpredictable types of hidden force.

Discoverable in classical and Renaissance writings, sympathy was originally a regulator or principle of cosmic relation. Cosmic sympathy facilitates the reading of signs, especially powerful in Greek astrology, where — as in *Daniel Deronda*, a novel saturated in astronomical imagery — the invisible orbits of planets are read into visible histories.<sup>4</sup> Sympathy is a form of powerful, secret, and occult affinity and connection, as described by the Roman natural philosopher, Pliny:

‘The Greeks have applied the terms “sympathy” and “antipathy” to the principle of Nature that water puts out fire ... the magnetic stone draws iron to itself while another kind repels it ... the diamond, unbreakable by any other force, is broken by goat’s blood.’ So says Pliny (XX §§ 1, 2).<sup>5</sup>

Mysterious affinity attaches Daniel to Mordecai — even while Daniel fails to grasp this fact. ‘I feel with you’, he declares to Mordecai, following their meeting at Blackfriars Bridge, offering the most recognizable modern locution of sympathy. ‘That is not enough’, Mordecai responds.<sup>6</sup>

In *The Order of Things* (1970), Michel Foucault writes of sympathy's elemental power — ‘it excites the things of the world to movement and can draw even the most distant of them together’ — while noting that such force is always and necessarily counterbalanced ‘by its twin, antipathy’.<sup>7</sup> All of Eliot's fictions contain human cruelty and venality. Such states are frequently associated with pernicious social conditions but almost invariably are also manifestations of egoism. Where unmediated egoism predominates, misery and meanness follow. People kill and in all manner of ways, like poor Hetty Sorrel or Madame Laure or Rosamond Lydgate, flourishing ‘on a murdered man's brains’.<sup>8</sup> But nothing in Eliot's fiction is of the order of *Daniel Deronda*. Gwendolen Harleth is egoistic but she is also defined by her antipathies — ‘she was subject to physical antipathies’ (p. 100 (Chap. 11)) — and the forms of

<sup>4</sup> See Anna Henchman, *The Starry Sky Within: Astronomy and the Reach of the Mind in Victorian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> ‘Additional Note C’, in Pliny, *Natural History*, trans. by D. E. Eichholz, W. H. S. Jones, and H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library, 10 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938–63), VIII: *Books 28–32*, trans. by W. H. S. Jones (1963), pp. 564–65 (p. 564).

<sup>6</sup> George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. by Graham Handley, new edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 422 (Chap. 40).

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1974), pp. 23–24.

<sup>8</sup> Hetty Sorrel is a character from *Adam Bede*; Madame Laure and Rosamond Lydgate from *Middlemarch*, ed. by Rosemary Ashton (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 835 (Finale).

unlimited dread to which they give rise. Henleigh Grandcourt is designed to court antipathies: Gwendolen will come to prefer the eye of a boiled breakfast prawn to his (p. 495 (Chap. 48)). Antipathy takes extreme forms, exceeding egoism, besmirching the novel's central marriage plot, and making dread, terror, and violence pervasive keynotes.

I argue that this recursive sympathy–antipathy can help illuminate what is troubling and unsettled about *Daniel Deronda*.<sup>9</sup> To do so I largely follow one thread, relating primarily to antipathy. (I will have briefer things to say about the affinity that attracts Daniel and Mordecai and culminates in the latter's soul migration at the novel's end, and which I discuss fully elsewhere.<sup>10</sup>) Antipathy means a contrariety of feeling or disposition that carries the affective colouring of aversion and repugnance. In the occult traditions it is conceived as a natural force that counters the pull of sympathetic affinity. In *Daniel Deronda* it is most often and overtly associated with Gwendolen. It especially characterizes her spontaneous response to Grandcourt's well-paid secretary Lush. Lush is plump and prosperous. His name hints at dissipations but we learn relatively little that explains Gwendolen's antipathy, her instantaneous sense that 'she would never, if she could help it, let [Lush] come within a yard of her' (p. 100 (Chap. 11)). Antipathy enters her 'more reflective judgments' 'as sap into leafage' (p. 101), aligning Lush with an instantaneous plumping succulence that antipathy injects and his name also denotes.

The only independent steer we receive about Lush comes from the musician, Klesmer, who identifies him for Gwendolen as a musical 'amateur [...] too fond of Meyerbeer and Scribe — too fond of the mechanical-dramatic' (p. 97 (Chap. 11)). Composer Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791–1864) and librettist Eugène Scribe (1791–1861) are mentioned in Eliot's essay for *Fraser's*, 'Liszt, Wagner, and Weimar', where she describes their joint productions as subordinating melody to a 'declamatory style' of spectacle and orchestral effects. There 'is no attempt at the evolution of these from the true workings of human character and human passions', she complains.<sup>11</sup> Gwendolen may not be reflective enough in this instance to grasp the significance of Lush's enjoyment of the 'mechanical-dramatic'. But readers can find in Lush's musical taste a hint about what I argue is one of the most important contexts for reading *Daniel Deronda*'s treatment of sympathy–antipathy. This context, as I explain shortly, is Eliot's profound engagement with mechanistic theories of human action that formed an increasingly dominant aspect of naturalistic science by the 1870s.

I look first, however, at how and why the sympathy that Eliot shaped and promoted during the 1850s is represented as problematic in *Daniel Deronda*. This sympathy is a disposition or capacity located within the individual. Though it may and

---

<sup>9</sup> Prompting critics even to propose its dismemberment. See F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (New York: Stewart, 1950), pp. 79–125.

<sup>10</sup> In *Forming Empathy: Psychology, Aesthetics, Ethics: 1870–1920*, in preparation.

<sup>11</sup> 'Liszt, Wagner, and Weimar', in *Essays of George Eliot*, ed. by Pinney, pp. 96–122 (p. 101) (first publ. in *Fraser's Magazine*, July 1855, pp. 48–62).

does find objects for its enactment, it is not dependent upon them.<sup>12</sup> This is a sympathy widely evoked in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century in the clash between intuitionist and utilitarian philosophies, within utilitarianism itself, in theological and denominational dispute, and in relation to political democratization. It was inherited from the eighteenth-century philosophical tradition exemplified by Adam Smith and Dugald Stewart and, through their influence, developed in the liberalism of James and John Stuart Mill. It was intended to bind what political economy sundered in human relations and it found in George Eliot its most powerful cultural articulation. I read this sympathy in *Daniel Deronda* alongside the critique of sentimentalized sympathy that took place in the periodical press in the 1860s and 1870s. Precipitated by anxieties about political reform and democratization, these were often arguments about ideals of self-cultivation that took powerful class and gendered shape, seeing sympathy as feminized or sentimental, a type of ‘dissolvent’ that strips away focus and vigour.

The second type (or manifestation) of sympathy I characterize as ‘occult’. It is a connection between persons or objects that is exemplified by the attracting force of the lodestone or magnet: it draws things together (while antipathy repels them). In the novel this sympathy replaces the more familiar Eliotean form that seeks always to widen or extend affective and cognitive embrace of others as a crucial component of moral efficacy. To account for why this happens I turn to the wider debate about sympathy that sees it relocate from philosophical into scientific domains. During the final three decades of the nineteenth century discussion of sympathy burgeons in evolutionary writing, in the new psychology press, and in the general press carrying scientific writing. By the 1870s sympathy has become a key term in psychology and evolutionary accounts of ethics.

These are debates Eliot knew well. She was actively engaged with the newest writing on psychology in part because her partner, George Henry Lewes, was preparing for publication his multivolume *Problems of Life and Mind* (1874–79): ‘it is a holiday to sit with one’s feet at the fire reading one’s husband’s writing — at least when, like mine, he allows me to differ from him’, Eliot told a friend in 1872.<sup>13</sup> By the 1870s Lewes was calling himself a psychologist: writing to one of Eliot’s women friends in 1873, he admitted that ‘sympathy is one of the great psychological mysteries — and as a psychologist I am bound to explain it, but can’t’.<sup>14</sup> Eliot could not either, but she committed to testing it outside the liberal-meliorative frame that she had helped create and champion twenty years earlier. It necessitated her deepest engagement with psychology and with obdurate internal forces that scupper reason and love.

---

<sup>12</sup> A different, and useful, way to understand sympathy as divisible into affective, cognitive, and practical forms is provided in T. H. Irwin, ‘Sympathy and the Basis of Morality’, in *A Companion to George Eliot*, ed. by Amanda Anderson and Harry E. Shaw (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 279–93.

<sup>13</sup> Letter to ‘Mrs Mark Pattison’, 16 December 1872, in *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. by Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954–78), v: 1869–1873 (1956), 344.

<sup>14</sup> George Henry Lewes to Elma Stuart, 19 February 1873, in *Eliot Letters*, ed. by Haight, v, 376.

The scientific psychology Lewes was developing was both enabling and restrictive for Eliot's imagination. Knowing where she agreed *and* where she differed opened the way to a bleaker but principled acknowledgement that sympathy is always and necessarily attached to and implicated in its opposite, antipathy.

### Dissolvent sympathy

The word sympathy appears more frequently in *Daniel Deronda* than in any other of Eliot's novels. It is invariably associated with the book's eponymous hero, whose sensitivity to others' lives is repeatedly noted.<sup>15</sup> Stricken as a child by the mystery of his origins and the suspicion that he is Sir Hugo Mallinger's bastard son, an early 'arrival of care' is associated with the central question of what had befallen his mother, stoking Daniel's imaginative sympathies (p. 141 (Chap. 16)). In *Middlemarch* (1871–72) the effects of Dorothea's hard-won sympathetic capacity are judged 'incalculably diffusive' and valued for that (p. 838 (Finale)); but in the later novel Daniel's early-achieved sympathetic 'diffusiveness' is a negative, associated increasingly in his case with paralysis.

When Daniel walks in Frankfurt's *Judengasse*, his curiosity fired by the sad history of Mirah, the beautiful Jewish woman he has saved from suicide, it provides opportunity for a lengthy parenthesis on sympathy. Sympathy is judged the young man's life problem, barring him from vocation: 'plenteous and flexible' it hinders his actions precisely because it is 'too reflective and diffusive' (p. 305 (Chap. 32)). 'Reflective analysis' had previously been fundamental to sympathizing in Eliot's novels: in *Middlemarch* it is what brings Dorothea Casaubon, in the turbulent early days of her marriage, out of moral stupidity to see that her husband, as all humans, 'had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference' (p. 211 (Chap. 22)). But in Daniel's case it is either excessive ('too reflective') or 'neutralising': his 'sympathy had ended by falling into one current with that reflective analysis which tends to neutralise sympathy' (p. 305). He is stricken with inertia and lack of purpose, 'traits' that derive from his 'many-sided sympathy' (p. 304).

'Many-sided' is one of a series of adjectival modifiers of sympathy in *Daniel Deronda* that call our attention.<sup>16</sup> 'Many-sidedness', as David Wayne Thomas argues, was the 'liberal ideal of cultivated agency' for the mid-Victorians. It was understood as a disposition to consider diverse alternative viewpoints and it formed a 'sustained

---

<sup>15</sup> Searching for 'sympath' to give sympathy and 'sympathetic' and other related forms, finds 36 instances in both *Middlemarch* and *Romola*; in *Adam Bede*, 34; *Felix Holt*, 21; and *Mill on the Floss*, 16. *Silas Marner* and *The Lifted Veil* have 8 each, while *Scenes of Clerical Life* references sympathy more frequently at 42. *Daniel Deronda* contains 64.

<sup>16</sup> Other modifiers of sympathy in the novel that are specially charged by debate about liberalism and democracy in the 1860s and 1870s include 'practical' and 'impartial' (see, for instance, *Daniel Deronda*, p. 627 (Chap. 62)).

and locatable debate throughout the 1860s'. Political reform and the raft of Liberal legislation passed by the Gladstone ministry of 1868–74 were met by sharpened fears about the consequences of 'uncultivated social and political agents' — anxieties felt by liberals as well as by conservatives.<sup>17</sup> Cultivation was a class issue, exemplified in Matthew Arnold's anxious configurations in *Culture and Anarchy* (1867–68); it was also strongly gendered. 'What men gain in mansidedness [...] they are losing in vigour', a contributor to the *Saturday Review* laments:

Tolerance, or impartiality, or sympathy, is being allowed to drain off the sources of the no less admirable virtue of conviction [...]. [Men] are so anxious to do justice to the ideas of everybody else that they have no strength left, or inclination either, to grasp and hold a set of ideas for themselves.<sup>18</sup>

Feminist history recognizes in this argument a familiar and repetitious fear that civilization feminizes as it rolls away feudal and martial organization, replaced by luxury and commerce (in the eighteenth century) or mass culture (in the nineteenth).<sup>19</sup>

Thomas suggests that mid-Victorian liberal culture tried to remake manly heroism as a form of self-discipline, positioning self-denial as a type of self-fulfilment. But he acknowledges that pitching many-sidedness as the new vigour was a difficult task (pp. 10, 28). Daniel is meant to escape this sympathetic dissolvent and be recovered from many-sidedness by the discovery of his Jewish identity. He welcomes his 'duteous bond' and the discovery of an 'added soul' that rescues him from 'the mazes of impartial sympathy' (pp. 626–27 (Chap. 63)).<sup>20</sup> For Leslie Stephen (among others), though, he never casts off the effeminacy that agitates the anti-sentimental commentators: 'Daniel Deronda is not merely a feminine but, one is inclined to say, a school-girl's hero.'<sup>21</sup> The 'quick ready feeling' of the 'sympathetic type' was repeatedly decried in the conservative press as evidence of an incontinent emotional mirroring of others and an imagination untethered from anything internally substantial or authentic ('that deeper part of feeling which has become character').<sup>22</sup> Novels exacerbated the problem, too fond of depicting promiscuous sympathizers (often women) whose tender feeling is ultimately valueless and misleading for those who mistake it for genuine

<sup>17</sup> David Wayne Thomas, *Cultivating Victorians: Liberal Culture and the Aesthetic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 26, 27.

<sup>18</sup> 'Intellectual Vigour', *Saturday Review*, 19 May 1866, pp. 584–85 (p. 584). The *Saturday Review* carried frequent attacks on sentimental sympathy in this period. For more on Eliot and Lewes's relation to this and other elements of the press, see Laurel Brake's contribution to this issue of *19*.

<sup>19</sup> Jane Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States 1780–1860* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985).

<sup>20</sup> 'Impartial' here, as in the *Saturday Review* extract, means uncommitted. As with almost all the descriptors modifying sympathy in this passage, however, it carries significant freight.

<sup>21</sup> Leslie Stephen, *George Eliot* (London: Macmillan, 1902), p. 190.

<sup>22</sup> 'Retrospective Sympathy', *Saturday Review*, 27 April 1878, pp. 519–20 (p. 520).

feeling.<sup>23</sup> Compare the sympathetic Daniel, whose eyes have ‘drawn many men into trouble’ because they ‘seemed to express a special interest in everyone on whom he fixed them’ (p. 277 (Chap. 29)).

We might ask further why Eliot chose the phrase ‘many-sided’ at all, when there is such a weight of other evidence to confirm that, like John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty* (1859), she believed many-sidedness ‘the exception’ rather than the rule, a deficit to be addressed and reduced?<sup>24</sup> Writing in her journal at the end of 1877, Eliot confesses herself struck by her own many-sidedness: ‘my mind is embarrassed by the number and wide variety of subjects that attract me, and the enlarging vista that each brings with it.’<sup>25</sup> It is also the primary quality of her novelistic aesthetic, on dazzling display in *Daniel Deronda*. As tellingly, and as Sarah Barnette has detailed, ‘many-sidedness’ gained its currency through its association with Goethe, a writer who held a special place for both Eliot and Lewes.<sup>26</sup> The word came into English as a noun in the 1830s, from the German *Vielseitigkeit*, describing the ‘many-sidedness’ of Goethe’s mind. In his biography, writing of those aspects discernable in the child that contain the germs of the man to come, Lewes identifies ‘first [Goethe’s] *manysidedness*’.<sup>27</sup> It is, surely, a motivated choice of word to describe Daniel’s sympathy — but what is the motive? Eliot seems to want to administer a shock to those who misuse sympathy, rendering it easy and conventional, or an empty performance of virtue. But there is no suggestion that Daniel can escape his paralysis by adopting moral precepts that lie outside sympathy. Instead he must find justification for partiality.<sup>28</sup> It arrives through an alternative sympathetic connection that, simultaneously, brings along its twin, antipathy.

We do not have to imagine Eliot in full agreement with the critique of sentimentalized sympathy in the 1860s press to acknowledge that she is likely to have worried about sympathy becoming conventionalized or sentimentalized. Certainly, there is evidence that she was equivocal about altruism, the term Herbert Spencer

<sup>23</sup> ‘Sympathy’, *Saturday Review*, 31 December 1864, pp. 802–03 (p. 802).

<sup>24</sup> Mill’s ‘in the human mind, one-sidedness has always been the rule, and many-sidedness the exception’ is quoted in Thomas, p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> *The Journals of George Eliot*, ed. by Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 148 (31 December 1877).

<sup>26</sup> Sarah Barnette, ‘Many-Sided Sympathy and the Science of Religion in George Eliot, Vernon Lee, and Edith Lyall’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> George Henry Lewes, *The Life of Goethe*, 2nd edn (London: Smith, Elder, 1864), p. 34, emphasis in original.

<sup>28</sup> Irwin makes this point about *Deronda* in ‘Sympathy and the Basis of Morality’, in *A Companion to George Eliot*, ed. by Anderson and Shaw, pp. 279–93. Sebastian Lecourt sees many-sidedness as integral to the liberal individuality being reimagined in the wake of a rigid and narrow Protestantism. It combines self-definition with inherited multiple commitments that are not chosen — including ethnic ones, like Daniel’s Jewishness. See Sebastian Lecourt, *Cultivating Belief: Victorian Anthropology, Liberal Aesthetics, and the Secular Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).



eventually preferred to sympathy.<sup>29</sup> She had long understood humans as first and foremost egoistic, as all her fiction attests. She had also a store of lessons from Spinoza, whose *Ethics* she translated in the 1850s.<sup>30</sup> For Spinoza, desire and striving dominate affective experience: the *conatus*, the striving to persevere in one's being, is the foundation of his psychology. Social life occurs because affects are imitated and refracted through others.<sup>31</sup> But the imitation of affect — the *affectuum imitatio* — that is the core of social life can move alarmingly from social to anti-social actions (Bijlsma, p. 9). The logic of desire and striving dominates the self for Spinoza but also necessarily threatens depletion because we seek intensifications that depend on others' desires that, in turn, create envy and hatred. Witness one of the significant beneficiaries of Daniel's sympathy, Hans Meyrick: when Hans's interest in Mirah aligns with Daniel's own, the latter's thoughts about him take on 'an unpleasant edge' and he is condemned in Daniel's thoughts as culpably solipsistic, able to imagine what goes on inside others only by fitting such imagining to 'his own inclination' (pp. 544–45 (Chap. 52)).

The Spinoza scholar, P. F. Moreau, writes: 'Far from being able to found a spontaneous sociability and harmonious concord among men, the feeling of similarity and the *imitatio affectuum* is rather a source of jealousy, rivalry, intolerance and fanaticism' (quoted in Bijlsma, p. 9, n. 24). This is the affective world in which Grandcourt operates. He understands that his habitual 'state of not-caring [...] required its related object', the crowd of envying spectators (p. 493 (Chap. 48)). Despite his reptilian stillness, Grandcourt is psychologically busy, supremely sensitive to power dynamics and his dominance within them: he is a fanatic (a fanaticism constantly cross-referenced with national and imperial power).<sup>32</sup> Spinoza was preparation for Eliot's increasing understanding that sympathy and antipathy are entwined. For Spinoza, conscious reason is the only means to a good life. Eliot, though, was negotiating new challenges about the limits of consciousness that derived from evolutionary and biological argument and from the new psychology. As I go on now to discuss, new thinking about the relation between body and mind provoked attention to what escapes consciousness but nevertheless appears to motivate us in mysterious and unsettling ways.

---

<sup>29</sup> See Thomas Dixon, *The Invention of Altruism: Making Moral Meanings in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>30</sup> See Isobel Armstrong, 'George Eliot, Spinoza, and the Emotions', in *Companion to George Eliot*, ed. by Anderson and Shaw, pp. 294–308.

<sup>31</sup> This is David Hume's position. In Hume's accounts of sympathy the passions are felt, enacted, assessed, and transformed because others have passions too, and respond to our own as we do to theirs. But this means that sympathetic pleasure in the good fortune of another can as readily become envy and hatred if that other is deemed unworthy. See Rudmer Bijlsma, 'Sympathy and *Affectuum Imitatio*: Spinoza and Hume as Social and Political Psychologists', *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 33 (2014), 1–18.

<sup>32</sup> 'Grandcourt within his own sphere of interest showed some of the qualities which have entered into triumphal diplomacy of the widest continental sort' (p. 492 (Chap. 48)).

## Instinctual sympathy

The fraught 1860s arguments about the limits of liberal self-cultivation shaped Eliot's negative diagnosis of Daniel's diffusive and neutralizing sympathy. The scientific re-configuration of sympathy produces conditions for unleashing the stranger occult sympathies and antipathies of the novel. These sympathies and antipathies, characterized by unknown and inexorable forces, are often connected to or located in the body. Sympathy was a hot topic in the 1870s: its definition and importance was widely contested in the scientific discussions that followed the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) in relation to the extension of Darwin's ideas in social ethics, philosophy, and, especially, psychology.

In the *Ethics* Spinoza insisted that 'nobody as yet has determined the limits of the body's capabilities: that is, nobody as yet has learned from experience what the body can and cannot do'.<sup>33</sup> In her *Daniel Deronda* Notebook, having read Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) shortly after it was published, Eliot recorded the three 'principles of expression' of emotions.<sup>34</sup> Emotions are a body performance, often leftovers from earlier survival imperatives. The work that immediately preceded the *Expression*, *The Descent of Man* (1871), had a great deal to say about sympathy, and sympathy too is located, along with other more standard emotions, primarily in the body. Sympathy is an instinct, Darwin insists. It is a crucial point. He was addressing criticism of the account of the evolutionary mechanism of natural selection given in the *Origin*. This criticism judged natural selection obviously and demonstrably at odds with the moral development of human societies. Sympathy is the sign of the inadequacy of a wholly naturalistic account of the life of human species because it so palpably dismantles a central aspect of evolutionary change: the elimination of the weakest in the struggle for existence.<sup>35</sup> Darwin's answer is that sympathy is a socially foundational instinct: it is common to all social animals, but selects in terms of the group rather than the individual.<sup>36</sup> Uneasily, he quietly fudges the question of competing instincts; while self-preserving urges may be experienced as imperative, in group creatures the 'enduring and always present social instinct' will

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in Eric Schliesser, 'Introduction: On Sympathy', in *Sympathy: A History*, ed. by Eric Schliesser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 3–14 (p. 13).

<sup>34</sup> *George Eliot's 'Daniel Deronda' Notebooks*, ed. by Jane Irwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 242. See also, Angeliqe Richardson, 'George Eliot, G. H. Lewes, and Darwin: Animal, Emotions, and Morals', in *After Darwin: Animals, Emotions, and the Mind*, ed. by Angeliqe Richardson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), pp. 136–71.

<sup>35</sup> This argument was initiated by Alfred Russel Wallace's 1864 paper 'On the Origin of Human Races'. See Alfred Russel Wallace, *Contribution to the Theory of Natural Selection: A Series of Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1870), pp. 303–31. It was given a more popular and polemic rehearsal by William Rathbone Greg in 'On the Failure of "Natural Selection" in the Case of Man', *Fraser's Magazine*, September 1868, pp. 353–62.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2 vols (London: Murray, 1871), I, chapter 3.

always reassert itself, precipitating painful remorse if unsatisfied and growing stronger as a result.<sup>37</sup>

Opposition to this locating of ethical drivers in the instinctual body, separated from any rationalist account of the functioning of morality, made it into the inaugural issue of the journal *Mind*, founded by the psychologist Alexander Bain to investigate psychology as a distinctive discipline. Appearing in January 1876, just a month before *Daniel Deronda*'s first part, it pitched the utilitarian philosopher Henry Sidgwick alongside Herbert Spencer. Sidgwick skewered Spencer, insisting that moral conduct cannot be handed over to instinct.<sup>38</sup> This was one front, among others, that pushed back against the naturalistic account. Lewes's *Problems of Life and Mind* was an attempt to suture the challenges to naturalism and empiricism by defusing the opposition between materialism and idealism. This was how he sought to rescue psychophysiology from reductive and mechanistic determinism and simultaneously ward off philosophical critique being mounted by both utilitarians like Sidgwick and the resurgent idealism represented by figures like T. H. Green.

Central to Lewes's task was putting mind into the body without reducing consciousness to an epiphenomenal manifestation of a physiological system. This 'hard' version of empiricism was called 'automatism'. Flourishing from the 1870s, it was the contention that 'mental conditions are simply the symbols in consciousness of the changes which take place automatically in the organism'.<sup>39</sup> Countering it, Lewes insisted: 'We know ourselves as Body-Mind; we do not know ourselves as Body *and* Mind, if by that be meant two coexistent independent Existents.'<sup>40</sup> Body-Mind must also be conceived as enworlded: 'body' *is* 'world', the 'social medium [...] a factor which permeates the whole composition of the mind'.<sup>41</sup> Organicism allowed Lewes to experiment with non-reductive models of human development and ontology. These include what he calls the 'facultative actions', such as human language and imagination. The facultative actions take energy from the body but they are never uniformly or inevitably produced by it. Instead they open mediatory spaces with 'enabling and

---

<sup>37</sup> Darwin, 1, 73. Frances Power Cobbe, 'Heteropathy, Aversion, Sympathy', *Theological Review*, January 1874, pp. 1–35, targets this point, arguing that only a higher power could endow humans with moral capacity to choose between competing instincts.

<sup>38</sup> Henry Sidgwick, 'The Theory of Evolution in its Application to Practice', *Mind*, 1 (1876), 52–67. For a wider assessment of debate about sympathy in the journal, see Susan Lanzoni, 'Sympathy in *Mind* (1876–1900)', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 70 (2009), 265–87.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Henry Huxley, 'On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata, and its History', in *Methods and Results: Essays* (New York: Appleton, 1896), pp. 199–250 (p. 244) (first publ. in *Nature*, 10 (1874), 362–66). Roger Smith discusses the 'automatism' debate in *Free Will and the Human Sciences in Britain, 1870–1910* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), pp. 23–33.

<sup>40</sup> George Henry Lewes, *The Physical Basis of Mind*, Second series of *Problems of Life and Mind* (London: Trübner, 1877), p. 350, emphasis in original.

<sup>41</sup> George Henry Lewes, *The Study of Psychology: Its Object, Scope, and Method*, Third series of *Problems of Life and Mind*, 2 vols (London: Trübner, 1879), 1, 71.

creative uses'.<sup>42</sup> The interactions of multiple natural, social, physical, and mental environments require 'a synthetic interpretation that will comprise the whole of the factors, past and present'.<sup>43</sup> The body is memory too. We can only speculate how much influence on this aspect of his work his 'differing' partner exerted ('he allows me to differ from him'). We can, though, as I show shortly, see that Eliot was prepared to intervene and change Lewes's text when she judged it tipping towards a reductive determinism.

Daniel's initial advice to Gwendolen during the newly married Grandcourts' New Year's visit to Topping Abbey is quite conventional: 'Try to care for what is best in thought and action — something that is good apart from the accidents of your own lot' (p. 377 (Chap. 36)). The harrowing rebuke from Grandcourt that follows this scene, however, sends Gwendolen straight back into her own body, leaving her unable to imagine defiance because the 'ghostly army at his back' has infiltrated her: 'she might as well have tried to defy the texture of her nerves and the palpitation of her heart' (pp. 378–79). When she next speaks to Daniel, on the last morning of the abbey visit, his new advice now targets her 'Body-Mind': 'Take your fear as a safeguard. It is like quickness of hearing. [...] Try to take hold of your sensibility, and use it as if it were a faculty, like vision' (p. 383). Daniel references three different bodily senses in his effort to operationalize moral functioning in Gwendolen. But physicalizing her sensibility has a very different effect to that intended by Daniel as evidenced in her confession of the (potential) moral catastrophe when her hated husband drowns. Evoking yet another sense — 'I wanted to kill — it was as strong as thirst' — she cries out confirmation that 'I did, I did kill him in my thoughts', as if she has been tutored that the distinction between mental thought and bodily act is illusory (pp. 582, 586 (Chap. 56)). Gwendolen is propelled by a Body-Mind force of antipathy. The question of her responsibility, though, is one of the vanishing points of the text. Daniel legislates on it as a proxy for an external law but in doing so further internalizes Gwendolen's punishment. We are returned to *Daniel Deronda*'s terrifying, Gothic opening epigraph: 'Let thy chief terror be of thine own soul' with its invitation or injunction to face what of human selves and histories resists meliorative improvement.

---

<sup>42</sup> George Henry Lewes, *The Foundations of a Creed*, First series of *Problems of Life and Mind*, 2 vols (London: Trübner, 1874), I, 139. See also, Rick Rylance, *Victorian Psychology and British Culture, 1850–1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>43</sup> George Henry Lewes, 'Spiritualism and Materialism', Part II, *Fortnightly Review*, May 1876, pp. 707–19 (p. 707).

## Occult and unconscious

In *Daniel Deronda* there are no longer bodies containing hearts that can be pressed upon, metaphorically, as the repository of moral and divine feeling.<sup>44</sup> Instead there are the intensities of complex organisms, their sensational and perceptive capacities, and a ‘strange spiritual chemistry going on within’, attracting or repelling (p. 266 (Chap. 28)). The ironic passage in which the latter phrase appears warns readers against believing they can adequately understand Grandcourt by the appearance of his languid motionlessness: he is as incalculable in his actions as a ‘navvy waking from sleep and without malice heaving a stone to crush the life out of his still sleeping comrade’ (p. 266). What force does Eliot intend to signal here, in this unexpected scenario? The act cannot be understood by an onlooker but nor is it comprehended by the perpetrator who feels no malice.

Spinoza writes of how we ‘love or hate some things without any cause known to us, but merely from sympathy and antipathy’.<sup>45</sup> Gwendolen, as I have already noted, is ‘subject to physical antipathies’ (p. 100 (Chap. 11)).<sup>46</sup> ‘I can’t love people. I hate them’, she sobs to her mother (p. 68 (Chap. 7)). ‘I have not been fond of people’, she tells Daniel, without knowing why (p. 381 (Chap. 36)).<sup>47</sup> For the early modern mechanistic paradigms that Spinoza helped develop and that ushered in the sovereign domain of reason, all effects have causes. A sympathy or antipathy that has no cause must be illegitimate and Spinoza explicitly condemns the appeal to ‘occult’ qualities of things. Nevertheless, as Ryan Patrick Hanley argues, there is ambiguity in his conception of how sympathetic connection to distant phenomena is made: association, metaphor, and memory haunt the body and propel it in strange ways (pp. 175–76). Simon During has shown how risky is the effort to account naturalistically for occult phenomena in order to preserve a spiritual force for rationalism — something he calls ‘weak Spinozism’. For During this manoeuvre is likely to make ‘certain questions — about [...] the relation between mind and matter [...] acquire a new and still potentially magical interest’.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> In *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. by A. S. Byatt (London: Penguin, 2003), Maggie Tulliver feels the past as affect ‘pressing on [her] heart’ when refusing to stay with Stephen Guest (p. 496 (Book 6, Chap. 14)).

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Ryan Patrick Hanley, ‘The Eighteenth-Century Context of Sympathy from Spinoza to Kant’, in *Sympathy*, ed. by Schliesser, pp. 171–98 (p. 175).

<sup>46</sup> I have already noted that the most ready and violent antipathy is felt for Lush, a man whose name also means a stroke or blow. Lush combines complacent self-interestedness with an obscure sexual threat. He is described as ‘a very large cigar’ (p. 477 (Chap. 45)).

<sup>47</sup> Readers find the not knowing hardest to bear, hence the accounts of child abuse that provide an acceptable backstory and motive for Gwendolen’s antipathies. See Margaret Loewen Reimer, ‘The Spoiled Child: What Happened to Gwendolen Harleth?’, *Cambridge Quarterly*, 36 (2007), 33–50.

<sup>48</sup> Simon During, *Modern Enchantments: The Cultural Power of Secular Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 278, 261. Lewes’s aim to reconstruct metaphysics on an empirical basis shares some aims and qualities of ‘weak Spinozism’.

Eliot does not explicitly make this ‘weak Spinozist’ gesture in the manner of the men who formed the Society for Psychical Research in the early 1880s and who she and Lewes visited in Cambridge in 1873.<sup>49</sup> But she plays with its possibilities in the resurrection of occult sympathy that tinges the description of Daniel’s half-conscious animistic fantasy that he can identify with external objects until ‘his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape’ (p. 158 (Chap. 17)), or, more strongly, characterizes Mordecai’s ‘second sight’. Mordecai is described as thinking in images resembling ‘genuine dreams in their way of breaking off the passage from the known to the unknown’, replicating in this mysterious gap the occult mode of unseen connection (p. 400 (Chap. 38)). Dreaming also points to the final element that I argue shapes Eliot’s treatment in *Daniel Deronda* of the psychological force of sympathy’s other side, antipathy: the unconscious. Although some critics have enjoyed identifying in Eliot’s acuity about mental life a precursor to Freudian psychoanalysis, there is no real need to do so. As Matt ffytche has shown, the conceptualization of an unconscious was fully part of the nineteenth century, embedded in its social, political, and cultural dynamics and the philosophies of selfhood which sought to make sense of them.<sup>50</sup> The unconscious is one of the forces that undoes biological and naturalistic reductiveness and Eliot uses it to dramatize limits to reason and deterministic biology.

New scientific ideas about consciousness and its limits occur throughout *Daniel Deronda*, from the reference to the ‘double consciousness’ of Daniel’s mother in her ‘sincere acting’ — her womanliness as masquerade — through to the choice of horse, bit, and bridle to describe the power dynamics within the Grandcourt marriage (p. 529 (Chap. 51)).<sup>51</sup> The physiologist William Benjamin Carpenter used the same image to describe how attention is directed in mental life — as a horse ‘under the guidance and control of a skilful rider’ — in his influential accounts of ‘unconscious cerebration’.<sup>52</sup> Gwendolen, a skilled horsewoman, reaches with ease for the metaphor in her naive conviction that marrying Grandcourt would permit her to ‘mount the chariot and drive the plunging horses herself’, and retain control over her life (p. 113 (Chap. 13)). Instead she is to be ‘brought to kneel down like a horse under training’ until Grandcourt is ‘perfectly satisfied that he held his wife with bit and bridle’ (p.

---

<sup>49</sup> During discusses this trip to see Frederic Myers where Eliot and Lewes also met Edmund Gurney (pp. 273–74). It is recorded in Lewes’s diary, 19–21 May 1873, in *Eliot Letters*, ed. by Haight, v, 409–10.

<sup>50</sup> ‘A complete understanding of the rationale for the development of the unconscious in the nineteenth century would require nothing less than a cultural history of the nineteenth century itself.’ Matt ffytche, *The Foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> Joan Riviere, ‘Womanliness as a Masquerade’, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 10 (1929), 303–13.

<sup>52</sup> William Benjamin Carpenter, ‘Principles of Mental Physiology’ (1874), in *Embodied Selves: An Anthology of Psychological Texts 1830–1890*, ed. by Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 95–101 (p. 96).

266 (Chap. 28); p. 573 (Chap. 54)). Conscious will can be used in all sorts of ways: here it is refracted through social power that, exerted in the intimate setting of the home, is tyrannical and limitless.

In Lewes's manuscript notes for the volume of *Problems of Life and Mind* most obviously dedicated to psychology — *The Study of Psychology* — he quotes from the epigraph to *Daniel Deronda* I have already quoted: 'Let thy chief terror be of thine own soul.' When, following his death, Eliot revised the section in which it appears — on 'The Moral Sense' — she takes it out. It is not surprising she does so, given the overall tenor of the revisions she makes to this section. The literary scholar K. K. Collins, who reprinted Lewes's original manuscript alongside Eliot's revisions in 1978, glosses them as Eliot replacing Darwin with Kant.<sup>53</sup> Eliot excises Darwin's account of sympathy that Lewes quotes extensively to support the case for the instinctual origins of moral conduct; she replaces it with a modified version of a moral self, founded both on and by authoritative reason. Without the rebalancing that Lewes had undertaken in key parts of *Problems of Life and Mind*, made to choose between a body pre-scripted by social instinct and a reflective mind, Eliot favours critical reason as a sounder foundation for moral life.

But she also replaces the excised epigraph with a fragment from Wordsworth's *The Excursion*. Wordsworth is a reminder of what gets expelled or downgraded by reason: emotion and moral sentiment. John Stuart Mill also famously admired Wordsworth and used his influence to modify the mechanistic 'chains' of ideas and sensations of associationist psychology. Wordsworth helps Mill to envisage a self endowed with hidden, inner sources of moral autonomy, the 'inward forces which make [the individual] a living thing'.<sup>54</sup>

This is the Romantic grounding of self in the unconscious. The self can make a foundational gesture but it is not a Kantian one; instead it can be done only on the basis of the lostness, secrecy, and obscurity of the originary moment. The unconscious allows the self's home within itself — but it is an *unheimlich* one. For ffytche, this account of self-foundation is elaborated most fully in the *Naturphilosophie* of F. W. J. Schelling and he cites Emerson, who read Schelling in the 1840s, writing of needing 'a bit of night, of chaos, of *Abgrund*' to found the self. By the end of the nineteenth century these modern imaginings of self had been given firm cultural location in late-Victorian Gothic literature as it aligned the idea of the unconscious with deep history,

---

<sup>53</sup> K. K. Collins, 'G. H. Lewes Revised: George Eliot and the Moral Sense', *Victorian Studies*, 21 (1978), 463–92. Collins eventually argues that Eliot is trying to preserve in her account *both* moral reason and moral sentiment.

<sup>54</sup> John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, People's edn (London: Longmans, Green, 1867), p. 34. This point about Mill is made by ffytche (p. 233), who cites Wordsworth's 'shadowy recollections', 'thoughts that lie too deep', 'vanishings' and birth that is 'sleep and a forgetting' from 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood'.

primeval instincts, inheritance, and memory and pressed into exploratory service supernatural and occult imaginings.<sup>55</sup>

*Daniel Deronda*'s epigraph warns from the novel's outset of something recalcitrant in or of the self that is not amenable to reason. But if turning one's own terror into self-censorship is the only response to this plight, where does this leave Gwendolen, and where does it leave readers of the novel? How do we avoid becoming Grandcourt, satisfied that Gwendolen can be 'brought to kneel down like a horse under training' in moral recovery? And is this also what Daniel Deronda tries to do to her? Eliot holds off fully replicating Grandcourt's sadism but she does not escape it, nor does Daniel — 'I am cruel too, I am cruel', he groans (p. 679 (Chap. 69)) — and nor do we.

The occult forces I have been describing, and the linking of both sympathy and antipathy with something that escapes reason, help explain why *Daniel Deronda* is a different reading experience from Eliot's previous fictions. There is real unsettling in this novel — 'the upheaval of *Daniel Deronda*', as Isobel Armstrong expresses it (*Novel Politics*, p. 166). Though in the novel we recognize much that seems familiar from Eliot's previous novelistic worlds, these recognizable moments are also disturbed and unsettled by the Gothic or occult elements that circulate through the novel. The latter are rarely given free rein (except when contained by an alternative structure, as they are in Mordecai's case by Jewish text and doctrine). Mostly, they move uneasily, like ghosts or portents, colliding with moments of familiar moral conclusion.

Thus, when we are prompted, early in the novel, to 'pity that Offendene is not the home of Miss Harleth's childhood', we are on familiar ground — the stabilizing ground of family and community that can hold social and moral value intact: 'A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land', the narrator confirms (p. 15 (Chap. 3)). Towards the end of the novel this passage is recalled as Gwendolen returns in her thoughts to Offendene — though she is physically as displaced as ever, on a 'foreign train', during one of its 'long unaccountable pauses' (p. 641 (Chap. 64)). The passage begins with touching witness to her new-found sensitivity to the sensory and emotional qualities of place so 'that brief experience of a quiet home' is felt now as 'restful escape [...], the breath of morning and the unreproaching voice of birds'. Again, this is familiar Eliot territory, aesthetically, psychologically, and morally, offering the slender promise of a recuperative space for Gwendolen, now life-educated to value quiet home affections. But the passage's ending could belong in no other Eliot novel, knocking aside the meliorative moment (and its conservative resonances) to reassert the 'lure through a long Satanic masquerade', the end of which Gwendolen sees out 'in shrieking fear lest she herself had become one of the evil spirits who were dropping their human mummery and hissing around her with serpent tongues' (p. 641). We cannot easily return from this to the comfort and stabilization of place and home: for readers, as much as for Gwendolen herself, if it is

---

<sup>55</sup> This is the main argument of ffytche's book, on which I draw here. Quoted matter is at pp. 203–04.



available at all in this paragraph it is only through active effort to foreclose on the terror and the violence.<sup>56</sup>

Gwendolen responds to the terror by introjecting Daniel: ‘in some mysterious way he was becoming a part of her conscience’ (p. 350 (Chap. 35)). But this process requires an ever-increasing nearness, as if antipathy can only be countered by a sympathy that entirely assimilates self and other in magical affinity. ‘Sympathy transforms’, Foucault writes of its occult form. ‘It alters, but in the direction of identity’ (p. 24). In the aftermath of Grandcourt’s drowning Gwendolen repeats her refrain as the most urgent of questions: ‘You will not forsake me?’. It prompts Daniel’s fall to ethical failure as he struggles to respond to an unlimited demand, ‘making an indefinite promise to an indefinite hope’ (p. 590 (Chap. 57)). ‘You must be near’, Gwendolen insists, anxiously seeking confirmation of togetherness, ‘we shall all go to England?’. His hedging answer prolongs the wrenching revelations when finally Gwendolen is forced fully to confront the fact that his is a different story to hers.

It is only Gwendolen who fails to know that ‘she was thinking of Deronda more than he was thinking of her’, a gendered difference that Eliot repeatedly underscores (p. 461 (Chap. 44)). In the final, near unbearable scene between them when she finds this out, experiencing herself ‘reduced to a mere speck’ and finally forsaken, Daniel promises proximity: ‘I shall be more with you than I used to be’, he says: ‘we can perhaps never see each other again. But our minds may get nearer’ (pp. 677, 679 (Chap. 69)). Adela Pinch reads this moment optimistically. She sees it as confirmation of the fact that they have been and will be able to think about each other and to hold each other in mind.<sup>57</sup> Daniel, though, feels otherwise (and so do I). Gwendolen’s ‘look of grief’ ‘made him hate his own words’. They have ‘the hardness of easy consolation’ (p. 679). Perhaps the problem for Daniel — who does, after all, say much that is conventional and even banal — is that he is quoting ‘George Eliot’. Eliot feared recycled words for herself, too: ‘I am haunted by the fear I am only saying again what I have already said.’<sup>58</sup> More important is that Daniel is quoting Eliot from the 1850s. The

---

<sup>56</sup> There are many other examples that function in a similar way, even outside an explicitly ‘occult’ register. Compare, for example, another of Daniel’s conventional utterances about duty — which also gains meaning in relation to the wider importance of ‘organicism’ in both Eliot’s and Lewes’s work. Once she begins to act with ‘penitential, loving purpose’, Daniel tells Gwendolen: ‘You will find your life growing like a plant’ (p. 647 (Chap. 65)). But compare Gwendolen’s own deployment of the metaphor in an earlier and uneasy courtship scene with Grandcourt where she contrasts gendered life expectations: ‘We must stay where we grow, or where the gardeners like to transplant us [...]. That is my notion about the plants: they are often bored, and that is the reason why some of them have got poisonous’ (p. 111 (Chap. 13)). Plants, like humans, grow in many different ways, depending on constitution, environment, experience, and their unpredictable interactions.

<sup>57</sup> Adela Pinch, *Thinking About Other People in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 139–69.

<sup>58</sup> Letter to Alexander Main, 9 November 1871, in *Eliot Letters*, ed. by Haight, v, 212. Main published the much circulated *Wise, Witty, and Tender Sayings* (1873) excerpted from Eliot’s prose and poetry. For discussion of Eliot’s fear of repetition and overproduction in the literary

ethic of the sympathy that she promotes in that decade is not entirely superseded but nor is it any longer fully adequate. If we understand sympathy as constitutively joined with antipathy it becomes part of the human problem as well as the answer.

In the extraordinary passages where Daniel and Mordecai meet, the question of the former's sympathy and truthfulness is for him always on the line. But this means nothing at all to Mordecai, whose attraction to Daniel works on an entirely different axis of connection that I have been calling 'occult'. When Daniel responds, trying to hedge his commitments, to Mordecai's description of 'the doctrine of the Cabbala' as souls reborn into a new body, 'he tried to make it truthful; but for Mordecai's ear it was inevitably filled with unspoken meanings' (p. 455 (Chap. 43)). They miss each other at this point. By the novel's end, however, and facilitated by multiple forms of inheritance, Daniel transfers to the alternative sympathy axis in the culmination of Mordecai's five-year wait to see his wish outside him. Mordecai's death is the 'divine kiss which is both parting and reunion [...] Where thou goest Daniel, I shall go. [...] Have I not breathed my soul into you? We shall live together', are his final words (p. 683 (Chap. 70)). A spiritual language of breath cannot entirely mute the eroticism of this moment (or the material imagery of transfusion that Eliot made use of in *The Lifted Veil* (1859)). Erotic attraction models the force by which separate entities are drawn 'together and communicate with one another without a break' (like something mad or unbound in erotic love) (Foucault, p. 24). After the 'prophetic' meeting at Blackfriars Bridge, when Mordecai and Daniel return together to Mr Ram's bookshop, they face each other 'with as intense a consciousness as if they had been two undeclared lovers' (p. 418 (Chap. 40)).

The three entwined figures at the novel's end also intriguingly point to another of Daniel's mythic or literary 'ideal' identities. Prince Camaralzaman, from *The Arabian Nights*, is the figure the Meyrick sisters choose to paint him as after first meeting him (p. 154 (Chap. 16)). Mab regularly refers to him as 'Prince Camaralzaman' and, on her first morning in the Meyricks' house, to Mirah as 'Queen Budoor' (p. 174 (Chap. 20)). The *Arabian Nights* story ends happily, with the prince reunited with his beloved wife, the Princess Badoura (or Budoor), and proclaimed king — though only after he agrees also to marry King Armanos's daughter who Badoura had illegitimately married pretending to be Camaralzaman. The queens live together 'in true sisterly harmony' each presenting Camaralzaman with a son.<sup>59</sup>

If, unlike Prince Camaralzaman, Daniel Deronda does not end the novel with two wives he does get two siblings. It is also the case that two wives is a scenario that he actively keeps open — at least for a while. 'Budoor' or Mirah is aware of the possibility and it gives rise to her own moment of antipathy.<sup>60</sup> It is the only moment in

---

marketplace and of parroting herself, see Rosemarie Bodenheimer, *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot, Her Letters and Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 161–88.

<sup>59</sup> 'Camaralzaman and Badoura', in *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*, ed. by Andrew Lang (London: Longmans, 1898), pp. 216–66 (p. 266).

<sup>60</sup> See Josephine McDonagh's article in this issue of *19* for Mirah in relation to the Medea myth.

which she (almost) fractures harmony with her beloved brother by disagreeing with him and causing something like an argument. Jealousy is the root of Mirah's antipathy — 'a cruel heart of jealousy' that concentrates her 'repugnance' on an 'evil' Gwendolen (p. 617 (Chap. 61)). She challenges Mordecai's conviction that 'women are specially framed' for 'renouncing', an assertion he illustrates by a story from the Midrash. It tells of a Jewish woman in love with a Gentile king who enters prison to change clothes with another woman condemned to death who is loved by the king. By dying in the other woman's place, she proves the superiority of her own love by preserving the king's favourite. 'This is the surpassing love', Mordecai concludes, 'that loses self in the object of love.' For Mirah, though, this is interpretatively inept: the fable is about a *moral* killing of the rival that in the same stroke also intends to punish the king: 'No, Ezra, no [...] that was not it. She wanted the king when she was dead to know what she had done, and feel that she was better than the other.' She wants (like Mirah) 'to conquer' (p. 618). Mirah understands human love better than Mordecai does: she grasps its imbrication with hate. The egoism that blocks an understanding of another in Eliot's previous novels is not the entire point here. *Daniel Deronda* sensitizes us to something obdurate about fear and hatred and the dread that follows. A sympathy that cannot admit its constitutive connection to antipathy will no longer do.

Eliot famously wrote that, in *Daniel Deronda*, she 'meant everything in the book to be related to everything else there'.<sup>61</sup> If the novel is split, its division can be read differently if we keep its occult elements more consistently in view. These do not align along 'realist Gwendolen and English' versus 'idealist/messianic Mordecai and Jewish' plotlines. They produce different connections that work against conclusion or resolution. In a novel with many references to drowning we cannot know whether Daniel and Mirah will reach their destination just as we cannot foresee what will become of Gwendolen. We can, though, grasp that Eliot commits to acknowledging sympathy and antipathy both at the foundation of being human, acknowledging in that gesture that dark violent moments mark all real life. *Daniel Deronda* signals the end of Eliot's meliorism and takes us to the very edge of things, leaving us all there: her characters, the realist novel, and the 'law and cause' of social progress.<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Letter to Barbara Bodichon, 2 October 1876, in *Eliot Letters*, ed. by Haight, vi: 1874–1877 (1956), 290. She is complaining about readers who talk about nothing but Gwendolen: this article is guilty.

<sup>62</sup> Herbert Spencer, 'Progress: Its Law and Cause', *Westminster Review*, April 1857, pp. 445–85.