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Narcissus and Echo

A Political Reading of George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda

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George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*

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horizonte

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Preface

Their role in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* has made them one of the most influent mythical pairs in the cultural history of the western world: Narcissus and Echo have left well-recognisable traces in virtually innumerable pieces of visual art, in literary texts and theoretical thinking. Narcissus and Echo form a rather odd pair: they are neither a couple nor siblings. Are they lovers? Well, Echo would have hoped so, Narcissus denied it. It is not love, nor familial bonds, but Ovid's intricate two-stranded narrative that constitutes this odd pair. An odd pair, because Ovid's story aims at the two figures' deadly contrast rather than their loving conciliation.

Narcissus is beautiful – and he is unloving. He is a man of the surface and of visuality, who is not receptive for the love with which others approach him. He rejects many beautiful nymphs, and flies from Echo, who has artistically chatted him up, despite her inability to speak first. His unlovingness is turned into a just punishment, when he encounters his own reflection in the water: he falls in love, but cannot reach the beloved behind the beautiful surface. Narcissus's visual love cannot transcend the unloving distance that is inherent in the notion of the gaze. The source of this love, the fact that it is not love for others, but love for the own, beautiful self, makes its realisation impossible. The trap of the auto-reference and Narcissus's lack of love for the other turn out to be the same: his slow, self-consuming death mirrors the vanishing of Echo's body as a result of her unfulfilled love to him.

Echo is a representative of voice. Ovid has reasons to name her "vocalis nymphe" (III, 357): her sermons are powerful enough to repeatedly distract a goddess, Juno, from catching her husband Jupiter red-handed: he is notoriously making love to nymphs in the mountains. Juno punishes Echo for these deceits by robbing her of her extraordinary vocal faculties: from that moment on, Echo cannot speak by herself, but just repeat what has been said. This does not prevent her from flirting with the beautiful Narcissus, with whom she is terribly in love. Being rejected, her loving sorrows make her shrink, her body vanishes and is said to be transformed into stone. She has lost her body, however, her reverberating voice is still alive.

Ovid's story is tragic: it centres on Narcissus's fatal self-love that proves disastrous not only for himself, but also for Echo. However, by focusing on Narcissus, Ovid's story almost covers up the characteristic asymmetry that the encounter of its central pair Narcissus and Echo brings forth: whereas Narcis-

sus's self-referential, superficial, visual love is not only shown to be sterile, but capitally punished in the end, Echo's loving voice survives. Ovid's story does not make this survival fruitful. Echo's defining characteristic, her love for the other that is not mediated by vision but by her voice, asserts itself only negatively through Narcissus's tragic fate. The loss of her body and her metamorphosis into stone render her love for the other that is still present in her voice a mere potential – a potential, however, that stays alive.

In contrast to large parts of the reception of Ovid's story in literature, visual arts and theoretical thinking, George Eliot's novel *Daniel Deronda* shows interest in Echo's living potential. *Daniel Deronda* can be read as a rewriting and sequel of Ovid's story that attempts to realise Echo's love by restoring her body and her full powerful voice. As the following chapters attempt to show, George Eliot's novel associates two societal models with Ovid's mythical pair: English capitalistic society shares characteristic, fatal traits with Narcissus; the counter-model of the Jewish Nation has, like Echo, lost its body and has only stayed alive in loving voices reverberating a sublime past and calling for a fulfilled future. The novel's title hero, Daniel Deronda, is posed right in between these two models. He encounters Gwendolen, the novel's main representative of the English, narcissistic society, and accompanies her through the difficulties of her cold, unloving life as a moral mentor. However, despite his unchallenged, supreme authority over her, he cannot liberate her from her tragic life. It is not her moral corruption, but the narcissistic societal mechanism in which she is caught that confines her to a neutral and quiet life without a future. Daniel Deronda finds himself in the heroic role of a Messiah of the future, when his saving a Jewish girl from drowning herself leads him to meet her brother Mordecai. Through this deeply believing Jewish brother he does not only make the acquaintance with Judaism and the proto-Zionist plan to found a Jewish Nation, but also with his own Jewish birth that had been concealed from him. His being raised as an English gentleman, his wealth and strong stature in combination with being born a Jew make him the perfect executor of the frail, hoarse and deathly consumptive Mordecai's plan. Their spiritual marriage is to give birth to the Jewish Nation – to restore Echo's body and her powerful voice among the nations. To realise this future, Gwendolen and the narcissistic English society have to be left behind, a decision that George Eliot's novel takes without hesitation. A decision that is not only interesting from a political, philosophical and sociological point of view, but that is also a poetological decision: it is, as the following study attempts to show, also the decision for the novel as the narration of a full, meaningful story.

Introduction

George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* is, without any doubt, a highly complex novel that addresses issues of political importance that are still, perhaps even more than ever, of interest in the world of the twenty-first century. The wide range and high quality of criticism that this novel has stimulated is impressive: hundreds of articles, book sections and books read *Daniel Deronda*, from feminist, psychoanalytical, postcolonial, theological, deconstructive, historical and many more perspectives.

The idea of this project was not to start with the focus on a certain political question in mind and look for reflections of this problematic in the novel, but with a detailed analysis of the novel's complex configurations. This analysis will continually be augmented with concepts of critical thinking or arguments of the rich field of criticism on the novel that resonate with the findings of close readings. In this way, various critical perspectives will feature in our study: whenever our close reading discovers a possible point of connection that promises interesting resonances, we will weave the interesting concepts into our text and thereby initiate many symbioses of novel and pieces of theory or philosophy, producing a growing rhizome.

The project's goal is not a 'new' interpretation of the novel, a final attempt at finding out what the novel is 'really' about. *How it functions, and "what it functions with"* (Deleuze and Guattari 2004b, 4) – these are the guiding questions. Reading the novel in this way implicates reading it as a social, artistic, political practice; it does not merely reflect a reality that is situated outside the 'book', it does not mirror philosophical thinking and translate it into literary terms; it does not depict a societal configuration that was predominant when the novel was written. It does not matter what George Eliot might have read or known, it does not matter where the novel's complexity comes from. Our study regards the novel itself as part of a societal and an artistic configuration, an active, a creative part that follows strategic goals, that connects and resonates with other parts to exercise an impact on the configurations and effect a certain transformation.

George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* is connected to both a literary 'machine' and a societal 'machine', at the same time. It contrasts two basal types of 'machinic' configuration: one where time is an active agent, where stability has to constitute itself against time's forces of contingency in a self-referential way without any essential foundation – another where time is sublated in meaningful history and functions as a force of order, unity and stability. These two basal

types of machinic configuration have very different effects on both the literary and the societal 'machine': the meaningful story with a closed plot implies, as does its societal 'counterpart', the nation, meaningful history as its condition of possibility; capitalism, speculation, self-fashioning spectacle and the biographical narration of personal episodes are driven by time as an agent of contingency. We – the many, non-majestic but various 'Is' that are bundled by unfortunately only one name on the title page – have decided to bring the novel's fundamental distinction of these two basal types of machinic configurations into resonance with Ovid's mythic characters of Narcissus and Echo: the self-referential, unloving, spec(tac)ular narcissistic mechanism that resists and is driven by time as force of contingency and Echo's binding, loving history constituting nation and meaningful, closed narration.

The first chapter is dedicated to the narcissistic mechanism. It explores its functioning in a circular fashion, maps its workings by passing and re-passing the same parts from different angles, attempting to sketch the resonance that holds this complex construction together. Its segmentation into sections does not follow a logical pattern: neither the sequence nor the division of sections are of great consequence; the dynamics, the self-referential processuality of this mechanism resists an abstract, transcendent order imposed from above. Departing from the conceptual resonance created by the lexical field of speculum, spectacle, spectator and spectre the chapter attempts to enrich this conceptual network with the notions of fashion, female imaginary and media-theoretical concepts of portraiture that the novel itself operates with. Close readings and theoretical excursus stimulate each other mutually, so that the linearity of writing confronts us with a serious problem: inputs and results of close readings always retroact with the findings of the previous sections, so that we are forced to repeatedly come back – with new conceptual tools – to points where we have already been, and hope that the reader will follow our patience to travel in spirals rather than desperately look for the 'direct way'.

The second chapter's presentation of Echo's binding history is segmented in a different fashion; the conceptual construction George Eliot develops to create the unity of History and story follows a strict, logical, a dialectical pattern that the chapter's structure reproduces. An introductory, connecting section leads to the tripartite dialectical movement that retraces the novel's conceptual efforts to narrate its own narratability and construct the Jewish nation's transcendental unity.

The short final chapter deconstructs the dichotomy that both George Eliot's novel and our study took as the fundamental structuring element.

The Narcissistic Spectacle and Its Time

The notions of theatricality and performance in *Daniel Deronda* have since long attracted the critics' interest: "theatricality", Lynn Voskuil writes, "saturates the novel as a whole" (2004, 114), Joan DeMaria diagnoses a fundamental "ambivalence about acting and the theatre and about artistic performance in general" (1990, 407). The wide range of meaning and theoretical implications of the terms 'theatricality' and 'performance' themselves has, however, proved quite an obstacle to a thorough analysis of this very interesting ambivalence at the core of George Eliot's novel. Talking about theatricality is always at least latently in danger of contrasting it with a notion of authenticity; thinking 'performance', on the other hand, very easily evokes the 'rivalling' concept of representation, especially in the light of the very influential theoretical debates transporting Austin's speech-act theory or the distinction of *énoncé* and *énonciation* into the fields of cultural studies. The idea that this study attempts to develop has to evade these two binary oppositions in order to unveil and analyse the 'theatrical' workings and the (concept of) time of a specific – roughly 'the modern' – societal configuration. The novel's plotline around Gwendolen Harleth and her interaction with and her movements in the English upper-class provide us with the diagram of a distinct societal fabric. This fabric is not only characterised by "binding metaphors and symbols" of the theatre (Swann 1972, 192), but is itself specifically 'theatrical': 'theatrical' in the sense that this word's etymology bears testimony of – *θεᾶοθαι*, to behold, to look on. In other words, using another, more influent foreign reservoir that informs the heterogeneous English language: theatricality in a, on the first glance, very narrow understanding of *spectacle* – lat. *specere*, or, intensified, *spectāre*, to behold, to look on. What is now provisionally hinted at by 'spec-tacle', however, cannot merely be understood as a horizontal, spatial 'visual', as Homi Bhabha calls a concept of time and nation ascribed to Edward Said in the very influential chapter "DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation" of *The Location of Culture* (2008, 199-244). A thorough reading of George Eliot's novel will help to work out the complex functioning of a societal mechanism with its own concept of time that may be mapped with the help of the following constitutive axes: *spec-ulum*, *spec-tacle*, *spec-ulation* and *spec-tre*. To put it in a provocative way: the English upper-class society George Eliot depicts in *Daniel Deronda* is not just the epitome of a "materialistic age" (Bonaparte 1993, 32) and as such the contrast foil for the much more inspirited, spiritual Jewish na-

tion-to-come: to define it as secular cannot give an account of its specificity, since the Jewish nation-to-come is thought as characteristically secular as well; it is characteristically *spec(tac)ular*.

The English upper-class society's spec(tac)ularity sets it off from the Jewish nation-to-come's reverberating historicalness. Thus George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* with its two plotlines centring on Gwendolen and Daniel can be read as a rewriting of Ovid's two-stranded "Narcissus and Echo" myth from his *Metamorphoses*. The elements that connect George Eliot's novel and the Narcissus part of Ovid's rendering of the myth group themselves, as will be shown in detail in the following, around the (un-)fundamental notion of self-referentiality that is associated with unloving indifference, standstill and degeneration. Without having explicitly and extensively established the link to Ovid, many critics' observations seem to support the arguments for an attempt at doing so: Brian Swann, for example, writes that "those characters who stay stage-struck are those who get caught in their own mirror" (1972, 193), Lynn Voskuil calls Gwendolen an "admiring spectator of herself" (2004, 111), Irene Tucker very similarly observes that Gwendolen "is at once author, creation and audience of herself" (2000, 78), Joanne DeMaria links the "success for women" to a necessary "rejection of love" (1990, 407), Brian Swann likens "the stage" to the "morbid condition" of "a world devoid of love" (1972, 199). However, before we direct our attention to Gwendolen Harleth, a very fundamental warning has to be expressed: it is no coincidence that directly following Brian Swann's allusions to Ovid's Narcissus or, to take quite a different example, Hugh Witemeyer's criticism of false "Ovidian idealization" (1979, 54), the problem is, in both cases, very quickly shifted to one of "ego[t]ism" (Swann 1972, 193), (Witemeyer 1979, 55). As stated above, we are interested in a mechanism constitutive for a societal fabric and its concept of time. Thus the link to Ovid is operating and functional on this societal level: any attempt at displacing self-referentiality or a lack of love to one character's idiosyncratic, flawed personality, as egoistic, for example, forecloses these societal workings and covers the implications these workings have on thinking and living gender and nation, just to pick out these two. As we will see later, this movement of foreclosure, of moral attribution to flawed characters is not only promoted by the novel itself, it is even necessary for the self-camouflaging workings of the societal mechanism we are interested in. Consequently, when we now begin by focusing on Gwendolen Harleth, we suggest reading her as an exemplary figure of a specific societal configuration instead of tracing and judging (the morality of) her (decisions) as a person. From this perspective, egoism is not a false but fundamental charac-

ter trait, rather, it is an *effect* of a more (un-)fundamental mechanism that constitutes a society's cohesion.

Gwendolen's specularity

Gwendolen Harleth's story is very much a story of mirror scenes: departing from the naïve narcissistic kiss of her mirror image (18)[1], followed by a scene before the glass that reflects her miming Saint Cecilia at the organ (28), and a dressing scene alluding to Gwendolen's fashioning herself as a Diana (94). The next mirror scene is the first to introduce a faded self-delight explicitly referring to the narcissistic kissing scene (229); this moment of anagnorisis is situated very early in the novel, and is counterbalanced by retarding moments of hope, budding in the preparatory moments before being judged by Klesmer, when Gwendolen associates herself in the mirror with a beautiful Roman statue (251), and another before meeting Grandcourt to seal their marriage (296). The second explicit, distancing reference to the initial kissing scene, when Gwendolen, now being Mrs Grandcourt, no longer feels "inclined to kiss her fortunate image in the glass" (423), without any further retarding moment leads to her final "contempt of appearance" (608) manifested in a scene before the glass where she feels inclined to cover her neck that "showed to advantage" (608). This rough, summarizing sketch of Gwendolen's story of mirror scenes suffices at the moment to show that Gwendolen's self, her subjectivity, and that is also to say her place in society, throughout the whole novel all remain defined by reference to her own image in the mirror, to put it more precisely, in a self-referential way; no matter whether this image triggers delight or contempt, she is trapped, imprisoned in a *specular* mode of subjectivation. All that her awareness of the problems inherent in this mechanism can do is to vary the accompanying emotion – delight, contempt – which resembles rather a superficial moral self-fashioning than it affects the mechanism's workings as such. Abandoning the mirror-relation seems to be impossible for Gwendolen; this is the tragedy of her fate. Regarding this lack of alternative, this non-occurrence of change – and we will have to come back to the question whether her fate can ever be narrated, can ever constitute a 'story' at all – it is no wonder that Deborah Wynne's very positive reading of Gwendolen's post-novelistic future, so to speak, as "*feme*

1 All references only consisting of page numbers stand for *Daniel Deronda* (Eliot 2003 [1876]).

sole with property to control and to enjoy" (2008, 19), has not found significant critical resonance.

A more detailed analysis of the mirror scenes will help to map the diagram at work in this mirror constellation, a map of surprising complexity and unexpected societal scope. The scene we called the narcissistic kissing scene actually consists of two mirror encounters. The first follows directly Gwendolen's reading of her mother's letter telling her about the loss of their fortune:

> She stood motionless for a few minutes, then tossed off her hat and automatically looked in the glass. The coils of her smooth light-brown hair were still in order perfect enough for a ball-room; and as on other nights, Gwendolen might have looked lingeringly at herself for pleasure (surely an allowable indulgence); but now she took no conscious note of her reflected beauty, and simply stared right before her as if she had been jarred by a hateful sound and was waiting for any sign of its cause. (16)

The encounter is an unconscious one. Is it triggered by the disturbance of the established way of Gwendolen's life, i.e. the loss of fortune caused by speculation announced by the letter, or, is the encounter habitual, a routine? Obviously, these two readings do not contradict – Gwendolen's unconscious reassuring look in the mirror is habitual and fundamental at the same time; it is habitually fundamental, fundamental because habitual without rising to the conscious surface and being deployed as a means to overcome some extraordinary crisis that asks for extraordinary, unusual means. The word "automatically" seems to bear exactly these connotations in Eliot's use – if we think of the passage where Daniel "had really taken off the hat automatically" entering the former chapel now stables (420), Gwendolen's "whip, which she had snatched up automatically with her hat" when departing for a tête-à-tête with Grandcourt (134), or Daniel's gaze that makes the servants ask "him automatically, 'What did you say, sir?' when he had been quite silent" (162) – each pointing to a very significant, very telling and fundamental *because* unconscious pattern. This first, unconscious, mirror encounter depicts Gwendolen's prison-that-is-her-home[2], the mechanism from which she will not be able to free herself. The question why she has to free herself at all, has to be left unasked here – she cannot abandon this mechanism, because she constantly constitutes and reassures herself through it. This constitution is not a self-sufficient, private affair – most mirror scenes are either preparatory or 'post'-paratory, all of them imply a social gaze, perhaps

2 Is it significant that the mirror in the hotel room and the mirror in her Offende home are uncannily similar in position: "the long strip of mirror between her two windows" (18) and "the tall mirror between the windows" (28)?

even ‘the purest’ of social gazes. In our example, the “ball-room” is not only present as a ‘standard’ for evaluating the state of hair but also as the only tiny connection that links the unconscious look in the mirror to the devastating news of impeding poverty received just some minutes ago. In short: it is important to note that the look in the mirror is inherently social, and as inherently social the place in front of the mirror is *the* place for self-fashioning.

The mirror scene being unconscious entails a narrator-focalised mode of narration; in the passage cited above, this mode is, on the one hand, used to emphasise the habitual nature of the gaze in the mirror by inserting the iterative pseudo-analepsis: “as on other nights, Gwendolen might have looked lingeringly at herself for pleasure”. It serves, on the other hand, to introduce the narrator-authorised level of moral comment in the form of a mockingly innocent aside/parenthesis directly following the pseudo-analepsis: “(surely an allowable indulgence)”. This comment foreshadows the second, the narcissistic kissing mirror scene, which, as a mere repetition of former delightful mirror encounters, is presented in a doubly dubious moral light: the scene is narrated under the spell of the innocently-mocking narrator’s comment – is this self-delight allowable? Apart from that, the emphasis of the repetitive nature of this self-delight contrasts strongly with the dramatic change of Gwendolen’s (financial, …) situation. Having packed up and prepared for her journey to Offende, Gwendolen encounters her image in the mirror again, this time in a conscious way:

> And happening to be seated sideways before the long strip of mirror between her two windows she turned to look at herself, leaning her elbow on the back of the chair *in an attitude that might have been chosen for her portrait*. It is possible to have a strong self-love without any self-satisfaction, rather with a self-discontent which is the more intense because one’s own little core of egoistic sensibility is a supreme care; but Gwendolen knew nothing of such inward strife. She had a *naïve* delight in her fortunate self, which any but the harshest saintliness will have some indulgence for in a girl *who had every day seen a pleasant reflection of that self in her friends’ flattery as well as in the looking-glass*. And even in this beginning of troubles, while for lack of anything else to do she sat gazing at her image in the growing light, her face gathered a complacency gradual as the cheerfulness of the morning. Her beautiful lips curled into a more and more decided smile, till at last she took off her hat, leaned forward and kissed the cold glass which had looked so warm. How could she believe in sorrow? If it attacked her, she felt the force to crush it, to defy it, or run away from it, as she had done already. Anything seemed more possible than that she could go on bearing miseries, great or small. (18; emph. J.U.)

This passage introduces a notion that will be key for understanding the spec(tac)ular mechanism, a notion that has been underestimated by most of the

critics interested in 'theatricality': portraiture. A lot will have to be said about "Gwendolen's imaginary self-portraits" (Witemeyer 1979, 92); in this particular passage the "might" in the phrase "an attitude that *might* have been chosen for her portrait" unfolds and plays on a fundamental ambivalence of the (self-)portrait: is Gwendolen (consciously) imitating an original gesture?, is the (well-known) conventional gesture elevating her incidental/haphazard body position into a recognisable and therefore (in the form of a portrait) representable entity (=subject) with its own place/rank?, and how does this conventional, recognisable and repeatable gesture come about originally? Questions of iteration, representation and subjectivation arise, questions that Judith Butler prominently posed in *Gender Trouble*, finding an answer with the help of the concept of performatives (2007, 183-193, cf. chapter "From interiority to gender performatives"). However, George Eliot's novel provides us with answers that in some aspects surpass Butler's ground-breaking concept of performatives: The spec(tac)ular mechanism at work in George Eliot's novel is not only historically situated and supplemented by alternative societal mechanisms; the connection with the concept of portraiture also considerably specifies the functioning of this mechanism with regard to its own concept of time.

A second very important observation can be extracted from the phrase, "a pleasant reflection of that self in her friends' flattery as well as in the looking-glass": The mechanism is not only at work whenever a person contemplates its image in a mirror – this is merely, so to speak, the primordial situation; it is mainly, most of the time, functioning through social interaction, using the "friends' flattery", the *spec-tators as "reflection", as spec-ulum*.

Piercing spectators and the indifference of a dead race

Already the Casino scene has shown this mechanism of the spectators as speculum at work in the admiring spectators that turn Gwendolen into the "heroine of the gaming table" (272). However, it has also shown that some special onlookers, in this case Daniel, resist functioning as a mere reflection, "he was of different quality from the human dross around her", "measuring her" from "a region outside and above her" (10). Instead of reflecting back (admiration) what he sees, he judges critically – Elizabeth Sabiston quite rightly identifies judgment as central to Eliot's novel (2007). The novel encodes this distinction or categorisation of onlookers by the help of a whole axiomatic of gazing/looking into the eyes that recurs with stunning frequency, accompanying virtually every encounter taking place in the course of the novel.

On the one hand, we find "eyes that are critical" (409). These are the ones to which Gwendolen "object[s]" (409), for example Deronda's "peculiarity of […] gaze which [she] chose to call 'dreadful'" (186), or Klesmer's "terribly omniscient eyes" (252) looking at her "with the air of a monster impenetrable by beauty" (256). The peculiarity of this type of gaze is emphasised by a comment in a narrator-focalised iterative mode, as we have seen above, a means deployed quite often in the novel on occasions where fundamental traits have to be established with the narrator's authority:

> There was a calm intensity of life and richness of tint in his face that on a sudden gaze from him was rather startling, and often made him seem to have spoken, so that servants and officials asked him automatically, "What did you say, sir?" when he had been quite silent. (162)

A gaze of this kind is "rather startling" in that it inter- and disrupts the self-stabilising specular relation between the (gazing and gazed at) spectators: the specular surface is "pierced" (453) by "calmly penetrating eyes[, n]ot seraphic any longer: thoroughly terrestrial and manly" (186):

> his eyes fixed on her with a look so gravely penetrating that it had a keener edge for her than his ironical smile at her loss – a keener edge than Klesmer's judgment (330).

This peculiar, piercing and penetrating gaze[3] opposes the indifference of the specular relation. Its "keen edge" accuses the spec(tac)ular mechanism, its functioning without a legitimating standard that would lay the foundation for (social) hierarchies and judgments. "That lawlessness, that casting away of all care for justification, suddenly frightened [Gwendolen]" (311). This is a very fundamental threat imposed by the non-specular, penetrating, judging gazes, because what is at stake is the non-foundational foundation that supports Gwendolen's very self, her social positioning in a society that is itself stabilised and held together by that "lawlessness" – by a standard that does not really count as a standard, regarded from the perspective of absolute, foundational law:

> His face had that disturbing kind of form and expression which threatens to affect opinion – as if one's standard were somehow wrong. (Who has not seen men with faces of this corrective power till they frustrated it by speech or action?) (331)

3 The masculine imaginary of a penetrating, piercing gaze is surely significant: what this gaze inter- and disrupts, what it supplements, is the self-referentiality of a sphere that the novel and that criticism has identified as feminine; we will have to come back to the feminine imaginary of "self-embracing" famously thought by Luce Irigaray (1985b, 23) *["s'auto-affecter"(1977, 23)]* and its inherent spec(tac)ularity linking it to George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*.

The 'standards' with which Gwendolen, Henleigh Grandcourt, the Rector, or Lydia Glasher are operating are manifold: Gwendolen's maxim to "amuse herself as best she could" (311) soon gives way to financial and social calculations; Grandcourt seems to oscillate between motives of (social) adornment and pure sadism; Lydia Glasher's actions are informed by a mixture of love, revenge and the dynastic and financial incentives of legitimacy and inheritance for her son. All of these are at best maxims, at least motives or interests; however, they are not justified by an objective, law-like standard. This is marked by the absence of awe:

> Poor Gwendolen had no awe of unmanageable forces in the state of matrimony, but regarded it as altogether a matter of management" (315).

The mechanism of self-referential societal constitution and stabilisation does even demand an abandonment of absolute standards and therefore "a violation of awe" (610) in order to guarantee its own, self-sufficient functioning: "may not a man silence his awe or his love, and take to finding reasons, which others demand?" (502) The moment of calculation that was very prominent in the sketch of maxims/motives/interests rendered above and the play/struggle that takes place between these heterogeneous motives/interests/maxims presupposes the loss of awe in order to set off – balancing reasons has replaced judgment according to absolute standards: "still, that could not but prompt her to look the unwelcome reasons full in the face until she had a little less awe of them" (297). What we encounter here, this deterritorialisation of an absolute (moral, artistic), justifying/legitimating standard, is nothing less than the condition of possibility for speculation. It sets free a play of resonating and contrasting moves that are made possible by the fading reference to transcendent standards: this fading releases the now unbound 'elements' into a horizontal field of competing forces where a new, abstract (capitalist) axiomatic[4] renders these heterogeneous elements computable with each other in a state of universal commodification, or rather valuation – indifferent to any transcendent moral or artistic or religious standard.

The gaze of figures like Daniel, Mordecai, Klesmer, Daniel, Leonora, Kalonymos or Mirah – all of them Jewish – inter- and disrupt this self-sufficient, lawless, play of speculation: Mordecai's "look fixed on an incidental customer seemed eager and questioning" (386), this is because he has "begun to measure

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4 For the concept of axiomatic and of capitalistic deterritorialisation see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: *Anti-Oedipus*, especially the chapter "Capitalist Representation" (2004a, 260-284).

men with a keen glance" (472) according to his prophetic, visionary (i.e. anti-specular) standard. This renders him "a man who, in an emaciated threadbare condition, imposed a certain awe on Deronda" (400) and also "shook Jacob's little frame into awe" (478). The very same happens in Daniel's second encounter with Kalonymos: "he bore the scrutinising look of Kalonymos with a delighted awe" (721). Leonora's resistance to her father's imposition of suffocating Jewish tradition on her finds its limits with respect to the affect of awe: "I had an awe of my father – always I had had an awe of him: it was impossible to help it. I hated to feel awed" (632). In Julius Klesmer's case the awe-evoking standard is not a standard of religious tradition and messianic vocation, it is the (universal) one of art: "'Herr Klesmer smites me with awe; I feel crushed in his presence; my courage all oozes from me'" (103), Gwendolen says and expresses a feeling that, for the same reasons, 'even' Julius Klesmer's wife-to-be, without herself embodying musical genius, is able to provoke, an "awe of her standard" (52), an artistic standard in which Julius Klesmer has taught her to believe and that reveals itself in Miss Arrowpoints "exasperating thoroughness in her musical accomplishment" (52). The affect of awe is linked to a strong belief in the transcendent otherness of a standard, transcendent in that it is beyond the contingency of life, in that it cannot be known by experience but has to be believed in: be it the "awe before the *mysteries* of our human lot" (610), the "belief in a human dignity" (186) and also, quite astonishingly, "sorrow"[5] (188, 701), as the rhetorical question shows that directly follows Gwendolen's kissing the mirror: "How could she believe in sorrow?" (18) In this moment, she shares the gambler's attitude that is paradigmatically embodied by Lapidoth, who, in contrast to Gwendolen, cannot even be disturbed by Mordecai's or Daniel's scrutinising and penetrating gazes: after only a little while living with his son and daughter, he "lost any awe he had felt of his son" (781), and when the opportunity of stealing Daniel's inherited ring presents itself, his "awe of Ezra's imposing friend" (788) is overcome. Gwendolen, as the first scene of gambling and pawning and later also her marriage shows, is a self inherently constituted as a gambler, a speculator; however, she is more susceptible to Klesmer's or Daniel's critical eyes than Lapidoth: "For the moment she felt like a shaken child – shaken out of its wailing into awe" (451). Significantly, the most symbolic and recurring motive of her connection to Daniel and source of her awe is his redeeming of her

5 The notion of sorrow has a very important function in George Eliot's novel: it links the non-historic standard of art to the standard of Jewish tradition and thereby provides the foundation for a legitimate place of the historic Jewish nation amongst the other nations – a historic nation conceptualised and unified as a (sublime) tragedy of sorrow.

inherited necklace, which she later on turns into a symbol for their special relationship:

> [S]he had a confused state of emotion about Deronda – was it wounded pride and resentment, or a certain awe and exceptional trust? It was something vague and yet mastering, which impelled her to this action about the necklace. (276-277)

Whereas these critical gazes impose a break on the common spectacle, and evoke awe by establishing a relation to a superior, "mastering" otherness, the gazes and looks of the specular kind are governed by the constitutive notion of indifference. Gwendolen's "state of emotion about Deronda", her relation toward Deronda described as "unreflecting openness" (771), can be read as the opposite of a specular relation; it is the indifference of the "indifferent spectators" (771) that serves as the condition which makes the reflection, the social relation as speculum, possible. As noted above, indifference is a, perhaps *the*, integral part of the narcissistic spectacle; as a parallel to Ovid's version of the myth, indifference is first of all linked to unlovingness that is the very condition of the fatal self-referentiality. Gwendolen is accused of unlovingness in the narrowest of senses when she rejects Rex's love: "'Be as cross with me as you like – only don't treat me with indifference,' said Rex, imploringly" (81). However, Gwendolen's unlovingness, her indifference is of a wider scope: her very self and 'her world' is constituted by "her indifference to the vastness in which she seemed an exile" (64). Whenever the vastness of "great movements of the world, the larger destinies of mankind" (803), for example "the bewildering vision of [Daniel's] wide-stretching purposes" (803), but also her mother's poverty resulting from the loss of their fortune by speculation, "enter like an earthquake into [her life]" (803), her – spec(tac)ularly constituted – self and world is existentially shattered: "she felt herself reduced to a mere speck" (803). Unlike Daniel, the novel does not assign her access to a different constitution of self, she is not casted for a part of historic, heroic dignity – so all she can do is, again and again, to "recover[ed] her indifference to the vastness" and "[find] again her usual world in which her will was of some avail" (64). The "blank indifference or rare self-mastery" (64) that helped her to "go on playing as if she were indifferent to loss or gain" (11) in the Casino scene makes her resonate with the novel's epitome of "utter indifference" (305), Henleigh Grandcourt. Seemingly paradoxically, it is his being "indifferent to everybody and everything around him" (278) that renders him the perfectly reflecting speculum to recover Gwendolen's spec(tac)ular subjectivity and world; their relation reterritorialises Gwendolen's self that Deronda's "evil eye" (330), the impeding poverty and

Klesmer's "humiliating judgment" (261) had shattered. Gwendolen and Grandcourt's exchange of looks contrast sharply to the disturbing effects of the critical eyes Gwendolen experiences; it is no wonder that Daniel "thought their exchange of looks as cold and official" (414): Grandcourt's "impenetrable gaze" (317), his "long, narrow, impenetrable eyes" (301), are cold like the mirror Gwendolen kissed, they are unloving, indifferent. However, all this has also a reassuring effect, because it is specular, even when the characters suffer from the coldness, the lack of affects:

> His complexion had a faded fairness resembling that of an actress when bare of the artificial white and red; his long narrow grey eyes expressed nothing but indifference. (111)
>
> He looked at her not less than usual; and some of her defiant spirit having come back, she looked full at him in return, not caring – rather preferring – that his eyes had no expression in them. (134)
>
> She was wondering what the effect of looking at him would be on herself rather than on him. (135)

Grandcourt's comparison with "an actress bare of the artificial white and red" has drawn a lot of critical attention. Several aspects add to the ambiguity of this comparison: (1) the gender transgression in the identification with an act*ress*, (2) very prominently, the subtraction of the artifice from the actress: what is an actress, if not the embodiment of artifice, what remains, when this aspect is explicitly excluded from the comparison? The artificial white and red are means to emphasise and facilitate expression, they enable the actress to transport what the promptbook says to the audience. They, for sure, do not give access to the actress's inner life, her "unreflecting openness", however, they open up, they give access to a third and superior entity in the theatrical pragmatic situation: the tragedy or opera or whatever else a playwright or composer has come up with. The artifice is still referential, it points away from itself, it is significant, it is artifice in that it technically and artistically serves as a medium to transport emotions, affects, experiences we know from, or can at least imagine to be part of, the 'real' world: this artifice is representation(-al). Grandcourt is no actress with artificial white and red, because he does not act[6], he does not imitate an authentic other; he is not the mirror *image of* anything, he is the non-signifying, non-representing, the absolutely indifferent, the dead mirror surface itself[7]. He is the

6 In the double sense of action and play-acting!

7 Cf. the description of the dying Narcissus in Ovid's poem: "quae simul adspexit liquefacta rursus in unda,| non tulit ulterius, sed, ut intabescere flavae |igne levi cerae matutinaeque pruinae | sole tepente solent, sic attenuatus amore |liquitur et tecto paulatim

actress bare of acting, he is just the reflecting indifference, the lack of any substantiality that is the condition of possibility for reflection, for spec-ulation, for self-referentiality. In this light, Marc Wohlfahrt's claim that "Grandcourt is one of the first great decadent figures in English literature" (1998, 192), that he "typifies decadence" (1998, 190), will be added some new support that goes along with a slight shift in meaning and relevance: Marc Wohlfahrt reads the comparison discussed above as signifying a "sallow complexion" (1998, 192) that follows the "scientific model of physiological decadence" (1998, 192). This is a very common reading, since, as Richard Dellamora puts it, "[i]n *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot writes for the first time under the impress of what Foucault refers to as 'the perversion-heredity-degenerescence system' that came quickly into place after 1870" (2004, 144). Without any doubt, morphological and semantic layers may be dissected from different lines of the novel – Aamir Mufti emphasises the obvious relations to "later-nineteenth-century discourses on degeneration of the Jews" (2007, 105) – that resonate with the historical, ideological context of its production. However, as the complexity of Grandcourt's comparison with "an actress bare of the artificial white and red" shows, the 'degeneration' depicted in *Daniel Deronda* is not merely to be explained as a physiological feature – it is inherently linked to a societal mechanism, a distinctly 'feminine', a 'theatrical' i.e. spec(ta)cular, and to some extent 'Jewish' – we will have to explain why feminine and 'Jewish' – sphere of fashion, a sphere that is constituting itself, and the subjects moving inside it, by the mechanism we have called narcissistic spectacle. In other words, 'degeneration' is not a given fact, not a defective state of things – it is the anachronistic name given to a relatively new[8] and now frighteningly self-exposing functioning of society. Anachronistic, because 'de-generation' presupposes a linear and holistic time scheme, a unified History – a concept of time that is 'foreign' to the 'degenerative' narcissistic mechanism, a mechanism for which 'change' is synonymous with contingency. To say that 'degeneration' is not a given defective state of things, falling to pieces in decline, however, does not mean to reduce it to an "ideological crisis caused by political modernization" (Hatten 2010, 213); it is not merely an "ideological bankruptcy on the part of the materially oriented British culture" (Jusova

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carpitur igni, | *et neque iam color est mixto candore rubori"* (III, 486-491; emph. J.U.) *["[...]* and nor is the colour still mixed white with red*"]*.

8 Surely, post-feudal society is not 'new' in the late middle of the nineteenth century. However, the enlightenment time scheme of progress suffers a crisis and exposes the frightening rootlessness of a specular, speculating, self-referential society with its own, much less reassuring concept of time that it had previously covered up.

and Reyes 2006, 37) that could be sorted out by injecting some enlivening spiritual ideas. Neither crisis, nor ideological, but reality: the word 'degeneration' designates the anxiety of looking a frightening, because foundationless, standardless self-sustaining societal mechanism in the (dead) face[9]; quite a monster that suddenly emerged fully from the cover of the enlightenment idea of progress – no wonder that its quite desperate name identifies it with enlightenment-turned-upside-down[10]. This mechanism is a reality – it creates and shapes and nourishes social cohesion, the constitution of subjects, economic circulation; it is a sort of societal transcendental.

Significantly, Grandcourt, despite his "sallow complexion" and baldness, is not sickly and dying – a very important contrast to the consumptive Mordecai. On the very contrary, he is associated with sporty, even adventurous bodily activity. Nevertheless, the symptoms the narrator reads from his face are indeed pointing to a certain 'death', if we are to use this word in order to refer to a standstill that is familiar to us from Ovid's Narcissus:

> "A confounded nuisance," drawled Grandcourt. "I hate fellows wanting to howl litanies –acting the greatest bores that have ever existed."
>
> "Well, yes, that's what their romanticism must come to," said Sir Hugo, in a tone of confidential assent – "that is if they carry it out logically."
>
> "I think that way of arguing against a course because it may be ridden down to an absurdity would soon bring life to a *standstill*," said Deronda. "It is not the logic of human action, but of a roasting-jack, that must go on to the last turn when it has been once wound up. We can do nothing safely without some *judgment* as to where we are to stop." (416-417; emph. J.U.)

The logic to which Grandcourt's indifference (to historic structures of buildings) corresponds is inherently mechanical and automatic: it is the logic of a roasting-jack – circular! – and therefore indifferent to (historic, heroic) human action. Without standing still – the roasting-jack is turning and turning and turning – this automatic, inhuman mechanism is dead, inorganic, because (humanly induced) change is foreign to it. In Daniel's eyes, it leads to a standstill, because it is, in the mode of *reductio ad absurdum*, self-sustainingly and self-referentially mirroring and re-mirroring, thus processing a (sceptical) stability of indifference that has abandoned all absolute standards. Consequently, it cannot know a universal historic telos or a binding past or tradition, as it is, in Niklas Luhmann's

9 We will come back to the prophetic picture of the "dead face" (27, 60, 674, 689, 691, 693, 696) that epitomisingly haunts the, so to speak, English plotline.

10 Not progress, but de-gress, the underlying time scheme of unified, teleological History is, falsely, taken as the same.

terms auto-poietic (1984). The spec(tac)ular mechanism as a mechanism lacks the safety of binding, historic and heroic human choice and judgments based on absolute standards. Interestingly, the novel renders this central criticism with astonishing frequency as a problem of "indifferent spectators" (771), or as Mordecai emblematically puts it: "'I am an onlooker, ask no choice or purpose of me[, t]hat is the blasphemy of this time'" (538). It is, however, important not to misread indifference for disinterestedness: Monica Cohen falls into this trap when she observes that "disinterestedness itself is portrayed as a kind of curse visited in the English nation" (1998, 342). On the very contrary, it is the very indifference, the lack of absolute (moral, artistic, religious, traditional), objective goals that frees the orientation on personal, idiosyncratic, situational interests:

> Grandcourt had a delusive mood of observing whatever had an interest for him, which could be surpassed by no sleepy-eyed animal on the watch for prey. (412)

Thus indifference functions as the condition of possibility for interestedness. In order to keep this specular, self-sustaining and self-referential constellation stable, the only constant interest that can be identified is an interest in indifference – or, to put it the other way round, indifference is the interest of/in interests. Grandcourt's "narrow gaze" (328) above all has to make sure that what he is spectating is and stays itself part of this narrow, spec(tac)ular world: "[h]is eyes were still fixed upon her, and she felt her own eyes narrowing under them as if to shut out an entering pain" (427): although Grandcourt's "exacting eyes of a husband" (548) seem to be quite sadistically concerned with "making his marriage answer all the ends he chose" (548), a more fundamental and important concern is to secure indifference. He does not, except his forcing her to wear the diamonds, impose certain features on her being "on the scene as Mrs Grandcourt" (548). What Grandcourt watches over is her not stepping out of her role and thus threatening the mechanism as such. Gwendolen herself seems to have interiorised this precaution that seems to serve as sort of immune system for the mechanism: "And she herself, whatever rebellion might be going on within her, could not have made up her mind to failure in her representation" (548). When she once uses the necklace Daniel had redeemed awkwardly wrapping it round her wrist as a sort of symbol for her alliance with Daniel, this triggers one of the rare incidences of Grandcourt feeling forced to intervene. After having stated his indifference towards Gwendolen's relation to Daniel, he tells her to "'behave as becomes my wife. And not make a spectacle of yourself.'" (447) Although the novel very much dramatizes these moments as struggles for mastery, the conflict that is fought out is more fundamental: paradoxically, making a spectacle in the

way Gwendolen did in the case of the awkward, symbolic necklace, or her convention-breaking morning visit to Mirah, threatens the spec(tac)ular, societal mechanism itself; these 'acts' are threateningly anarchic. Daniel does very explicitly not approve of them, Gwendolen herself, very late in the novel, still holds that "[i]n spite of remorse, it still seemed the worst result of her marriage that she should in any way make a spectacle of herself" (555). Blowing up indifference, the very condition of possibility of spectacle by transgressive spectacle does not seem to be regarded as a viable option by the novel. Anarchic spectacle does not grant any more safety than the mechanism, because it does not refer to any standard, is not historically heroic by any measure.

Daniel's heroic potential, however, his being a "figure of distinction" (406) is repeatedly set off as being a different onlooker: not only in the early Casino scene, where his eye is the only moral "evil eye" amongst all the non-moralistic onlookers, or in the numerous musical recital scenes with an ignorant, non-artistic English upper-class audience, but also in the very important synagogue scene:

> But with the cessation of the devotional sounds and the movement of many *indifferent faces* and vulgar figures before him there darted into his mind the frigid idea that he had probably been alone in his feeling (368; emph. J.U.).

The same happens in the equally important philosophers' club at the *Hand and Banner*. The "familiar men" following Mordecai's enthusiastic speech "embodied the indifference which gave a resistant energy to his speech" (533); instead of joining in and committing themselves to Mordecai's prophetic fervour, they harbour themselves in the specular, self-sufficient, choice- and purposeless, ultimately indifferent position as spectators, which turns his speech into a mere spectacle: "his speech had on them the effect of a dramatic representation, which had some pathos in it, though no practical consequences" (529). Significantly, Mordecai rebukes his listeners' and the contemporary Jews' indifference to their ancestry as "'dead as the wall-paintings of a conjectured race'" (529). Immediately, the comparison reminds us of the narcissistic mechanism we are trying to trace. This impression will intensify when we let Mordecai's rebuke resonate with a seemingly remote sentence, of a completely different context: the spectacle of the new year's ball at the Mallinger's estate where "the old portraits stretching back through generations even to the pre-portraying period, made a piquant line of spectators" (440). Regarded on its own, this "piquant line of spectators" may well evoke a positively connoted notion of tradition, of continuity of history and legacy. However, the portraits as spectators seem very unlikely to cast "evil eyes", they are, despite the continuity and tradition they sig-

nify, exemplary "indifferent spectators": what we encounter here is a good case of what Hugh Witemeyer describes as the ambiguity of the English portrait tradition in George Eliot's late work:

> The knowledge afforded by portraiture grows more uncertain and more complex as Eliot's work progresses, and the significance of the English portrait tradition itself becomes ambiguous. Sometimes the tradition represents an admirable continuity of English history, but at other times it reflects only the vanity of an exclusive and dying aristocracy. (1979, 45)

Literally, the piquant line of spectators "reflects only the vanity of an exclusive [...] aristocracy", it reflects the spectacle of the new year's ball. Mirror and portrait are closely related.

Mirror and portrait – trapped behind the looking-glass

In Gwendolen's narcissistic kissing-the-mirror scene, the mirror evoked portraiture; the piquant line of indifferent portrait-spectators in the ball scene functions as a speculum, uncritically reflecting back what takes place in front of them; these spectators are indeed dead – as is the spectacle they are reflecting. The mirroring connection of spectator and spectacle, the portrait as a mirror unsettles the distinction of the sitter and the portrait, the portrayed and the portrait, the original and the image: what the portrait-spectators view is imitations of themselves: a traditional, (more or less) aristocratic new year's ball, an image of a feudal, aristocratic past in a decidedly capitalistic, post-feudal present – unsettlingly, they view what they themselves '~~are~~'. There are only spectators on both sides of the spectacle: spectators, somehow inhuman, ghostly, because mechanic in their reflecting the past or the future in their haunting an empty, lifeless but stable present. This is what Mordecai's "'dead as the wall-paintings of a conjectured race'" (529) encapsulates: the deadly oscillating mirroring of wall-paintings and the 'race' that painted them. The novel very carefully, almost unnoticeably supports the resonance between the dead wall-paintings of a conjectured race and the portraiture of the English upper-class. The most explicit preparation for a resonance with Mordecai's comparison, which follows later in the novel, contributes the scene where Grandcourt introduces Gwendolen into her new home:

> But there was a brilliant light in the hall – warmth, matting, carpets, *full-length portraits*, Olympian statues, assiduous servants. [...] Gwendolen felt herself being led by Grandcourt along a subtly-scented corridor, into an ante-room where she saw an open doorway sending out a rich glow of light and colour.

> "*These are our dens*," said Grandcourt. "You will like to be quiet here till dinner. We shall dine early."
>
> He pressed her hand to his lips and moved away, more in love than he had ever expected to be.
>
> Gwendolen, yielding up her hat and mantle, threw herself into a chair by the glowing hearth, and *saw herself repeated in glass panels* with all her faint-green satin surroundings. (357-358; emph. J.U.)

This is the second time Grandcourt uses the word 'den'; he has already termed Leubronn, the place of Gwendolen's initial Casino spectacle, the scenery of her first gambling loss, "'a beastly *den* […] – a worse hole than Baden'" (162; emph. J.U.). Interestingly, then, he also uses this word to designate the scenery of Gwendolen's "last great gambling loss", a loss in "another sort of gambling than roulette", i.e. that of her marriage to Grandcourt. The rich description of the scenery summons up what Gwendolen had imagined viewing herself in the mirror: the "full-length portraits" correspond to the "attitude that might have been chosen for her portrait" (18) we know from the narcissistic kissing scene, the "Olympian statues" relate to the mirror scene before meeting Klesmer:

> Then catching the reflection of her movements in the glass panel, she was diverted to the contemplation of the image there and walked toward it. Dressed in black, without a single ornament, and with the warm whiteness of her skin set off between her light-brown coronet of hair and her square-cut bodice, she might have tempted an artist to try again the Roman trick of a statue in black, white, and tawny marble. (251)

The "den" she is now living in uncannily resembles the world behind her former looking-glasses: "if some magic mirror could have shown Gwendolen her actual position, she would have imagined herself moving in it with a glow of triumphant pleasure" (440). However, it is, as Grandcourt ironically terms it, still a "den", and his patronising remark that Gwendolen "will like to be quiet here till dinner" connotes the notion of death that haunts the scenery. The descriptive introductory scene's closing with Gwendolen seeing "herself repeated in glass panels with all her faint-green satin surroundings" serves as a meta-specular key to the scenery's very non-triumphant, rather claustrophobic, imprisoning, den-like character: in the full-length portraits, the Olympian statues, but also in all the luxury and the very theatrical upper-class setting Gwendolen encounters mirror images – of herself: mirror images that compose the very stability of *a role that ~~is~~ what she now ~~is~~*. She *is* now *to be* "on the scene as Mrs Grandcourt" (548), she *is to be* and cannot but *~~be~~* what the mirror images of the indifferent portrait-spectators, the statue-spectators reflect *her to be*. For sure, this encoun-

ter with these mirror images is not at all triumphant, but uncanny[11]: in this particular case however, it is not the re-appearing of repressed, threatening impulses that are responsible for the uncannyness, but the claustrophobic effects of the awareness of being trapped, imprisoned in the ever mirroring and re-mirroring stability of the spec(tac)ular mechanism: "Gwendolen is locked into the tableau of upper-class English marriage" (Voskuil 2004, 113). Her desperate escape for an unconventional morning visit to Mirah confirms these observations of the imprisoning mirrors and mirroring objects in negative terms:

> then she went down, and walked about the large drawing-room like an imprisoned dumb creature, not recognizing herself in the glass panels, not noting any object around her in the painted gilded prison (590).

Even when she is breaking out of her mirrored prison, the focalising narrator marks the ecstasy and exceptionality of the situation by negating twice the characteristic specular relations – thereby fastening Gwendolen tighter and tighter to this mechanism that is mightily present even when, or rather, just because of, being crossed out. From the very beginning of the novel as well as from early times in her life – "having passed two years at a showy school, where on all occasions of display she had been put foremost" (23) – Gwendolen has been associated with, she embodies spec(tac)ularity. Her feeling imprisoned in Grandcourt's dead dens with their wall-paintings functions as a late diegetic proof of the mirror's coldness experienced as early as in the narcissistic mirror-kissing scene. Gwendolen's desperate awareness of being trapped in these uncanny dens of portraits, statues and mirrors echoes and thereby also retroactively establishes her early moment of anagnorisis discussed above. However shocking this awareness might be for Gwendolen, the reader can hardly be surprised by these 'tragic' effects: from the very beginning, the self-delight of the mirror scenes has been accompanied by mocking, ironic and distancingly critical authorial comments; and there is a third level – besides the diegetic (Gwendolen's failure expressed in the plot) and the narrator's authorial comments – a meta-level dramatized in the plot itself, which illuminates and comments on the implications of the narcissistic mechanism. This meta-level works as a sort of 'play-within-a-play'-constellation: Gwendolen's charade- and *tableaux vivants* scenes are meta-'theatrical' and, as meta-'theatrical', a vital comment on the novel as a whole; not only because "Eliot even considered writing Deronda as a play" (Litvak 1992, 160), but rather because these scenes are meta-'spec(tac)ular'.

11 Cf. the notion of triumph in Jacques Lacan's famous mirror-stage (2008); for the concept of the uncanny see Sigmund Freud's influential "Das Unheimliche" (1970 [1919]).

Charades and the fashion of portraits – meta-'spec(tac)ularity'

In one of the chronologically 'earliest' sections of the novel, the scene when Gwendolen arrives at her new 'home' Offende for the first time, the following happens:

> "Mamma, mamma, pray come here!" said Gwendolen, Mrs Davilow having followed slowly in talk with the housekeeper. "Here is an organ. I will be Saint Cecilia: *some one shall paint me as Saint Cecilia*. Jocosa (this was her name for Miss Merry), let down my hair. See, mamma!"
>
> She had thrown off her hat and gloves, and seated herself before the organ in an admirable pose, looking upward; while the submissive and sad Jocosa took out the one comb which fastened the coil of hair, and then shook out the mass till it fell in a smooth light-brown stream far below its owner's slim waist.
>
> Mrs Davilow smiled and said, "*A charming picture*, my dear!" not indifferent to the display of her pet, even in the presence of a housekeeper. (26-27; emph. J.U.)

To say that "Gwendolen had pleased herself with acting Saint Cecilia on her first joyous arrival" (251), as the narrator does in a summarising flash-back, is surely not careful enough to capture the complexity of this scene. As Hugh Witemeyer has prominently shown, what we encounter here is an "imaginary portrait" (1979, 95):

> the imaginary portrait is in the style of Kneller's *Lady Elizabeth Cromwell as Saint Cecilia (1703),* Reynolds's *Mrs. Sheridan as Saint Cecilia* (1775), Reynolds's *Mrs. Billington as Saint Cecilia* (1790) (1979, 95).

Surely, the idea of "acting Saint Cecilia" in order to be portrayed as Saint Cecilia refers to the eighteenth-century English tradition of the heroic, fancy portrait[12]. However, the connections are more entangled than this: Gwendolen's acting Saint Cecilia has to be identifiable as Saint Cecilia, and this is granted by the fancy portrait tradition of being painted as Saint Cecilia that Hugh Witemeyer

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12 Cf. Hugh Witemeyer: "The attitude of Saint Cecilia in society portraiture was familiar enough by 1735 to be an object of Pope's satire in *Moral Essay II*, 'On the Characters of Women':
How many pictures of one Nymph we view,
All how unlike each other, all how true!
………………………………
Let then the Fair one beautifully cry,
In Magdalen's loose hair and lifted eye,
Or drest in smiles of sweet Cecilia shine,
With simp'ring Angels, Palms, and Harps divine;
Whether the Charmer sinner it or saint it,
If folly grows romantic, I must paint it." (1979, 95)

Fig. 1: Sir Joshua Reynolds:
Mrs. Sheridan as Saint Cecilia

lists. Thus Gwendolen's imaginary portrait is not merely "in the style of", her acting Saint Cecilia is *made possible* by fancy portraits imitating, or rather interpreting, and thereby also establishing, an image of Saint Cecilia. Hugh Witemeyer avoids as strong a claim as this for good reasons: his list of paintings does not really give an account of the few significant traits that Gwendolen chooses for her "admirable pose", traits that have to make her identifiable as Saint Cecilia: (1) she seats herself before the organ, (2) she looks upward, (3) her hair is loose and long, (4) there is emphasis on the slim waist. Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Mrs. Sheridan as Saint Cecilia* (fig. 1) depicts Cecilia seated at the organ, however, the pose is not admirable by any means, she does not look upward, her hair is pinned up, the waist covered by her left arm. His *Mrs. Billington as Saint Cecilia* (fig. 2) does not resemble Gwendolen's acting at all, there is no organ, she is standing, looking to the right, her hair untidy, but held by a black ribbon. Sir Godfrey Kneller's *Lady Elizabeth Cromwell as Saint Cecilia* (fig. 3) is standing at the organ, her hair loose, looking upwards to the left. Similar to Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Mrs. Sheridan*, the position of her hands on the keyboard covers the waist with her arm. When we add George Romney's *Mrs. Billington as Saint Cecilia* (fig. 4) to the list, all the traits Gwendolen activates in order to be identifiable as Saint Cecilia can be given an account of: *Mrs Billington* is sitting or leaning, not really before, but sort of next to the organ, which exposes her slim waist, emphasised by a dark ribbon contrasting with the white dress. She is looking upward, which is supported by her left arm and forefinger also pointing upwards. Her curly hair is loose, a white veil attached to it in the back.

Fig. 2: Sir Joshua Reynolds:
Mrs. Billington as Saint Cecilia

Fig. 3: Sir Godfrey Kneller:
Lady Elizabeth Cromwell as Saint Cecilia

Obviously, posing as Saint Cecilia connects the sitters of these portraits; as tautological as this comment may sound, it gives an important background for an analysis of the fancy, heroic portrait as a social practice. With regard to "Reynolds's portraits of women", Edgar Wind distinguishes "three types of model: the courtesan, the lady of fashion, and the actress" (Wind 1986, 42). Our list brings together a lady of fashion, Lady Elizabeth Cromwell, later Lady Southwell, "daughter and heir of Vere Essex, fourth earl of Ardglass (1625-1687)" and wife of Edward Southwell, Member of Parliament (Hayton 2004); Elizabeth Ann Linley [married name Sheridan] (1754-1792) a renown singer[13] (Aspden 2009), and the singer and actress Elizabeth Billington [née Weichsel] (1765-1818) (Cowgill 2004). With her wish that "some one shall paint me as Saint Cecilia" (26) Gwendolen aspires to write her name into the list of sitters of fancy

13 Mirah's and Leonora's stories seem, in parts, be inspired by Elizabeth Sheridan's biography, confer her "constantly delicate state of health" and her being married off into silence (Aspden 2009).

Fig. 4: George Romney:
Mrs. Billington as Saint Cecilia

portraits – a list that, as Edgar Wind's three types show, provides three kinds of spec(tac)ular social subjectivations. All three kinds present themselves as wishes of or possibilities for Gwendolen in the way of the novel. From the very beginning, she dreams of becoming an actress, like Rachel:

> she felt assured that she could act well, and having been once or twice to the Théâtre Français, and also heard her mamma speak of Rachel, her waking dreams and cogitations as to how she would manage her destiny sometimes turned on the question whether she would become an actress like Rachel, thin Jewess. (54)

Significantly, Gwendolen's beauty, her "'better arms than Rachel'" (54) her looks, all that is visual, superficial, unpierced and therefore potentially specular, "'would do for anything'" (54). It is Gwendolen's voice that "'is not so tragic as hers; it is not so deep'" (54). The pitch of a voice cannot really be fashioned – "'I can make it deeper, if I like,' said Gwendolen, *provisionally*" (54; emph. J.U.) – she is quick to insist that "'a higher voice is more tragic: it is more feminine; and the more feminine a woman is, the more tragic it *seems* when she does desperate actions'" (54; emph. J.U.). In the novel's taxonomy, this femininity assigns her to the "sphere of fashion" (53) , which is – despite possible interferences – clearly separated from the rank of talent. Her desperate actions only *seem* tragic, a superficial effect, since these actions as feminine (fashioning) actions are not part of a larger, historic, tragedy. In fact, Gwendolen's dialogue with her mother about Rachel and her own aspirations as a future actress foreshadows Julius Klesmer's judgments on her artistic talent and prospects on stage. The first thing Julius Klesmer dismisses is Gwendolen's voice; it is not only ill trained, even if it had been well taught and practiced, Julius Klesmer doesn't "'think [Gwendolen's] voice would have counted for much in public'" (257), because a beautiful voice is the voice of "'a child that inherits a singing throat from a long line of choristers'" (257) – here we find the historic dimension that is inherently linked with, even

responsible for, the sublime, the tragic, awe. However, Julius Klesmer, like Gwendolen's mother, attests to her exceptional beauty and points to two spec(tac)ular careers we already know from Edgar Wind's typology:

> "But – there are certainly other ideas, other dispositions with which a young lady may take up an art that will bring her before the public. She may rely on the unquestioned power of her *beauty as a passport*. She may desire *to exhibit herself to an admiration* which dispenses with skill. This goes a certain way on the stage: not in music: but on the stage, beauty is taken when there is nothing more commanding to be had. Not without some drilling, however: as I have said before, technicalities have in any case to be mastered. But these excepted, *we have here nothing to do with art*. The woman who takes up this career is not an artist: she is usually one who thinks of entering on a luxurious life by a short and easy road – perhaps by marriage – that is her most brilliant chance, and the rarest." (259-260; emph. J.U.)

Despite all the harsh criticism, the career(s) Julius Klesmer sketches for Gwendolen imply a judgment Gwendolen had been waiting for, a judgment on her beauty: "Being beautiful was after all the condition on which she most needed external testimony" (251). However, Gwendolen cannot envision these careers as courtesan (and/)or marrying into a luxurious life, because they do not go together with her "'desire to be independent'" (260). The 'tragedy', the 'sorrows' of her life are exactly located at this contradiction: beauty *is* Gwendolen's passport, she *does* desire to exhibit herself to an admiration – proved by her desire to be portrayed in the fancy fashion of the eighteenth century – but she desires to be independent as well. This contradiction is constitutive, since the narcissistic spectacle, which the fancy, heroic portrait of the eighteenth century epitomizingly illustrates, has lost the notion of a fixed, individual/personal (social) place granted by a transcendent, cosmological (or artistic) order:

> Perhaps this points to the difference between the function of allegory in a society of commoners and in a court nobility like that of France. There the motifs from classical mythology symbolized a real identification – the person portrayed was transformed by his [sic!] disguise. By contrast there are no mythological portraits of the court of George III, only of ladies belonging to the socially ambitious bourgeoisie or new nobility, who projected themselves into classical roles which had become forced poses. (Wind 1986, 43)

"[T]he king's *parade* [was turned] into a giant *masquerade*" (Saint-Amand and Gage 1994, 391): identification with a cosmological order has been replaced by fashioning (with the help of classical roles and poses) – which means that independence has to make way for a complicated play and struggle of relations and references. Whereas the transcendent order produced a relative independence of

Fig. 5: Sir Josuha Reynolds:
Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse

the entities subjectivated via identification, abandoning transcendent standards creates an absolute immanence of everything virtually relating to everything, of absolute, non-foundational interdependence. The spec(tac)ular mechanism creates stability out of these virtualities by producing resonances, self-referential circles of reference – by fashioning: referring to something else that refers to … that refers to … and finally back to the (non-existent, non temporal) 'beginning', constituting a loop of self-referentiality: mirroring of mirrors, an effect of stability known from the acoustic (or optical) feedback. The *différance* of this circular 'detour' is responsible for the mechanism's productivity: it subjectivates, it temporalizes, it creates an ever-becoming and fluctuating order of immanence that favours the "socially ambitious bourgeoisie or new nobility", because its independence from absolute (hereditary, artistic) standards (of talent) offers great upward (and downward) mobility. Edgar Wind, referring to Sir Joshua Reynolds's portrait of *Mrs Siddons as the Tragic Muse* (fig. 5), gives a great example of the social implications of the *practice* of the fancy portrait, a social practice that is not identifying or representational, but fashioning:

> Significantly, at the time of the painting Mrs Siddons had never yet played the Tragic Muse. Mrs Yates was then the queen of tragedy, with exclusive claims to this symbolic role. […] With his portrait of Mrs Siddons as Tragic Muse, [Reynolds] actively intervened in the life of the stage, for he had no sooner exhibited the picture (1784) than, under its compelling influence, Mrs Siddons played the Tragic Muse (1785). She thrust out her rival Mrs Yates with […] panache (Wind 1986, 44-45).

The fancy portrait of *Mrs Siddons as the Tragic Muse* is not *representing* her acting the Tragic Muse – Mrs Siddons is *fashioned* as the tragic Muse, the dif-

ference being that there is no original, no authentic Mrs Siddons as Tragic Muse. If the portrait is representational at all, it represents representation – implying that the portrait does not primarily refer to the situation, the scenery it depicts, but to the abundant world of representations available in a specific social sphere; it refers to the representation of the queen of the stage in the figure of the Tragic Muse. It mirrors this representation, producing, with the help of Sir Joshua Reynolds's "compelling influence", such a resonating representation that its effects "intervene[d] in the life of the stage". Thus these representations do no merely depict the order of the *being*, do not reflect what one *is*; in a world that is constituted by (self-)fashioning, it is the other way round: one ~~is~~ what one is able to represent, what one is able to fashion oneself with resonances enough to be recognisable, to be accepted as, to achieve a (self-)referentiality powerful enough to establish a stability for this fashioning.

All this is taking place and is, at the same time, exposed and commented on when Gwendolen fashions herself as Saint Cecilia. It is important to note that the novel does not narrate Gwendolen's acting Saint Cecilia in the way of a detailed, elaborate *ekphrasis*; the "charming picture" is, effectively, not treated as a scene or picture of its own. The novel rather renders an allusive sketch that is (scarce) enough to establish, and thus expose, the reference to the well-known tradition of the fancy portrait: the novel's careful selection of few, distinct and recognisable traits sets Gwendolen's imaginary portrait into a mirroring connection with famous and conventional portraits of the eighteenth century – portraits, which are themselves specular, mirroring each other, and thereby establishing a conventionality of Saint Cecilias that can be alluded to.

Edgar Wind in his famous study gives a perfect example of what this mirroring that uncannily takes place between the sitters, painters and paintings, involves. Again he is talking about Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse*:

> Much has been written about the question whether Mrs Siddons's pose in this picture was prescribed by Reynolds or adopted by her spontaneously. Mrs Siddons in her memoirs claims the latter, but all the internal evidence points to the former. The left arm with the elbow supported and the hand pointing upward is surely imitated from Michelangelo's Isaiah, and the right arm hanging limply over the side of the chair recalls his Daniel. If further proof is needed, Reynolds used the same pose with a slight modification for another portrait, this time of a lady of fashion. Is it likely that he would have transferred to someone else a pose Mrs Siddons had invented for herself, a pose that was, so to speak, her copyright? However, any attempt to give a definite answer is not only doomed to failure, but also meaningless, for in the theatre of the time actors as well as painters

> were consciously influenced by classical examples and once an actress had discovered a formula it would be adopted by others, *particularly by women in society*. (1986, 45; emph. J.U.)

Clearly, Gwendolen's "admirable pose" as Saint Cecilia is a formula she adopts from well-known eighteenth-century fancy portraits and their sitters. This mirroring and re-mirroring of poses and formulas is even more obvious in her miming Hermione in the statue scene of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* in an extended *tableau vivant*. As Hugh Witemeyer writes, "[i]n her tableau Gwendolen chooses to imitate the attitude in which Mrs. Siddons and other eighteenth-century actresses regularly played the statue scene in *The Winter's Tale*" (1979, 93-94):

> Hermione, her arm resting on a pillar, was elevated by about six inches, which she counted on as a means of showing her pretty foot and instep, when at the given signal she should advance and descend. (60)

Fig. 6: Johann Zoffany:
Elizabeht Farren as Hermione in the Winters Tale.

Again, the narrator gives us merely a sketch of the scene, which is characterised only by two traits: the resting of the arm on a pillar and the showing of the instep. However, it is exactly these two constitutive traits that make Gwendolen's pose identifiable (as an imitation): it imitates or refers to a tradition that is well documented, and maybe even established, by (fancy) portraits: According to Victor Ieronim Stoichita, it was Miss Farren who "twenty years or so after Garrick's performance […] came up with a rather different solution from Garrick's" (2008, 107): as Johann Zoffany's *Miss Farren in 'The Winter's Tale'* (fig. 6) shows, this involves resting the arm on a pillar and showing the instep in an "ambiguous" (Stoichita 2008, 107) pose.

Another

> [t]wenty years later, in 1802, […] Mrs. Siddons performed one of the most acclaimed Hermiones in the entire history of theatre. […] [N]early all the elements at work in Miss Farren's interpretation have been used here, too, but have been redistributed and, so to speak, toned down, according to the strict rules of triumphant neoclassicism. (Stoichita 2008, 109)

Again it is a painting, *Mrs. Siddons as Hermione*, by Adam Buck, engraved by J. Alais (fig. 7), which allows us to trace the mirroring relations. Importantly, we are not tracing a line of origin that would merely list representations of the one and only original pose: it is Mrs Siddons's famous interpretation of Hermione, her mirroring Mrs Farren's pose that largely accounts for the prominence of the pose she herself has not really invented: the resonance of her imitation and Zoffany's and Buck's pictorial 'imitations of the imitations' produces the lasting and conventional effect of the pose – and enables Gwendolen to connect to this resonance.

Fig. 7: Adam Buck:
Mrs. Siddons in the Role of Hermione

Is "Gwendolen, then […] imitating *pictures*" (Witemeyer 1979, 94; emph. J.U.) or is she "imitating famous *actresses*" (Voskuil 2004, 105; emph. J.U.)? Well, both and neither of the two: she is *participating* in the specular p rocess of fashioning. Grace Kehler is right to draw the connection of Gwendolen to the actress and singer Elizabeth Billington, who, for Grace Kehler, stands for the two primary traits of "[v]oice and industry" (2003, 129) that Gwendolen conspicuously lacks. However, drawing the conclusion that

> Gwendolen's posing, in which music occupies an inconsequential position, misses the point of Billington's career and of Saint Cecilia's function […] [because] she considers singing and acting as aids to displaying her beauty and in her pose as Saint Cecilia there is, ironically, nothing behind the representation (2003, 129)

completely misses the point. Without any doubt, Gwendolen's and Elizabeth Billington's career differs – her lack of industry and voice does not allow Gwendolen to pursue a career as singer and actress. However, it is obviously not the type of career that connects the two, but their aspiration as sitters of fancy portraits: as stated above, fancy portraits are not representational, they function as social practices. Both, Elizabeth Billington and Gwendolen are subjectivated in the spec(tac)ular way, in the way of fashion – this is what their sitting for fancy portraits expresses. Elizabeth Billington following Edgar Wind's type of the actress, Gwendolen, for her lack of voice and industry, has to rely on her beauty and choose between the courtesan or becoming a lady of fashion by marriage. Importantly, as far as the mirroring connections and references of the fancy portrait are concerned, there is no 'behind the representation'. As Brian Swann argues, the novel "discriminates between two kinds of being, or ways of regarding the self, even as a way of contrasting two worlds" (1972, 192): for the kind he calls "Gwendolen's theatricalities" (1972, 192), what we would call narcissistic spectacle – and this is where the fancy portrait plays its part as a social practice – questions of the 'original', the 'authentic', the 'natural', do not make any sense. The immanence of this spec(tac)ularity is a plain surface, without any (transcendental) foundation or (transcendent) standards. Clearly, as Julius Klesmer puts it, "we have here nothing to do with art" (260) – instead, this surface is exclusively about fashioning. With the Hermione *tableau vivant*, the novel stages a social practice that illustrates this fashioning particularly well, the practice of "*tableaux vivants* [being] one of the best known and most popular entertainments in eighteenth-century society" (Wind 1986, 47):

> The *ladies* assumed particular roles for masquerades, and from descriptions we can see that the poses they struck on such occasions had often been copied from the stage. Mary Hamilton, a dilettante whose sketch-book is preserved in the British Museum, drew with great care and application the 'attitudes and costumes' which Mrs Siddons displayed during her appearances in Dublin. These watercolour drawings are designed to capture pose and costume at a particular moment in a given role, but do not attempt to catch the facial expression. The face remains blank, from which we can see that the artist was not so much concerned to render the overall impression the actress made as to capture *those facets which could be of use to her socially – pose and costume*. (Wind 1986, 47; emph. J.U.)

The blank faces of Mary Hamilton's watercolour drawings (fig. 8, fig. 9), her not attempting to catch the facial expression, reminds us of Grandcourt's "complexion [that] had a faded fairness resembling that of an actress when bare of the artificial white and red" (111). Moreover, it is for pose and costume that Gwen-

dolen cares most when thinking of acting and *tableaux vivants*. Even before the concrete idea of a tableau vivant or a specific charade is sprouting, half the household staff helps Gwendolen

> to arrange various dramatic costumes which Gwendolen pleased herself with having in readiness for some future occasions of acting in charades or theatrical pieces, occasions which she meant to bring about by force of will or contrivance (54).

Fig. 8: Lady Mary Hamilton: *Constance, Act III, Sc. III. June 26, 1802. "A Widow Cries, Be Husband to Me Heaven"*

Fig. 9: Lady Mary Hamilton: *Hermione (the Winter's Tale), Act III, Sc.II. July 31, 1802. "Life! I Prise It Not a Straw!"*

The 'extended' Hermione *tableau* is then carefully selected in order to give Gwendolen the occasion to fashion herself, explicitly exposing what Edgar Wind called "those facets which could be of use to her socially – pose and costume" (1986, 47):

> The main source of doubt and retardation had been Gwendolen's desire to appear in her Greek dress. No word for a charade would occur to her either waking or dreaming that suited her purpose of getting a statuesque pose in this favourite costume. (58-59)

The novel is not mean with exposing Gwendolen's obsession with costume and pose; in fact, much of "the irony and controlled satire characteristic of the English parts" (Heller 1990, 92) is created through these meta-spec(tac)ular scenes,

so that it is hardly astonishing the narrator much later in the novel characterises the antechamber as the room "where [Gwendolen] had achieved the wearing of her Greek dress as Hermione" (251). The fact that "Hermione […] was elevated by about six inches, which she counted on as a means of showing her pretty foot and instep" (60) ironically exposes Gwendolen's vain compulsion to be admired and comments on the function of the pose as a mere means of self-fashioning. Importantly, the relation of these scenes to the English upper-class routine is itself cast in an ironic light: this double move exposes these 'theatrical' scenes' ambiguous relation to the "demi-monde in the professional theatre world" (Voskuil 2004, 108) where "[o]nly those marginalized in class-structured England can become professional performers *without* sullying their reputations" (Sabiston 2007, 173) and with which mere "contact" would already be "sullying" (Voskuil 2004, 108). It is Mr Gascoigne whose responsibility as clergyman seems to lie in giving moral legitimacy to this distinction between sullying theatre and drawing-room charades or "tableaux vivants, mode[s] of domesticated theatre that allowed its genteel participants and spectators *to play at theatre* and to avoid sullying contact with the demi-monde in the professional theatre world" (Voskuil 2004, 108; emph. J.U.):

> Besides, Mr Gascoigne prohibited the acting of scenes from plays: he usually protested against the notion that an amusement which was fitting for every one else was unfitting for a clergyman; but he would not in this matter overstep the line of decorum as drawn in that part of Wessex, which did not exclude his sanction of the young people's acting charades in his sister-in-law's house – a very different affair from private theatricals in the full sense of the word. (59)

This difference between acting charades and private theatricals in the full sense is then ironically charged with Aristotelian *and* Platonic notions, establishing an ambiguous interplay leading both notions *ad absurdum*:

> considering that it was an imitation of acting, was likely to be successful, since we know from ancient fable that an imitation may have more chance of success than the original. (60)

The interplay exploits and distorts Aristotle's and Plato's different evaluations of mimesis that are most prominently formulated in Aristotle's *Poetics* and Plato's *Republic*. The phrase "imitation of acting" plays with the double meaning of 'acting' as (1) 'doing something' and (2) 'play-acting': it can be read as a translation of Aristotle's definition of tragedy as "*μίμησις πράξεως*" (1451b) – Aristotle contrasting and preferring the imitation of actions to imitation of characters. However, this Aristotelian reading is haunted by the second, the theatrical denotation of 'acting' that is dominant in this scene, as not only the (meta-)

theatrical context but also the explanation shows that concludes the sentence quoted above. This notion of 'play-acting' unhinges the complete argumentation: imitation of (play-)acting being imitation of imitation – or (play-)acting (play-)acting – introduces the idea of (self-referential) estrangement from the original, the essence, the idea – the estrangement that is so vehemently criticised in the tenth book of Plato's *Republic*. Concluding that imitation *as* "imitation may have more chance of success than the original" wittily misreads Aristotle's concept of mimesis so that it turns Plato's concept of mimesis upside down. The narrator leaves out Aristotle's standards of *τὸ εἰκος* (the probable) and *τὸ ἀναγκαῖον* (the necessary) (1451b) which misleadingly and ironically approximates Aristotle's thinking of mimesis with an inversion of Plato's concept and evaluation of mimesis: Plato's (or rather Socrates's) hierarchy of original over imitation, of truth/the idea over the painter's mere "*φαντάσματος* [...] *μίμησις*" (598b) (imitation of appearance) is overthrown, imitation *as imitation* (and not as more true to *εἰκος* and *ἀναγκαῖον*) *may* have more chance of success. Thus what we encounter is a perfect example of the spec(tac)ular mechanism: imitation *seems* to be the representation of an original; however, the imitation involved in this mechanism is imitation of imitation, the original, the authentic, does not play any role, it appears just *as an effect*, as representation's Other. The self-referential loop that constitutes itself in this mirroring of mirroring defies all standards, as the exclusion of, or rather, the indifference to Aristotle's standards of *τὸ εἰκος* and *τὸ αναγκαῖον* has shown. The way to the (pseudo-)Aristotelian conclusion that imitation may have more success than the original – and thus that imitation of imitation may have more success than mere imitation of 'reality' – exposes the mocking effects of this commentary. These critical, parodic effects rely on an implicit (Platonic or phonocentristic) standard that favours presence over absence, essence over representation – it is Plato's authority or, as Jacques Derrida puts it, western philosophy's defiance of writing[14], that guarantees this comment's parody. With regard to Mr Gascoigne's moral distinction of sullying theatre and the harmless drawing room charades the absurdity of the argument exposes itself: the fact that makes the domestic "play[ing] at theatre" (Voskuil 2004, 108) morally superior, "more successful" than theatre "in the full sense", is its being an *imitation* of theatre, not the original. However, it is, from

14 Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*: "writing, the letter, the sensible inscription, has always been considered by Western tradition as the body and matter external to the spirit, to breath, to speech, and to the logos. And the problem of soul and body is no doubt derived from the problem of writing from which it seems – conversely – to borrow its metaphors." (1997, 35)

a Platonic perspective, exactly theatre's constitutive trait of *imitating* (appearance, illusion, representations) that accounts for its corruption. Thus, leading Aristotle *ad absurdum* with Plato, or vice versa, imitation is at once healing and impairing – a *pharmakon* that is not affirmed and applauded as it is in Jacques Derrida's writings[15], but read as a fatal contradiction, thus ridiculed and used as an index of a spec(tac)ular society's/class's corruption. This impression even intensifies when we consider the acting of charades or *tableaux vivants* as social practices: the question of who is imitating whom cannot find a stable answer, the search for the original – is it the theatre, or the 'social reality' of the drawing room, or even the imaginary realm of "the classics" that is the proper home of/for the admired pose or dress? – is a constitutively endless one. A search that surpasses, trans-passes and thereby destabilises distinctions, the order of representations and things, of imitations and 'originals' – expression of a deterritorialisation that has abandoned the being "well rooted in some spot of a native land" which the narrator thinks so important for a "human life" (22). Questions of proper place and home have become involved in an unpredictable process. This process is a process of mirroring, of (self-)fashioning[16] that does not merely imitate, copy an 'original', design a mask and hide the unwanted 'own', 'essential' interiority behind this external cover – this is how the western tradition of thinking has metaphorised "writing, the letter, the sensible inscription, […] artificial exteriority" as "'clothing'" (Derrida 1997, 35). The narcissistic fashioning that is at the heart of Gwendolen's subjectivation is not exterior to some more essential interiority; there is no outside or inside of the text(ile)[17], so to speak – the "face remains blank" (Wind 1986, 47), costume and everyday dress coincide:

> Meanwhile the wet days before Christmas were passed pleasantly in the preparation of costumes, Greek, Oriental, and Composite, in which Gwendolen attitudinized and speechified before a domestic audience, including even the housekeeper, who was once pressed into it that she might swell the notes of applause; but having shown herself unworthy by observing that Miss Harleth looked far

15 Cf. "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* (1981).

16 For a brilliant conceptual explication of the complex of mirroring, fashioning and repetition without any essence or standard, see Gilles Deleuze's . *Difference and Repetition*, where he speaks of "clothed repetition, which forms itself in clothing itself, in masking and disguising itself" (2004a, 27; translation corr. J.U.) *["répétition vêtue, qui se forme elle-même en se vêtant, en se masquant, en se déguisant" (1968, 37)]* and establishes a connection to Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, as we will do in the first section of the second chapter.

17 Cf. "*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte.*" in Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (1967, 227).

> more like a queen in her own dress than in that baggy thing with her arms all bare, she was not invited a second time. (54)

As much as the housekeeper's comment ironises Gwendolen's vain charading, it also destabilises the distinction between charade and 'reality'[18]. Similar in effect to the punning Aristotelian comment, the novel mocks its English characters' attempts at "separation of the theatrical from the familial" (Kehler 2003, 110), at drawing a distinction between 'social reality' and the theatre – it in fact establishes the "sullying contact" (Voskuil 2004, 108) of the English upper-class's subjectivating societal mechanism with morally corrupt 'theatre'. Exposing and elaborating on this contact passes (harsh) criticism on the 'English' upper-class's way of "regarding the self" (Swann 1972, 192) and the cohesion of its world. The fact that "Gwendolen […] is […] seen as a theatrical figure in performing her social role as the wife of an aristocrat and is appreciated as an aesthetic spectacle" (Rignall 2006, 149) renders her morally dubious, since the stage is regarded "as seducer of true worth, and venial exploiter of the animal will" (Swann 1972, 194). This *seduction* of true worth is central to the corruption the novel tries to critically expose: "Gwendolen is initiated into" "a society without positive or fertile values" (Swann 1972, 195), a society without absolute moral, artistic, religious standards, a society where judgments cannot have true worth. Gwendolen "cannot distinguish what is play-acting and what is real" (Swann 1972, 194), because she "is enmeshed in a world" (Swann 1972, 194) that does not know this fundamental distinction, has no notion of anything real, essential, true behind the potentially false, fake appearances: "mere performance replacing morally, intellectually, or emotionally informed actions" (Kehler 2003, 112). This configuration definitely "elevates the self-referential over the common good" (Kehler 2003, 116); however, the moralising undertone of this statement is itself based on a problematic distinction: from the perspective of the narcissistic spectacle, the "common good" is just one classical standard, a quite empty one, that serves as an absolute, universal, binding and legitimating foundation of (ethically, socially, strategically) *subjecting* acting. It is only from the perspective of ethical acting based on the 'common good' – whatever that may be – that self-referentiality as not being subjected to this standard is regarded as good acting's bad, mean, un-ethical other. Without any doubt, the novel rejects this mode of regarding the self, of individuation, of a society's constitution and cohesion – it is, however, important that this rejection is strategic (and nostal-

18 A destabilisation that, at least since Ervin Goffman's epochal *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), has become a common place in contemporary theory.

gic), it is a decision for another mode of regarding self and world. It is strategic, because by definition there is no absolute, universal standard that would account for the true worth of an objective judgment between these modes – universal standards and judgment belonging only to one mode, obviously the one favoured by the novel.

Death – and the 'female' 'Jewish' imaginary of fashioning

The narcissism the novel critically exposes is not, as Gertrude Himmelfarb claims, "a narcissism that comes from a spurious sense of identity, a self that is entirely self-contained, self-fashioned, self-willed – and ultimately, self-destructive" (2009, 78). On the very contrary, it is the self that has to be produced, to be constituted in a complex mirroring of mirroring. The relations of poses, dresses, paintings and the mirroring spectators are *primary*, composing a captivating "wirework of social forms" (53): *the self is an effect of this societal narcissism* – and not the other way round. Read in this light, '(self-)fashioned' comes to mean the opposite of 'self-contained': fashioning as fashioning is not at all self-sufficient, self-identical – it composes itself as a play of differences. Thus, the self-destruction (of a spurious sense of identity, of a self-willed, self-contained self) Gertrude Himmelfarb speaks of is an essential trait of fashioning – one may even say that fashioning ~~is~~ exactly this self-destruction. In any case, death does not happen to fashioning narcissism – as a moral punishment … – death is constitutively inherent:

> "Music, awake her, strike!" said Paulina (Mrs Davilow, who, by special entreaty, had consented to take the part in a white burnous and hood).
>
> Herr Klesmer, who had been good-natured enough to seat himself at the piano, struck a thunderous chord – but in the same instant, and before Hermione had put forth her foot, the movable panel, which was on a line with the piano, flew open on the right opposite the stage and disclosed the picture of the dead face and the fleeing figure, brought out in pale definiteness by the position of the wax-lights. Every one was startled, but all eyes in the act of turning toward the open panel were recalled by a *piercing cry* from Gwendolen, who stood without change of attitude, but with a change of expression that was terrifying in its terror. She looked like a statue into which a soul of Fear had entered: *her pallid lips were parted*; her eyes, usually narrowed under their long lashes, were dilated and fixed. […]
>
> "A magnificent bit of plastik that!" said Klesmer to Miss Arrowpoint. (60-61; emph. J.U.)

In his monumental *Arcades Project* Walter Benjamin calls death fashion's "clerk" (2002, 62) *["ihr langer, flegelhafter Kommis" (1983, 111)],*

> [f]or fashion was never anything other than the parody of the motley cadaver, provocation of death through the woman, and bitter colloquy with decay whispered between shrill bursts of mechanical laughter. That is fashion. And that is why she changes so quickly; she titillates death and is already something different, something new, as he casts about to crush her (2002, 63).
>
> *[Denn nie war Mode anderes als Parodie der bunten Leiche, Provokation des Todes durch das Weib und zwischen geller memorierter Lache bitter geflüsterte Zwiesprach mit der Verwesung, Das ist Mode. Darum wechselt sie so geschwinde; kitzelt den Tod und ist schon wieder eine andere, neue, wenn er nach ihr sich umsieht, um sie zu schlagen (1983, 111)].*

It is exactly this moment of 'fashion witnessing death casting about to crush her' that the novel stages as the decisive *peripeteia* of its 'play-within-a-play' constellation: the *memento mori* is to be related to fashion's inherent reference to, its titillation of death, its clerk, that Walter Benjamin so brilliantly and eloquently puts into language. Significantly, the *memento mori* is triggered, when the lifeless, inorganic statue is to come to life: it exposes the impossibility of a transgression of fashion, the transgression from the inorganic to the organic, from death to life, the impossibility of a self-willed, self-contained, a *living* self 'beneath' the cover of cloth – it is and has to *remain* death that "serves as a mannequin himself" (Benjamin 2002, 63). Gwendolen's involuntary "piercing cry" is one of the very rare moments where she penetrates the surface of fashioning – still as a statue, and not to surpass her narcissistic self towards a self of an other mode. However, this cry is an index of the spec(tac)ular mechanism's 'inhuman', 'uninspired', fetishistic functioning, an index that comes from somewhere else, from 'a beyond' the narcissistic surface. This 'beyond' is contrasted to the surface of fashion in terms of sexual imaginary: the cry is "piercing". We have already encountered this semantic field of penetration when analysing the indifference of the specular spectators' looks and setting it off from non- or anti-superficial penetrating or piercing looks. The novel functionalises this obviously phallic (male, masculine) imaginary to disturb and destroy, to subject, to "pierce" the narcissistic mechanism-as-surface. Consequently, the novel's recourse to the semantic field of 'piercing' and 'penetration' is as obsessive as its preoccupation with mirrors: Daniel's "calmly penetrating eyes" show his reconciling "refinement with force" (186) and produce "a look so gravely penetrating that it had […] a keener edge than Klesmer's judgment" (330); Gwendolen is again and again "pierced, as she had been by his face of sorrow"

"her eyes dilated, her lips parted" (453, 694), mostly by Daniel's "opinion which has pierced even to the joints and marrow" (763); Kalonymos's "small penetrating eyes which glittered like black gems" (720) are "the piercing eyes of [the] questioner" (725); Mordecai mainly pierces with "passionate, penetrative speech" (510) as the "very sharpness with which these words penetrated Deronda" (502) shows; with the exception of Leonora, whose "eyes were piercing" (624), female characters seem to be able to penetrate mainly through cries: Mordecai's mother's "'letter was a piercing cry'" (542); very similar to Gwendolen's *memento mori* experience, Mirah's "sadness […] pierced [Daniel] like a cry from a small dumb creature in fear" (193) in their first encounter at the Thames; a very interesting meta-poetic comment even – but not very surprisingly – aligns the novel's own enterprise with penetration, since it is "the force of imagination that pierces or exalts the solid fact" (381).

Read in the light of this phallic imaginary of piercing and penetration, Gwendolen's *memento mori* moment stages the (phallic) penetration of a female (non-phallic), self-referential imaginary, the phallic imaginary's subjection of the female imaginary of spec(tac)ular fashioning:

> Everyone was startled, but all eyes […] were recalled by a *piercing cry* from Gwendolen, who stood without change of attitude, but with a change of expression that was terrifying in its terror. She looked like a statue *into* which a *soul* of Fear had *entered*: *her pallid lips were parted*; her eyes, usually narrowed under their long lashes, were dilated and fixed. (61; emph. J.U.)

Luce Irigaray describes this scene of penetration in very similar words, when what she calls the feminine "autoeroticism is disrupted by a violent break-in: the brutal separation of the two lips by a violating penis" (1985b, 24) *["Le suspens de cet auto-érotisme s'opère dans l'effraction violente : l'écartement brutal de ces deux lèvres par un pénis violeur" (1977, 24)]*:

> The *one* of form, of the individual, of the (male) sexual organ, of the proper name, of the proper meaning … supplants, while separating and dividing that contact of *at least two* (lips) which keeps woman in touch with herself, but without any possibility of distinguishing what is touching from what is touched. (Irigaray 1985b, 26)
>
> *[Le* un *de la forme, de l'individu, du sexe, du nom propre, du sens propre… supplante, en écartant et divisant, ce toucher d'*au moins deux *(lèvres) qui maintient la femme en contact avec elle-même, mais sans discrimination possible de ce qui se touche. (1977, 26)]*

The impossibility of "distinguishing what is touching from what is touched" reminds us very much of the vain search for the original and the copy in the mir-

roring of mirroring analysed above with the help of fancy portraits and its poses. However, in order to prevent confusion, we should hasten to add that Luce Irigaray uses the notion of mirroring very differently from the way we do: mirroring for her illustrates a process that starts from – or rather, by way of producing mirrored and thus inferior, substandard others, a process that produces – a (seemingly) self-identical, self-contained *male* self[19]. In other words, her concept of mirroring is operating on the basis of the difference between the original and its copy – whereas our notion of mirroring of mirroring – a mirroring of second order, so to speak – exactly abandons this basic distinction of original and copy, replacing this distinction of identity and other with self-reference. Consequently, in Luce Irigaray's conceptual apparatus "masculine specula(riza)tion" (1985b, 30) *["spécula(risa)tion masculine" (1977, 29)]* characterises the male imaginary, whereas our notion of the narcissistic, spec(tac)ular mechanism shares considerable traits with Luce Irigaray's female imaginary. Her "self-embracing" (1985b, 23) *["s'auto-affecter" (1977, 23)]* autoeroticism resonates strikingly with the *non-phallic self-referentiality* we discovered at the heart of the novel's processes of fashioning: "this incompleteness of form which allows her organ to touch itself over and over again, indefinitely, by itself" (Irigaray 1985b, 26) *["cette incomplétude de forme de son sexe qui fait qu'il se re-touche indéfiniment lui-même" (1977, 26)]*. In George Eliot's novel the narcissistic spectacle is clearly coded as a female, a surficial imaginary of undecidability, a hymen[20] that the novel opts to have pierced, destroyed, subjected by a male, unifying imaginary: "To exalt, here, is as phallocentric an act as to pierce. Through Klesmer and Mordecai alike, the novel shows how to enforce a piercing exaltation of a distressingly feminized culture" (Litvak 1992, 182). Joseph Litvak identifies "contaminating (female) theatricality" (Litvak 1992, 183) as the main trait of that "distressingly feminized culture"; with this rather suspicious notion, he does not only try to capture "the virtually impossible position in which Victorian women had been placed, [...] the oppressive strictures of [a] culture, the prescribed theatricality" (Voskuil 2004, 111), a culture that seems to be dominated by the "underlying scam of theatricality inherent in the system of courtship and marriage" (Cho 2006, 186). As his notion of 'contamination' may already hint at – a notion that is not at all motivated by anything in the novel – Joseph Litvak

19 Cf. Luce Irigaray's epochal *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1985a). – Sarah Gates analyses Daniel's constitution of self in an Irigarayan way, using Mirah as a speculum: "Once he rescues her, she continues to be the perfect mirror (as her name, "Mirah" suggests) before which his masculine identity can constitute itself." (2001, 715)

20 Cf. Jacques Derrida's "The Double Session" in *Dissemination* (1981, 187-316).

links this female imaginary of theatricality with another, heavily stereotyped imaginary: *a* Jewish one. His analysis of the novel distinguishes a "good (virilising) Jewish communication with the English from bad (feminizing) Jewish communication with the English" (Litvak 1992, 183). Eileen Cleere has traced the novel's treatment of stereotypes and its central distinction of (spiritual) refinement and (commercially alienated) fat/grease concluding that "Gwendolen absorbs the ideological contaminations of usury so that Daniel can be cleansed" (Cleere 2004, 151). As Eileen Cleere convincingly shows, the novel invests in anti-Semitic stereotypes to denounce a societal configuration that is not essentially Jewish, as Daniel cannot distinguish the (heavily stereotyped) pawnbroker Ezra Cohen's "vulgarity of soul from that of a prosperous pink-and-white huckster of the purest English lineage" (391). It is therefore important not to transfer the obviously problematic anti-Semitic valuations to the analysis of the societal configuration the novel presents: speaking of "sullying contact" (Voskuil 2004), "contaminating (female) theatricality" (Litvak 1992, 191), the "English culture, a culture already infected by bad Jewishness" (Litvak 1992, 182), or "ideological contaminations" that can and have to be "cleansed" (Cleere 2004, 151) does not only uncritically and probably involuntarily use and proliferate an anti-Semitic imaginary, but also forecloses a thorough analysis of the 'theatrical' configuration we encounter in the novel. First of all, the novel does not display the process of a 'good', 'healthy' state's decay as the quoted critics' semantics of contamination and infection presuppose: the novel does not at all suggest that a sickness coming from outside has infected a healthy English society and culture. On the very contrary, it is the remedy that seems to have to come from an outside (as well as from the inside, at the same time, as we will see). However, the novel does identify the spec(tac)ular functioning of the English (upper-class) society with notions of 'Jewishness'. As Aamir Mufti writes, in the novel

> the life of performance and the stage is both linked to the Jews – Klesmer, Lapidoth, Leonora, and the young Daniel [not to forget Mirah!] – and at the same time is the site of the potential dissolution of their traditional communality. *Being Jewish in the modern world entails something rather like acting* (2007, 104; emph. J.U.).

Lynn Voskuil underlines the importance of this stereotypical commonplace for and in the novel:

> Jews remain largely invisible in that Christian world and become visible only (so to speak) as "stage Jews." These relations between Judaism and display are longstanding, and Mirah alludes to them in her life story […], Alcharisi likewise

> draws on the linked discourses of Jewishness and theatricality (Voskuil 2004, 124).

However, is it really the "*[b]eing Jewish* in the modern world" (Mufti 2007, 104; emph. J.U.) that entails acting, or rather the *being part of the modern world* that entails '~~being~~ Jewish', thus acting? In other words, does the 'Jewish acting' happen to a healthy world – or is 'Jewish acting' the epitome of a modern world, a society and culture inherently 'theatrical', or, as we would rather say, spec(tac)ular? Is this modern anti-Semitism directed against something foreign, something other, something exotic, or, in an uncanny fashion, against the very core, the very own of its modern society's functioning? Is the performative contradiction of a self-referential critique camouflaged by directing the criticism at an 'Other' whose scapegoating function[21] is to source the very own, constitutive problems out, in order to 'de-paradoxicalise' and naturalise, essentialise, substantialise a self-referentially constituted society?

These are the questions that the novel's "Nietzscheanic constellation" *["nietzscheanische[] Konstellation" (Wagner 2000, 511)]* raises. The novel does indeed analyse the "contemporary power structures" *["gegenwärtige[n] Machtverhältnisse" (2000, 511)]*; however, it is important to note that the novel does not "dissect the aggressive potential of anti-Semitism and misogyny" *["das aggressive Potential von Antisemitismus und Misogynie freilegen" (2000, 511)]* in a critical move, it rather employs anti-Semitic and misogynist resentments to condemn the contemporary power structures diagnosed as working according to a female, Jewish imaginary. We should hasten to add that George Eliot's complex novel does not impose this judgment as rigorously and in as black and white a fashion as Joseph Litvak's misogynist distinction of "good (virilizing)" and "bad (feminizing)" (Litvak 1992, 183) may suggest. Especially Leonora, aka the Alcharisi, "George Eliot's only portrait of a feminist figure" (Heller 1983, 39), her "phenomenal feminist success" (Cho 2006, 185), produces so much resistance to this easy categorisation in good (virilising) and bad (feminizing) that the novel feels urged to characterise her, the epitome of the spec(tac)ularly subjectivated selves, as unloving mother and let her die from a mysterious sickness in a slow, suffering manner that even to her looks like a punishment imposed on her by god *him*self. Thus to further enhance our understanding of this *complex* constellation of a female, 'Jewish', modern? imaginary,

21 Cf. René Girard's *Violence and the Sacred* (2005) and *The Scapegoat* (1986). – Sarah Gates identifies Gwendolen (2001, 720) and Mirah (2001, 700) as scapegoats that serve as conditions of possibility for the "forward march of Daniel's monumental vocation" (2001, 720).

we should follow Karl Wagner's (2000, 510) and Joseph Litvak's (1992, 184) reference to Friedrich Nietzsche's aphorism titled "361: *On the problem of the actor*" *["361.* Vom Probleme des Schauspielers*"]* from *The Gay Science* (2001, 225-226) *[*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft *(1988, 608-609)]*. This aphorism states in the very beginning that its subject is *not* "*only* […] the actor" (2001, 226) *["*nur *der Schauspieler an sich" (1988, 608)]*, the problem of the actor promises to open up an approach to the "dangerous concept of the 'artist'" (2001, 225) *["gefährlichen Begriff 'Künstler'" (1988, 608)]*. This is an important hint, because Friedrich Nietzsche's obvious, affirmative interest in the concept of the artist should prevent us from reading the following as mere anti-Semitic, misogynist tirades that condemn what is spoken about. Friedrich Nietzsche uses a very interesting fashion/clothing metaphor to describe the genealogy of the "instinct" (2001, 226) *["Instinkt" (1988, 608)]* of the actor:

> always readapting to new circumstances, always having to act and pose differently until they slowly learned to turn their coats with *every* wind and thus almost turned into coats themselves – and masters of an art which they have fully assimilated so that it is an integral part of themselves, that part of perpetually playing at self-concealment (2001, 226)
>
> *[[sich] auf neue Umstände immer neu einzurichten, [sich] immer wieder anders zu geben und zu stellen […], befähigt allmählich, den Mantel nach* jedem *Winde zu hängen und dadurch fast zum Mantel werdend, als Meister jener einverleibten und eingefleischten Kunst des ewigen Verstecken-Spielens (Nietzsche 1988, 608).]*

Zum-Mantel-Werden, becoming-cloak, as the mastery of an embodied and incarnated *["eingefleischt"]* art – it is not holy spirit, but "the play at self-concealment" *["Verstecken-Spielen[s]"]* with clothing = fashion = playacting that incarnates itself! – seems to be a brilliant phrasing of what we have described as the fashioning of the spec(tac)ular mechanism – there is no outside or inside of the text(ile). Moreover, it is 'Jews' and 'women' who are the "masters of an art […] of perpetually play at self-concealment" *["Meister jener einverleibten und eingefleischten Kunst des ewigen Verstecken-Spielens"]*:

> what good actor today is *not* – a Jew? […]
>
> Finally, *women*: consider the whole history of women – *mustn't* they be actresses first and foremost? (2001, 226)
>
> *[welcher gute Schauspieler ist heute* nicht *– Jude? […]*
>
> *Endlich die* Frauen*: man denke über die ganze Geschichte der Frauen nach, –* müssen *sie nicht zu allererst und -oberst Schauspielerinnen sein? (Nietzsche 1988, 609)]*

In his (re)reading of this aphorism in *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* Jacques Derrida very carefully distinguishes what he regards as an "eulogy of play-acting" from condemnation of 'woman' "from the man's point of view":

> She plays at dissimulation, at ornamentation, deceit, artifice, at an artist's philosophy. Hers is an affirmative power. And if she continues to be condemned, it is only from the man's point of view where she repudiates that affirmative power and, *in her specular reflection of that foolish dogmatism* that she provoked, belies her belief in truth. In its eulogy of play-acting, of the "delight in dissimulation" (*die Lust an der Verstellung*), of histrionics and of the "dangerous concept of 'artist'," *Joyful Wisdom* ranks both Jews and women among those expert mountebanks, the artists. That Jews and women should be thus associated does not seem at all insignificant and the fact that Nietzsche often considers them in parallel roles might in fact be related to the motif of castration and simulacrum for which circumcision is the mark, indeed the name of the mark. (Derrida 1979, 67-69; emph. J.U.)

And indeed, in the wake of Cynthia Chase's influent deconstructive reading of *Daniel Deronda*, titled "The Decomposition of the Elephants: Double-Reading Daniel Deronda" (1978), the motif of "unspeakable circumcision" (Carroll 1999, 109) has guided many very interesting re-readings of the novel: mostly of a feminist point of view, observing the play of a "[s]ubversive erotics of circumcision" (Carpenter 1988, 15) constructing "a bond between women" (Carpenter 1988, 3), identifying circumcision as one of the "[t]wo *secrets*" (Herzog 2005, 37) of the novel, but also readings interested in the construction of 'national' identities, as Brian Cheyette who emphasises the ambiguity and "ambivalence" (1997, 114) of circumcision against Cynthia Chase, an argument similar to Daniel Novak's reading of circumcision as "the mark that is not a mark – […] rather than the mark of racial *otherness*, it is a mark of the Jew's *referential* otherness, by which the Jew represents something other than himself or herself" (2004, 73-74). What connects all these readings is that they take root inside, or rather, in the mode of, the female imaginary – they follow Jacques Derrida (and Friedrich Nietzsche?) in *affirming* play-acting, fashioning, a mode of subjectivation that works in a specifically female, self-referential way:

> woman is recognized and affirmed as an affirmative power, a dissimulatress, an artist, a dionysiac. And no longer is it man who affirms her. She affirms herself, in and of herself in man (Derrida 1979, 97).

These readings do not subscribe to the piercing, male "foolish [?] dogmatism" that is indeed provoked by the novel's exposition of the narcissistic spectacle. They attempt to take up the mirroring play with mirrors, with imitations of imitations, take, in contrast to Daniel, their strategic stance immanent to the

spec(tac)ular mechanism, because they identify with possibilities that the novel unfolds and cannot really control:

> Notably, *Daniel Deronda* is not able to incorporate or absorb Gwendolen seamlessly into its denouement. She remains as a glimpse of another possibility, of the existence of chaotic desires, of a discontinuous sense of self, of the internal splits and ruptures that disrupt or refuse the production of a coherent, cohesive national identification. (Lesjak 1996, 36)

Lynn Voskuil puts this strategic option – especially for women – in the historical context of the novel's time:

> While women might be something of a spectacle in Victorian culture, displaying themselves was often (paradoxically) the only means by which they could claim agency and wield power in a culture that required them to be at once both natural and theatrical. (Voskuil 2004, 114)

However, this does not really explain contemporary critics' strategic decision for an affirmation of the female imaginary. On the contrary, Lynn Voskuil's contextualisation implicitly presupposes that we, today, live in a very different society from the paradoxically oppressive Victorian one. A society where non-paradoxical agency is available for women and thus spectacle is not necessary any more. If this were true – and I do not think it is – how could we read *Daniel Deronda* without a slightly patronizing view? Why should we, apart from historical or professional interest in Victorian culture, read the novel at all? This "glimpse of another possibility" Joseph Litvak speaks of is so attractive to us, because the novel's brilliant social analysis and diagnosis is still very pertinent today; it is not by chance that the Nietzschean constellation, or what we have called the 'narcissistic spectacle', resonates with Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's notion of capitalistic deterritorialisation, Niklas Luhmann's theory of self-referential, auto-poietic social systems, or Jacques Derrida's deconstructive political strategies. The novel's dogmatism of a morally legitimated, organic, unified, male, all-encompassing imaginary is what seems dated, suspicious and yet present in all its oppressive effects to the twenty-first-century reader: what we experience – incurable through dogmatic reactions/revanchism – is, still?, "the existence of chaotic desires, of a discontinuous sense of self, of the internal splits and ruptures that disrupt or refuse the production of a coherent, cohesive national identification" (Lesjak 1996, 36). Our lives, I would like to claim, move, like Gwendolen's, "strictly in the sphere of fashion" (53).

Speculation's seductive spectres

The novel unfolds another dimension of this Nietzschean constellation, a dimension that is closely related, intertwined with the spec(tac)ular 'female' 'Jewish' imaginary of play-acting: spec-ulation. Walter Benjamin identifies this dimension as central to the concept of fashion:

> fashion has opened the business of dialectical *exchange between woman and ware* – between carnal pleasure and the corpse. (2002, 62; emph. J.U.)
>
> *[Hier hat die Mode den dialektischen Umschlagplatz zwischen Weib und Ware – zwischen Lust und Leiche – eröffnet. (Benjamin 1983, 111)]*

The novel conceptualises this dimension of speculation in terms of three strongly interrelated notions: (1) gambling, (2) pawning and (3) "self-commodification" (Hatten 2010, 199) of the actress/woman. All of these three notions resonate with an anti-Semitic, 'Jewish' capitalistic imaginary – that is to say that the novel invests in anti-Semitic stereotypes in order to express or impose its "dislike of capitalism" (Cho 2006, 187). The plot line around Gwendolen Harleth is from the very beginning associated with gambling: the novel starting with what turns out to be a lengthy prolepsis has the function of exposing Gwendolen as a gambler and customer of a pawnshop. The first assertive information we get about Gwendolen, our interest in her having been raised by the focaliser Daniel's questions rendered in free indirect presentation of thought, is that "[s]he who raised these questions in Daniel Deronda's mind was occupied in gambling" (7). Gwendolen is, as well will see, throughout the novel addressed as the "gambling beauty" (161), the "heroine of the gaming table" (272): the motif of gambling is tightly, perpetually and constitutively associated with her. Daniel's redeeming and giving her back the necklace she had pawned as compensation for her gambling losses characterises his relation to Gwendolen throughout the novel: it establishes – playing on the "pun upon the hero as redeemer" (Robinson 1964, 289) – Daniel's "redeeming agency" (Swann 1972), his role as "secular redeemer" (Robinson 1964, 293), as "personal redeemer of Gwendolen" (Swann 1974, 44) – or is it, as Catherine Gallagher (1986) claims, the pawnbroker that Daniel redeems? Anyways, this constellation of gambling, pawning and speculation associates speculation and all that is connected to it with sin, with evil – and Daniel's intervention and his mode of self and world as evil's, as sin's Other. However, Daniel's (failing?) redemption of Gwendolen is not, as he himself seems to claim, a story of the "lost sheep" (439) – the opening casino scene exposing Gwendolen as gambling and pawning establishes a connection of Gwendolen and her 'story' with speculation that is much more fun-

damental than personal decisions, character traits, preferences, tastes or chosen styles of life: on several levels, speculation fuels the plot of her 'story', it is speculation that creates the necessity for her to act, her actions, in turn, are, as we will see, themselves characterised as 'speculation', as 'gambling', so that Gwendolen's 'story' resembles a call and response pattern of speculation that drives itself, beyond an individual's control:

> "Everything has gone against me. People have come near me only to blight me."
>
> Among the "people" she was including Deronda. If he had not interfered in her life she would have gone to the gaming-table again with a few napoleons, and might have won back her losses.
>
> "We must resign ourselves to *the will of Providence*, my child," said poor Mrs Davilow, startled by this revelation of the gambling, but not daring to say more. She felt sure that "people" meant Grandcourt, about whom her lips were sealed. And Gwendolen answered immediately –
>
> "But I don't resign myself. I shall do what I can against it. *What is the good of calling the people's wickedness Providence?* You said in your letter it was Mr Lassman's fault we had lost our money. Has he run away with it all?"
>
> "No, dear, you don't understand. *There were great speculations*: he meant to gain. It was all about mines and things of that sort. He risked too much."
>
> "*I don't call that Providence*: it was *his improvidence* with our money, and he ought to be punished. Can't we go to law and recover our fortune? My uncle ought to take measures, and not sit down by such wrongs. We ought to go to law." (232-233; emph. J.U.)

This passage interestingly bundles the different threads of speculation and talks about them in a chiastic way: Gwendolen affirming her own gambling and disapproving of Mr Lassman's – her mother disapproving of Gwendolen's gambling affirming Mr Lassman's gambling in so far as she sees his losses as part of the "will of Providence". For the reader, the scene has an effect comparable to dramatic irony: what emerges is the similarity of Gwendolen's own and Mr Lassman's gambling: both risked too much, both lost. Gwendolen's and her mother's respective naïveties, their respective blind spots involuntarily add up to a telling societal picture of an age of speculation: is the "will of Providence" still an adequate concept to account for the events of an age of speculation? Does not 'speculation' – also with regard to its etymology – rather *replace* 'Providence' as a concept – and therefore introduce a new concept of history and time – than fall under it? Grandcourt's joke that he "heard somebody say how providential it was that there always happened to be springs at gambling places" (278) seems to ridicule the notions of Providence – in favour of (economical) speculation, sub-

scribing to the untimeliness of Providence and the rule of speculation. Gwendolen's naïve complaints in the scene quoted above seem to follow this movement. Paradoxically, her naïvety to identify (Mr Lassman's) speculation with improvidence rather strengthens the credibility of this claim. The novel ironically puts in Gwendolen's mouth its own moral criticism of a "materialistic age" (Bonaparte 1993, 32) ("calling the people's wickedness Providence"), a materialistic age that she as a character and her 'story' epitomise. Equally ironically, Gwendolen's mother mistakenly feels sure that her daughter by saying "'people' meant Grandcourt" when she had actually thought of Daniel's intervention in her gambling. This is telling, because both potential 'meanings' of – or rather associations triggered by – "people", Deronda and Grandcourt, are meaningful in a system of speculations, they are associated according to different logics of speculation: in Gwendolen's reckoning Daniel is "against" her (speculations) in that he disturbs her gambling, he opposes speculation as such, from without. Grandcourt could be said, and that is what Gwendolen's mother believes, to be "against" Gwendolen, because the marriage of the two has not (yet!) taken place, the attempt at arranging this – from a speculative point of view, promising – connection looks as if it had failed. In other words, by associating Grandcourt as being "against" her daughter in an *intra*-speculative sense, Gwendolen's mother involuntarily reveals her own disappointment with the (then) failed marriage, she reveals to be expecting, acting and feeling according to the very same logics of speculation that her daughter defends when complaining about Daniel's disturbing interventions. If the novel did not build up a conspicuous aura of silence around Fanny Davilow that makes her a rather mysterious, opaque character, her thinking about Gwendolen's marriage in 'speculative' terms would not be remarkable at all; this way of thinking marriage as a "gamble" (Cho 2006, 181) is presented as the way marriage is conceived, the rector's caring pragmatics emblemizing a general attitude towards marriage:

> Some readers of this history will doubtless regard it as incredible that people should construct matrimonial prospects on the mere report that a bachelor of good fortune and possibilities was coming within reach, and will reject the statement as a mere outflow of gall: they will aver that neither they nor their first cousins have minds so unbridled; and that in fact this is not *human nature*, *which would know that such speculations might turn out to be fallacious*, and would therefore not entertain them. But, let it be observed, nothing is here narrated of human nature generally: the history in its present stage concerns only a few people in a corner of Wessex – whose reputation, however, was unimpeached, and who, I am in the proud position of being able to state, were all on visiting terms with persons of rank. (91; emph. J.U.)

Obviously, this authorial comment ironically establishes what it negates: performatively, by narrating the 'story' of Gwendolen's marriage and the matrimonial prospects that a few people in a corner of Wessex foster in connection with that marriage, this problem of a world that believes in and acts according to speculation instead of Providence is given (a certain) generality. Whether this generality is one of human nature is a completely different question – however, it is important to note that the novel marks the 'problem' of speculation as a societal, structural one; instead of being merely morally flawed, Gwendolen stands for that societal orientation on speculation. When she feels that Daniel's "way of looking into things very likely despised her for marrying Grandcourt, as he had despised her for gambling" (354), when marriage is accused to be just "another sort of gambling than roulette" (563) this accusation has to be read as aimed at least at those few people in a corner of Wessex – if it is only them believing in speculation –, it has to be read as a fundamental accusation of a societal configuration based on speculation. It was this societal configuration that brought about the losses of Fanny Davilow's family fortune, that threatened Gwendolen and her family with poverty and made her risk the gamble of marriage: consequently, Gwendolen's "gambling" (324) on a marriage with Grandcourt is structurally identical to her pawning the necklace and her plans to gamble again in order to compensate for her previous losses – it is structurally identical to that from which Daniel tried her to redeem!

The novel underlines this structural identity by explicitly linking the Casino scene and the marriage scene with regard to their both being a spectacle:

> Gwendolen, in fact, never showed more elasticity in her bearing, more lustre in her long brown glance: she had the brilliancy of strong excitement, which will sometimes come even from pain. It was not pain, however, that she was feeling: she had wrought herself up to much the same condition as that in which she stood at the gambling-table when Deronda was looking at her, and she began to lose. There was enjoyment in it: whatever uneasiness a growing conscience hat created, was disregarded as an ailment might have been, amidst the gratification of that ambitious vanity and desire for luxury within her which it would take a great deal of slow poisoning to kill. (354)

> Was that agitating experience nullified this morning? No: it was surmounted and thrust down with a sort of exulting defiance as she felt herself standing at the game of life with many eyes upon her, daring everything to win much – or if to lose, still with *éclat* and a sense of importance. (354-355)

"Gambling and acting", as Brian Swann writes, seem, indeed, to "have much in common" (Swann 1972, 192): as well as the gambling spectacle itself, the treatment of losses is, in the Casino scene very similar to the aftermath of the

marriage ceremony, perfectly staged: "she was automatically practiced […] to bear this last great gambling loss with an air of perfect self-possession" (441). Gail Marshall attempts to capture this constellation of gambling, spectacle and speculation emphasising the importance of the unity of the actress's body:

> The capacities of her body and 'looks' are the capital she gambles with, and like an actress, who may be both artist and art-object, Gwendolen combines gambler and betting-capital within the single unit of her own body. Thus, when her attempt to wager the spectacle of her body for the return of influence and financial stability misfires, first in the casino, and then in her calculated marriage, her stake is lost, and she becomes controlled by her gambling opponent. Only in her narcissistic mirror- or 'speculum'-gazing can Gwendolen control the spectator's gaze. In this novel, for a woman to offer herself to be seen is to relinquish control over her personations. (1994, 122)

The question that this passage immediately raises is how the capacities of Gwendolen's body, her 'looks' can ever be lost; does the "spectacle of her body" really come to an end after her losses in the Casino or her marriage with Grandcourt? Her wringing the necklace round her arm that triggers Grandcourt's warning not to "'make a spectacle'" of herself (447) seems to suggest otherwise. Another example that casts doubt on Gail Marshall's claim is Leonora's/Alcharisi's presence in her encounter with Daniel: in Gail Marshall's terms, she has lost all control, she is at the verge of death, has married herself "into silence" (437) and, at last, yields to her father's wish and tells her son of his Jewish legacy. However, Daniel feels "the fascination which made him watch her and listen to her eagerly" (632), a fascination similar to the one Gwendolen's gambling spectacle exercises on him in the first scene:

> Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams? Probably the evil; else why was the effect that of unrest rather than of undisturbed charm? Why was the wish to look again felt as coercion and not as a longing in which the whole being consents? (7)

Gwendolen, like Leonora, both *~~being~~* the stake – not in an ontological, rather in a *hauntological*[22] sense – cannot lose it – *they have never been in possession of it*; they have never had the control over themselves in the sense that one, as a self-identical subject disposes over his possessions – nor have their 'opponents', or their spectators, as spectators (and that is to say as gamblers), ever had control over the stakes or over themselves. The very notion of 'control' is completely alien to the concept of speculation. If Gwendolen, in her "narcissistic

22 For the notion of "hauntology" confer Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (2006, 10).

mirror or 'speculum'" could control the spectator's gaze, it would not have been a spectator's gaze! Quite contrary to Gail Marshall's reading, we have read the narcissistic, specular gaze as *the* speculative gaze, as the epitome or the central concept of speculation, of spectacle and of gambling – that is to say as the primordial scene of all spec(tac)ular and speculative scenes to follow – the Casino gambling, the marriage, the marriage's aftermath, also of Leonora's/Alcharisi's or Mirah's theatrical appearances. Similar to psychoanalytical conceptualisations of the mirror in the wake of Jacques Lacan, we are stressing the fundamental difference that separates, that distances, the image and 'its original' – a distance that cannot be bridged – this is *the* narcissistic experience *par excellence*, which both Ovid's Narcissus and George Eliot's Gwendolen, kissing "the cold glass which had looked so warm" (18), have to make. By focusing on *control*, to be more specific, the control of the supposedly self-identical, self-present 'original' that is spectated or rather offers 'her'self to be gazed at, Gail Marshall takes Daniel Deronda's stance: her analysis of speculation is deeply flawed, because looking at speculation and Gwendolen's success/failure in speculation from the position of a male imaginary, from the outside. She is, as is Daniel Deronda, judging over, condemning speculation with moral standards that have to be brought to speculation from somewhere else, because (these) standards are foreign to speculation. The strategic force, the agency, speculation creates, has nothing to do with (self-)presence, a self-identical subject in possession of himself and the objects he desires, has nothing at all to do with the notion of control and unimpeded presence. On the very contrary, what creates this female agency – an agency that is fuelled by *seduction* – is, as Jacques Derrida terms it, following Friedrich Nietzsche, "*Dis-Tanz*" (1979, 46): "A woman seduces from a distance. In fact, distance is the very element of her power" (1979, 49) *["La seduction de la femme opère à distance, la distance est l'élément de son pouvoir" (1979, 48)]*. What Gail Marshall attempts to set as a target for successful speculation very much is speculation's other; she measures speculation, that is, as its intrinsic connection with play-acting already indicates, part of a female imaginary, with the (moral) standards of the male imaginary of self-identity, essence, control, property. This cannot but produce a condemning result, because

> [t]here is no such thing as the essence of woman because woman avers, she is averted of herself. Out of the depths, endless and unfathomable, she engulfs and distorts all vestige of essentiality, of identity, of property. (Derrida 1979, 51)
>
> *[Il n'y a pas d'essence de la femme parce que la femme écarte et s'écarte d'elle-même. Elle engloutit, envoile par le fond, sans fin, sans fond, toute essentialité, toute identité, toute propriété. (Derrida 1979, 50)]*

The conclusion Gail Marshall draws from her condemnation of the actress's "self-commodification" (Hatten 2010, 199) seems to be consequent: she counters the actress's corruptive "dependence upon the physical" (Marshall 1994, 133) with the ideal of "the status of body-less performer" (Marshall 1994, 134). Mirah is said to have come closest to this ideal, after her career as a drawing room singer, in private, *for* Daniel. The decisive step towards this status takes place during her last public performance:

> He was beginning to feel on Mirah's behalf something of what he had felt for himself in his seraphic boyish time, when Sir Hugo asked him if he would like to be a great singer – an indignant dislike to her being remarked on in a free and easy way, *as if she were an imported commodity disdainfully paid for by the fashionable public*; and he winced the more because Mordecai, he knew, would feel that the name 'Jewess' was taken as a sort of stamp like the lettering of Chinese silk. In this susceptible mood he saw the Grandcourts enter, and was immediately appealed to by Hans about 'that Vandyke duchess of a beauty.' Pray excuse Deronda that in this moment he felt a transient renewal of his first repulsion from Gwendolen, as if she and her beauty and her failings were to blame for the *undervaluing of Mirah as a woman* – a feeling something like *class animosity*, which affection for what is not fully recognised by others, whether in persons or in poetry, rarely allows us to escape. (558; emph. J.U.)

It is, first of all, striking that this decisive step towards what Gail Marshall calls "the status of body-less performer" takes place inside Daniel: he feels "on Mirah's behalf"[23] – is Mirah already so 'body-less' that she needs a male, self-identical, well-bodied counterpart that has taken over her sensibility? The passage's focalisation already hints at a semantics, a play of and with bodies that is far more complex than Gail Marshall's oppositional binary of corruptive dependence on the body and the ideal status of the body-less performer. By connecting the entering Gwendolen to this decisive moment of judging public performance, identifying her appearance with Mirah's performance, the scene is charged with importance for the whole novel: the scene is, more than it is able to control, a scene of *valuation*; it criticises the (self-)commodification of the actress/performer for a fashionable public – coming to a conclusion quite similar to Thomas P. Wolfe's: the "'performed self is finally a prostitution of […] the essential, the generic communal self'" (Thomas P. Wolfe, quoted in Marshall 1994, 133). This prostitution, in Daniel's opinion, is to blame for "the *under-*

23 For a brilliant discussion of the complex implications of representation (*vertreten* and *darstellen*), see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's famous "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) and the revised and commented version of this article at the end of the "History" chapter in her *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (2003, 248-313).

valuing of Mirah as a woman" – of her essential, generic communal self. However, does not the notion of value itself haunt the (supposed!) essentiality of "Mirah as a woman"?[24] For *whom* is her 'essential' self *as a woman – of value*? The passage quoted above gives the answer: it is Daniel who feels – on Mirah's behalf – "an indignant dislike", "repulsion". Instead of the "class-animosity" that the passage brings up in a simile, the question of the body, of performance is much more a question of *sex*: the control that Gail Marshall sees realised (or re-established) in the status of a body-less performer is the control (and domination) of a male imaginary over a female imaginary. What is Mirah's role in Daniel's journey to the East? Is not she as well married "into silence" (437)? What about her talent, her beautiful voice? As Sarah Gates writes, "while the eponymous hero sails off successfully into his new epic script, she is left in the only position available to her dangerous energies: that of the tragic scapegoat" (2001, 700). This loss of female agency becomes even more obvious when we bring another scene into consideration, a scene where Daniel again acts on behalf of a woman, this time Gwendolen: his redeeming the necklace she had pawned, and sending it back to her. Eileen Sypher terms Gwendolen's pawning a "radically independent economic move on Gwendolen's part" (1996, 511) that is countered, fended off by Daniel: "Deronda somewhere knows that gambling offers Gwendolen the potential freedom of a man" (1996, 511). We should be very careful with positing something like a "freedom *of a man*", because the male and the female imaginary we keep speaking of are not facing each other as mutually exclusive, one oppressing the other, fighting for the very same (male) position of agency. On the contrary, as shown above, (1) their modes of agencies are very different (control vs. seduction), (2) they are working differently, the male imaginary constituting itself by setting itself off from and at the same time making invisible *a (female) other*, thereby naturalising and essentialising the own self-identity and self-presence; the female imaginary questioning – and that is to say, working with/on – the male self-identity, involving it in a self-referential process that accounts for its emergence and its fundamental fragility, that dissolves the posited naturalness and universality of crystallised standards, opening a seductive, strategic, endless and *creative* play of resonances. However, Eileen Sypher is right to emphasise the strategic dimension of Daniel's move that the novel always covers up in moral terms. The question of the body that Gail Marshall concentrates on is a point in case: the novel does, in its domi-

24 This argument is inspired by Jacques Derrida's reading of Marx's distinction of exchange-value and use-value in *Spectres of Marx* (2006, 160-162).

nant threads, indeed promote the status of the body-less performer Gail Marshall traces – but it is important to note that it promotes this status only for its *female* performers – Gwendolen, Leonora/Alcharisi, Mirah. Daniel's own role in relation to Mordecai's (and the novel's) proto-Zionist mission is very much that of a well-built man whose "face and frame must be beautiful and strong" (472). The question is obviously not one of the body's presence, but of the *framing* of this presence, the (prescribed?) role this body plays. This is exactly where speculation and spectacle come into play: speculation – and so is play-acting that does not follow any script – is not framed by Providence, by a transcendent order of being or transcendental standards. The presence of the *female* performers' bodies – always *spectral* bodies, non-present bodies, bodies in the distance – threatens the moral and social standards that the novel attempts to erect, because their bodies' agency is, and has to be, seductive, speculative, spec(tac)ular: speculation and play-acting take place in the non-foundational openness of a female imaginary that is subject to unpredictable, unforeseeable "chances" (778):

> [T]he pawnshop converts paternal relicts into capital, transforms the telltale objects of utility into the homogenous emblems of exchange (Cleere 2004, 161).
>
> Like the pawnshop, the public theatre strips the self of patrilineal context and socioeconomic status, leaving female identity to fashion and refashion itself (Cleere 2004, 160).

It is important to note that this openness, this play of resonances that is the condition of possibility of fashion is not a 'good' thing of its own, opposed to the 'bad' male moral standards. On the contrary, Carolyn Lesjak is very right to evoke the "Benjaminian sense" of the "disenchanted object world of the commodity system" (1996, 28) to describe a world that, at the same time, is shaped by this play of resonances as it offers perfect conditions for it. This is indeed a world of "money, uniformity and assimilation" (Lesjak 1996, 34) in so far as it is the uniformity of money – or rather of *value* – that makes 'every~~thing~~' potentially resonate with 'every~~thing~~', that functions as the condition of possibility for mirroring of mirroring. We have arrived at an important point: it is not every*thing* communicating with every*thing*, it is not self-identical, essential bodies somehow set in relation to each other; speculation deals with *values of values*. Values are not labels of 'goods' signifying their inherent value; each value is constituted in relation to other values, in a process, always unstable, shifting – and it is these objectively unforeseeable shifts, by chances, that make speculation possible. Speculation thus never deals with bodies, with flesh, with possession – as speculation, it deals with *spectral* 'bodies', with looks, with values,

with *bodies from a distance*, without ever bridging the gap, without ever directly, immediately, involving a notion of the original, the 'authentic' – it deals just with values of values, mirroring of mirrors, not at all with consumption – consumption presupposing the immediate, full presence of the flesh, its edibility[25]. That is not to say that the self-marketing of the female body is without any risks; quite the opposite, the female body is always in danger to be made to leave the realm of speculation – and that presupposes the bridging of the unbridgeable gap between mirroring and 'authentic' original – to be naturalised and essentialised into an object, in order to be subjected to consumption, to be made into an item of exchange – that is to say to be robbed of her seducing agency and be re-entered in a patriarchal order. Speculation cannot at all guarantee 'positive virtues' – it is, by definition, indifferent. This lack of safety, of framing, makes speculation a risky field against which George Eliot in *Daniel Deronda*, according to Carolyn Lesjak, sets an alliance of "Race, separateness and nationality" (1996, 34):

> she puts Jews and women in a special category as groups particularly threatened and adversely affected by the power of the market. Women risk being degraded as virtual slaves of men, or if not slaves, female performers such as Mirah, their self-marketing associated with the degradation of actual prostitution. For Eliot, such self-marketing is not just degrading in the sense that all human involvement with the market risks degradation, but it particularly violates a basic nature of women in their capacity for altruism and purity. (Hatten 2010, 201)

The novel dismisses speculation and spectacle in order to secure and re-establish this naturalised, essential, generic communal "*nature* of women" that is rather women's *function* in a male imaginary, "their capacity for altruism and purity". The argumentation with which it deprives the novel's women of their seductive agency is highly paradoxical: as Eileen Cleere writes, "a beautiful woman's currency in the continuum of male homosociality is both sexual and economic" (2004, 161). Their speculative, spec(tac)ular, their seductive way of making strategically the most of their fashioning is rendered by the novel as becoming "items of exchange, a form of currency and also a type of commodity" (Gallagher, quoted in Cleere 2004, 151). However, the 'female', 'Jewish' business of the "expert mountebanks, the artists" (Derrida 1979, 67-69; emph. J.U.), the seductive spectacle of speculation has nothing to do with exchange – the tradesmen's or financier's notion of exchange is completely alien to speculation. The actress, as long as she moves inside the female, mirroring imaginary, does

25 For the workings of the distinction things/events, depth/surface, *to eat/to speak* see Gilles Deleuze's fabulous *The Logic of Sense* (2004b).

not give *anything* in exchange for her 'gains' – in so far as she ~~is~~ expert mountebank, artist, *she gives what she does not have*: actresses – or as Nietzsche would say, 'women', "'give themselves airs' ('give themselves for'), even when they – 'give themselves'" (Nietzsche quoted in Derrida 1979, 69)[26] *["Dass sie 'sich geben, selbst noch, wenn sie – sich geben'" (Nietzsche 1988, 609)]*. This is an important point, because it breaks the non-creative circularity of exchange[27] that marks exchange's difference to creative production:

> [T]he prostitute never makes this transition from exchange to production; she retains her commodity form at all times. Like money, the prostitute, according to ancient accounts, is incapable of natural procreation. (Gallagher, quoted in Cleere 2004, 151)

Thinking the prostitute in the way Catherine Gallagher does[28] is exactly the way the novel suggests reading the seductive actress: imbedded in a closed system of commodities circulating between fixed, male[29] agents of possession. As Catherine Gallagher notices, even this closed circulation of the market offers 'women' some liberation:

> Money may be a sign of sterility and even of an outcast status, but it is nevertheless an emblem of liberation from patriarchal authority. The woman in the marketplace is presumably free from the patriarch (Gallagher 1986, 46).

This is very much Leonora's/Alcharisi's argument:

> "He [Leonora's father, Daniel Charisi] hated that Jewish women should be thought of by the Christian world as a sort of ware to make public singers and actresses of. As if we were not the more enviable for that! That is a chance of escaping from bondage." (631)

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26 This sentence, followed only by a short, exclamatory phrase "Woman is so artistic", concludes the aphorism "361. *On the problem of the actor*". We quote this sentence from Barbara Harlow's translation of Derrida's text, because her version is closer to Friedrich Nietzsche's original. Josephine Nauckhoff's translation of the aphorism reads: "they try to be 'taken for something' even when they are being taken" (Nietzsche 2001, 226) – sacrificing the subversion of active/passive in order to find a better English idiom for the German pun on the ambiguous verb '*geben*'.

27 For a thorough discussion of the concepts of circularity of exchange, the distinction of gift and exchange, and the gift's opening and making the circle possible at the same time, see Jacques Derrida's *Given Time* (1992).

28 There are other, more nuanced ways of thinking prostitution, being more cautious of and more careful with the notion of the body as commodity, strictly avoiding the concept of possession – obviously, a difference *can* be thought between buying *sex* and buying/lending *a body*.

29 Obviously, these male agents may be women, but as agents of possession, they, as well, are male.

However, this notion of the self-marketing woman exchanging herself for money paradoxically resembles the notion of "the nature of woman" on which the novel's mission itself is based: the woman gives what 'nature' has equipped her with, for example her "capacity for altruism and purity" to the patriarch, and receives the award – being his wife, … For sure, Catherine Gallagher is right to emphasise the important liberating effect when this exchange is deterritorialised from the domestic sphere and reterritorialsed on the market-place, a movement that opens the spectrum of what the woman may give (her body, looks, …) and enables her to receive money – to become, to a certain extent, a *male* agent of *possession* – even financial independence of some sort. Nevertheless, the structure of exchange itself, as the non-creative, non-productive, the closed circulation of something in a system of fixed positions that is not affected by the circulation itself, the concept of possession that distinguishes between what can be possessed (objects, slaves, women) and what possesses (men, monstrous women, women-becoming-men?) is still part of the male imaginary. However, Gwendolen's or Alcharisi's seductive aura, the coercion they exercise to be looked at, to be admired, to an extent that even makes Sir Hugo raise her child and care for it as it had been his own, has obviously nothing to do with the possession of money. Without any doubt, Gwendolen's pawning her father's necklace is an independent economic move, a symbolical one, for sure. To read it as a compensation, a sacrifice for her gambling losses, the regaining of money as a consequence of a vice – as the novel seems to suggest – overlooks the decisive part of the necklace's function. In the end, Gwendolen gains money to travel back *and* retains the necklace – even more: she has established a lasting relation to Daniel. Why does he follow her, watch her, redeem her necklace, care for her? Her spectacle in the Casino has seduced him. Her pawning, then, enables him to act as her personal redeemer – the necklace becomes a symbol of seduction – used as this symbol in the scene where she wraps it round her arm. She is playing with 'taboos' and thereby exposing opportunities for Daniel to make examples of his moral standards – this clever play, using the standards without being subject to them, *creates* cohesion, makes him give what she, in the logics of exchange, does not 'deserve'. Speculation – and that is to say seduction – is possible, because the circle of circulation, constitutively, is not and can never be quite closed – for sure, attempts at 're'-closure are taking place all the time, but these attempts are only reactions to a constitutive force of contingency that is circulation's and speculation's very condition of possibility. This force is nothing less than a question of time.

Time – why Gwendolen's 'story' is not a story

In order to kick off the speculative circulation of values and commodities and to keep the circulation moving, the concepts of a 'fulfilled', a 'meaningful' time, of 'the' historic, universal and/or teleological time have to be abandoned: speculation is based on the play of constitutively differing expectations of futures-to-come, thus on resonances, interferences and dissonances – that is self-referentiality – of ungrounded expectations, hopes and fears, of *self-stabilising instability* facing a fundamental openness. The (impossibility of) reference to 'fundamental' contingency is the fragile-stabilising factor that induces the stabilising forces of speculation's circulating, spinning wheel. Consequently, time is more than an empty medium, or form, in which the idea of progress or a transcendent road to salvation takes place; it is the force of contingency that keeps the (roulette-)wheel spinning, thereby at once making the circulating stability of speculation possible, the driving hope[30], so to speak, but also creating the ever impeding danger of loss, of fatal failing. Time itself has agency, only time produces movement and incommensurable 'change', (human) action is always and only re-action to time's "power of transformation" (Lukács 1971, 126) *["wandelschaffende Macht" (Lukács 1994, 113)]* . Living 'in' or rather *with* this time is characterised by the "absence of any manifest aim" *["Verschwundensein der offenbaren Ziele"]*, by the "determining lack of direction" (Lukács 1971, 62) *["entscheidende Richtungslosigkeit des ganzen Lebens" (Lukács 1994, 53)]*. At the first glance, it does not seem too astonishing that Georg Lukács's terms resonate with George Eliot's novel, since Georg Lukács develops these terms with regard to the specific world and time of the novel. However, viewing the resonances and dissonances in greater detail, it is not George Eliot's novel as a novel that resonates with Georg Lukács's "objective structure of the world of the novel" (1971, 128) *["objektive Struktur der Romanwelt" (1994, 114)]*; only a thread of it, 'Gwendolen's story' – the narcissistic spectacle – resonates, the second thread, the proto-Zionist story centring on Daniel and Mordecai, defies Lukács's characteristics of the novel and its time, critically commenting on the first thread, transcending it by re-establishing (a moral) order and a meaningful, full, historic time. However, for Georg Lukács, "the normative incompleteness, the problematic nature of the novel" *["normative Unvollendung und Problematik des Romans"]* is reflecting the "true condition of the contemporary

30 For a discussion of this shift from feudalism to capitalism and the implication of the temporal concept of hope see Eve Kosofski Sedgwick's brief comments on Juliet Mitchell in her introduction to *Between Men* (1985, 14).

spirit" (1971, 73) *["wahren Zustand des gegenwärtigen Geistes" (1994, 63)]*. This is an interesting and important claim that sheds some new light on the novel's reception history, especially on the tendency to affirm the 'English' part of the novel and to have difficulties with the 'Jewish' part, culminating in F.R. Leavis's suggestion to leave out the 'Jewish' part as a whole (that does not really fit into a novel) and re-publish the novel with the title "Gwendolen Harleth"[31]. We do not try to lend legitimacy to critical comments involving intolerance and at least latent anti-Semitism, but dissect a particularity of George Eliot's last 'novel' that is remarkable: the polarising reception history indexes *Daniel Deronda*'s particular unconventionality; the 'novel' is remarkably unconventional, because it does not merely attempt to reflect the "true condition of the contemporary spirit", it attempts to overcome this state, an attempt that involves overcoming the genre 'belonging' to this state, the novel. Thus *Daniel Deronda* is a 'novel' (is it?) that attempts to overcome the novel, as it, at the same time, attempts to overcome a state of society. It is, as a 'novel', very much a political social practice, abandoning Stendhal's famous notion of the novel as "a mirror that promenades along a high road" *["un miroir qui se promène sur une grande route" (2005, 557)]*. The novel's two threads stage a "struggle for control over form" (Gates 2001, 702): its first thread, 'Gwendolen's story', exposes and elaborates on what Georg Lukács calls the "objective structure of the world of the novel" which "shows a heterogeneous totality, regulated only by regulative ideas, whose meaning is prescribed but not given" (1971, 128) *["Die objektive Struktur der Romanwelt zeigt eine heterogene, nur von regulativen Ideen geregelte Totalität, deren Sinn nur aufgegeben, aber nicht gegeben ist. (1994, 114)"]*; its second, more authoritative, thread (re-)introduces the "life-immanence of meaning" (Lukács 1971, 122) *["Lebensimmanenz des Sinnes" (Lukács 1994, 108)]*, and community/society as "an organic – and therefore intrinsically meaningful – concrete totality" (Lukács 1971, 67) *["Und die Gemeinschaft ist eine organische – und darum in sich sinnvolle – konkrete Totalität" (Lukács 1994, 58)],* reintroduces exactly what Lukács sees as characteristic for the genre of the *epic*. As Sarah Gates writes,

> the struggle for control over form is won by epic [and tragedy], which appropriate a few realistic details to give their closures flesh: Daniel sailing off to achieve his epic destiny (but happily married), Gwendolen abandoned and isolated (but alive and living at home). (2001, 702)

31 Cf. Baker (2005) and Storer (2005).

Consequently, *Daniel Deronda* stages a meta-poetical battle of two 'stories' that is, at the same time, a battle of genres reflecting two different societal 'states' and their corresponding concepts of time, meaning and closure. The narcissistic spectacle and its speculation with which we have been concerned up to now is the societal strategy, the societal apparatus belonging to Gwendolen's 'story' and thus to the deterritorialised world of the novel, where time is a constitutive agent (of contingency):

> Time can become constitutive only when the bond with the transcendental home has been severed. […] Only in the novel, whose very matter is seeking and failing to find the essence, is time posited together with the form: time is the resistance of the organic – which possesses a mere semblance of life – to the present meaning, the will of life to remain within its own completely enclosed immanence. In the epic the life-immanence of meaning is so strong that it abolishes time: life enters eternity as life, the organic retains nothing of time except the phase of blossoming; fading and dying are forgotten and left entirely behind. In the novel, meaning is separated from life, and hence the essential from the temporal; we might almost say that the entire inner action of the novel is nothing but a struggle against the power of time. (Lukács 1971, 122)
>
> *[Die Zeit kann erst konstitutiv werden, wenn die Verbundenheit mit der transzendentalen Heimat aufgehört hat. […] Nur im Roman, dessen Stoff das Suchenmüssen und das Nicht-finden-Können des Wesens ausmacht, ist die Zeit mit der Form mitgesetzt: die Zeit ist das Sichsträuben der bloß lebenhaften Organik wider den gegenwärtigen Sinn, das Verharrenwollen des Lebens in der eigenen, völlig geschlossenen Immanenz. In der Epopöe ist die Lebensimmanenz des Sinnes so stark, daß die Zeit von ihr aufgehoben wird: das Leben zieht als Leben in die Ewigkeit ein, die Organik hat aus der Zeit nur das Blühen mitgenommen und alles Verwelken und Sterben vergessen und hinter sich gelassen. Im Roman trennen sich Sinn und Leben und damit das Wesenhafte und das Zeitliche; man kann fast sagen: die ganze innere Handlung des Romans ist nichts als ein Kampf gegen die Macht der Zeit. (Lukács 1994, 108-109)]*

The narcissistic spec(tac)ular mechanism we have been elaborating on is nothing but a defence mechanism against the power of time – its speculating, self-fashioning practices create coherence and stability, at the same time driven and being threatened by time's power. Walter Benjamin's emphasis on fashion's complex reactive and compensating relation to the power of time will help to understand this important point:

> Fashions are a collective medicament for the ravages of oblivion. The more short-lived a period, the more susceptible it is to fashion (2002, 80)
>
> *[Moden sind ein Medikament, das die verhängnisvollen Wirkungen des Vergessens, im kollektiven Maßstab, kompensieren soll. Je kurzlebiger eine Zeit, desto mehr ist sie an der Mode ausgerichtet. (Benjamin 1983, 131)]*

However, fashion is not only directed towards the past, compensating for the oblivion caused by time's ever-moving power of contingency mainly by the means of citation – it is, crucially directed towards the open future, in a speculative manner:

> For the philosopher, the most interesting thing about fashion is its extraordinary anticipations. It is well known that art will often – for example in pictures – precede the perceptible reality by years. […] Yet fashion is much steadier, much more precise contact with the coming thing, thanks to the incomparable nose which the feminine collective has for what lies waiting in the future. Each season brings, in its newest creations, various secret signals of things to come. Whoever understands how to read these semaphores would know in advance not only about new currents in the arts but also about new legal codes, wars, and revolutions. – Here, surely, lies the greatest charm of fashion, but also the difficulty of making the charming fruitful. (Benjamin 2002, 64)
>
> *[Das brennendste Interesse der Mode liegt für den Philosophen in ihren außerordentlichen Antizipationen. Es ist ja bekannt, daß die Kunst vielfach, in Bildern etwa, der wahrnehmbaren Wirklichkeit um Jahre vorausgreift. […] Und dennoch ist die Mode in weit konstanterem, weit präziserem Kontakt mit den kommenden Dingen kraft der unvergleichlichen Witterung, die das weibliche Kollektiv für das hat, was in der Zukunft bereitliegt. Jede Saison bringt in ihren neuesten Kreationen irgendwelche geheimen Flaggensignale der kommenden Dinge. Wer sie zu lesen verstünde, der wüßte im voraus nicht nur um neue Strömungen der Kunst, sondern um neue Gesetzbücher, Kriege und Revolutionen. – Zweifellos liegt hierin der größte Reiz der Mode, aber auch die Schwierigkeit, ihn fruchtbar zu machen. (Benjamin 1983, 112)]*

Thus fashion points, to a certain extent, to the past, and is in contact with the coming thing – however, it is itself very much an art of the *moment*: it is the crystallisation of mirrorings, citations of the past and mirrorings, citations 'of the future' (=speculation) – in a single, splendorous, brilliant moment. It is the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous[32], a vibrating centre of resonance that desperately tries to give itself some duration, some stability – a quite impossible task, since the mighty power of time is challenging this resonance of resonances with ever new contingencies. The novel stages this battle against the power of time in media-theoretical terms: it associates this battle of the spec(tac)ular mechanism against time as threatening agent of contingency with painting:

> They were bare now: it was the fashion to dance in the archery dress, throwing off the jacket; and the simplicity of her white cashmere with its border of pale green set off her form to the utmost. A thin line of gold round her neck, and the gold star on her breast, were her only ornaments. Her smooth soft hair piled up

32 This has not too much to do with Ernst Bloch's famous concept of "non-simultaneity".

> into a grand crown made a clear line about her brow. *Sir Joshua would have been glad to take her portrait; and he would have had an easier task than the historian at least in this, that he would not have had to represent the truth of change – only to give stability to one beautiful moment*. (117; emph. J.U.)

We encounter here another 'fancy' portrait, a portrait that "Sir Joshua would have entitled […] "*Miss Harleth as Diana*" (Witemeyer 1979, 93) – and we encounter the key to the significance of these paintings, as paintings, as a social practice, as the epitome of what we have called the narcissistic spectacle: *the portrait gives stability to one beautiful moment*, and so does spectacle:

> And when they came down again at five o'clock, equipped for their boating, the scene was as good as a theatrical representation for all beholders. This handsome, fair-skinned English couple, manifesting the usual eccentricity of their nation, both of them proud, pale, and calm, without a smile on their faces, moving like creatures who were fulfilling a supernatural destiny – *it was a thing to go out and see, a thing to paint*. The husband's chest, back, and arms, showed very well in his close-fitting dress, and the wife was declared to be a statue. (681; emph. J.U.)

In order to mark the two different concepts of time and their respective societal importance, the novel invests in a media-theoretical topos that has famously been elaborated on by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in his essay titled "Laocoon; or The Limits of Poetry and painting" (1836) *["Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und der Poesie" (2007 [1766])]*. This essay, as the title suggests, characterises the difference between painting and poetry, which is, first of all, a very simple one:

> the imitations of painting are effected by means entirely different from those of poetry; the former employing figures and colors in space, and the latter articulate sounds in time. (1836, 150)
>
> *[die Malerei [gebrauchet] zu ihren Nachahmungen ganz andere Mittel, oder Zeichen [...], als die Poesie; jene nemlich Figuren und Farben in dem Raume, diese aber artikuliert Töne in der Zeit] (2007 [1766], 116)]*

Poetry, in contrast to painting, has time at its disposal: "Actions are therefore the legitimate subjects of poetry" (1836, 151) *["Folglich sind Handlungen der eigentliche Gegenstand der Poesie." (2007 [1766], 116)]*. Poetry can narrate, the actions it narrates follow its composition, its story; time is tame, in poetry, fully in control – therein lies poetry's precedence. Painting is limited to one single moment:

> The painter can only employ, in his compositions of co-existing bodies, one single moment of the action, and he must therefore select, as far as possible, that which is at once expressive of the past, and pregnant with future. (1836, 152)

> *[Die Malerei kann in ihren coexistierenden Compositionen nur einen einzigen Augenblick der Handlung nutzen, und muß daher den prägnantesten wählen, aus welchem das Vorhergehende und Folgende am begreiflichsten wird. (2007 [1766], 117)]*

The painting attempts to point towards the past and the future, to charge, to satiate the moment with as much radiance into past and future as possible – however, it does not have the power over time, it cannot control the 'plot' – it cannot narrate an organic, full, historic, closed story. All it can do is very similar to what Walter Benjamin writes about fashion – it can attempt to compensate for this loss of history. The novel illustrates this shortcoming of painting – which is a meta-commentary on the shortcoming of Gwendolen's 'story' – with regard to Hans Meyrick's artistic attempts. Hans Meyrick is very much drawn as an antihero, contrasting to Daniel – a relation that could also be described as the contrast of an anti-artist and a 'real' artist – one a painter, the other – a poet. In this role as an anti-artist Hans Meyrick's main function in the novel is to give or incite insightful meta-comments, as the following:

> " […] the third sketch in the series is Berenice exulting in the prospects of being Empress of Rome, when the news has come that Vespasian is declared Emperor and her lover Titus his successor."
>
> "You must put a scroll in her mouth, else people will not understand that. *You can't tell that in a picture*." (457; emph. J.U.)

Later in the novel, Sir Hugo confirms and elaborates on this criticism, in words that resonate with the limits Gotthold Ephraim Lessing deduces from the characteristics of painting and poetry:

> "My good fellow, your attempts at the historic and poetic are simply pitiable. Your brush is just that of a successful portrait-painter – it has a little truth and a great facility in falsehood – your idealism will never do for gods and goddesses and heroic story, but it may fetch a high price as flattery." (645)

Clearly, Hans Meyrick had chosen the wrong subject for his painting, had tried to exceed the limits of painting – and he had chosen the wrong sitter: Mirah, whom Daniel cannot allow "'to be used as a model for a heroine of this sort'" (460). In contrast to Sir Hugo's daughters of whom he is supposed (645) and eventually agrees to make a picture, "sitting on a bank, 'in the Gainsborough style,'" (797) Mirah is a historic and poetic character: her "suffering was part of the affliction of [her] people, [her] part in the long song of mourning that has been going on through ages and ages" (215). Analogous to Berenice's fate, this historic suffering cannot be told in a picture, it is historic and poetic, and as such asks for poetry that has time at its disposal, that is equipped to make a story.

Hans Meyrick's fascination for Gwendolen, however, is not connected to his pitiable attempts at the historic and poetic – on the contrary, "'that Vandyke duchess of a beauty'" (558), as he calls her, most perfectly suits his skills as a successful portrait painter: "'he thinks her so striking and picturesque'" (655), she would have been the perfect sitter. Hans's laughingly thinking to himself: "'Why didn't she fall in love with me [instead of with Daniel]?'" (800) carries more weight than might be suspected. As Mirah had been the wrong sitter for Hans, the artist of the portrait, who gives stability to one beautiful moment, Gwendolen, longing to be painted, had been the wrong hero – merely "the heroine of an admired play without the pains of art" (357) – for the poet Daniel, who is looking for the history and poetry of the epic. Hugh Witemeyer rightly claims that "the gap between static picture and changing person becomes normative in Eliot's portraiture" (1979, 45): *Daniel Deronda* establishes this gap, putting Gwendolen's 'story' (with portraiture and Hans as corresponding artist) on the one side, Mirah's and Mordecai's Jewish history (with poetry=tragedy/epic and Daniel as artist) on the other, in order to take side with the historic Daniel. Is this taking side a poetological or rather a political, socio-critical statement? This question cannot be decided and does not have to be decided, because it is both, at the same time. Gwendolen does not fail as a flawed literary character – she fails *as the exemplary heroine of the novel*, as a

> solitary individual, who is no longer able to express himself by giving examples of his most important concerns, is himself uncounselled, and cannot counsel others. To write a novel means to carry the incommensurable to extremes in the representation of human life. In the midst of life's fullness, and through the representation of this fullness, the novel gives evidence of the profound perplexity of the living. (Benjamin 1999, 87)
>
> *[Individuum in seiner Einsamkeit, das sich über seine wichtigsten Anliegen nicht mehr exemplarisch auszusprechen vermag, selbst unberaten ist und keinen Rate geben kann. Einen Roman schreiben heißt, in der Darstellung des menschlichen Lebens das Inkommensurable auf die Spitze treiben. Mitten in der Fülle des Lebens und durch die Darstellung dieser Fülle bekundet der Roman die tiefe Ratlosigkeit des Lebenden. (Benjamin 1984, 389)]*

Obviously, *Daniel Deronda* does not settle for the profound perplexity of the novel's world. It aspires, in the figure of Daniel Deronda, to counsel, to re-establish "obvious roots in supra-personal ideal necessities" (Lukács 1971, 62) *["evidentes Wurzeln in überpersönlichen, seinsollenden Notwendigkeiten" (Lukács 1994, 53)] – Daniel Deronda* aspires to tell a "story" (Benjamin 1999, 87) *["Erzählung" (Benjamin 1984, 389)]* in a *novelistic* age, an age that is "poor in noteworthy stories" (Benjamin 1999, 89) *["an merkwürdigen Geschichten*

arm" (Benjamin 1984, 391)]. *Daniel Deronda* wants to deal with the "great inscroutable course of the world" (Benjamin 1999, 95) *["de[m] großen unerforschlichen Weltlauf" (Benjamin 1984, 397)]*, it aspires a historical time scheme that tells a story itself, where time, history and narration bring forward the same, one course:

> Whether this course is eschatologically determined or is a natural one makes no difference. In the storyteller the chronicler is preserved in changed form, secularized, as it were. (Benjamin 1999, 95)
>
> *[Ob der Weltlauf ein heilsgeschichtlich bedingter oder ein natürlicher ist, das macht keinen Unterschied. Im Erzähler hat der Chronist in verwandelter, gleichsam säkularisierter Gestalt sich erhalten. (Benjamin 1984, 397-398)]*

With regard to these aspirations, Gwendolen's 'story' is not a story at all. It is, in this light, as little noteworthy as what happens to Sir Hugo's three daughters. It is merely "a small social drama almost as little penetrated by a feeling of wider relations as if it had been a puppet-show" (148-149). Similar to Walter Benjamin (1999, 87), *Daniel Deronda* associates this vain perplexity of the living with Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. Narrating Gwendolen's 'story', the narrator admits that she is "just now bound to tell a *story of life*" (148; emph. J.U.) – only to comment, few pages later, that "Gwendolen's uncontrolled reading, though consisting chiefly in what are called *pictures of life*, had somehow not prepared her for this encounter with reality" (155; emph. J.U.). The idea that Gwendolen's 'story' of life, the 'story' we are reading, might, in a metaleptic way, itself not be a 'story' but mere 'pictures of life' or "literary photographs" depicting the "manners of ladies in the fashionable world […] so full of coarse selfishness, petty quarrelling, and slang" (197), suggests itself very strongly. The novel indeed "freezes her into spectacle" (Gates 2001, 719), which recommends her rather for painting than furthers narrating her 'story':

> This emphasis on spectacle, conveyed through the female body, stresses the visual aspect of theatre rather than its narrative impulse, as the actress, like Galatea, is isolated in the viewer's gaze. (Rignall 2006, 149)

As stated above, the narcissistic spectacle is always a reaction to the unforeseeable events created by the power of time. It is not the closed and organically structured plot that gives narrative impulses, but time's contingencies. These impulses *happen to* the individual, without being united by any narrative unity or necessary connection. Thus the isolation John Rignall speaks of is no coincidence:

> The contingent world and the problematic individual are realities which mutually determine one another. If the individual is unproblematic, then his aims are given to him with immediate obviousness, and the realisation of the world constructed by these given aims may involve hindrances and difficulties but never any serious threat to his interior life. (Lukács 1971, 78)
>
> *[Kontingente Welt und problematisches Individuum sind einander wechselseitig bedingende Wirklichkeiten. Wenn das Individuum unproblematisch ist, so sind ihm seine Ziele in unmittelbarer Evidenz gegeben, und die Welt, deren Aufbau dieselben realisierten Ziele geleistet haben, kann ihm für ihre Verwirklichung nur Schwierigkeiten und Hindernisse bereiten, aber niemals eine innerlich ernsthafte Gefahr. (Lukács 1994, 67)]*

The novel as a novel is, like Gwendolen's 'story', "bound to tell a *story of life*" (148; emph. J.U.), because in a world that has ceased to exist as a meaningful history, as a narration itself, a story has to receive its unity, its closure, from its heroine's biography:

> The outward form of the novel is essentially biographical. The fluctuation between a conceptual system which can never completely capture life and a life complex which can never attain completeness because completeness is immanently utopian, can be objectivised only in that organic quality which is the aim of biography. In a world situation where the organic was the all-dominating category of existence, to make the individuality of a living being, with all its limitations, the starting point of stylisation and the centre of form-giving would have seemed foolish – a gratuitous violence inflicted upon the organic. (Lukács 1971, 77)
>
> *[[D]ie äußere Form des Romans ist eine wesentlich biographische. Das Schweben zwischen einem Begriffssystem, dem das Leben immer entgleitet, und einem Lebenskomplex, der niemals zur Ruhe seiner immanent-utopischen Vollendung zu gelangen vermag, kann sich nur in der erstrebten Organik der Biographie objektivieren. Für eine Weltlage, wo das Organische die alles beherrschende Kategorie des gesamten Seins ist, würde es als eine törichte Vergewaltigung gerade seines organischen Charakters erscheinen, wenn man die Individualität eines Lebewesens in ihrer begrenzenden Begrenztheit zum Ausgangspunkt der Stilisierung und zum Mittelpunkt des Gestaltens machen wollte. (Lukács 1994, 66-67)]*

Gwendolen's narcissism is not the expression of her flawed, egoist character – her narcissism is a societal one, is the expression of a modern world, a world that struggles for stability and cohesion against time's power of contingency, it is the narcissism of the novel as the genre reflecting and being brought forward by this world.

Paradoxically enough, the 'novel's' title figure, Daniel Deronda, is, as we will see in the next chapter, not an individual, not a product of a narcissistic society. Thus he is not entirely of this world. He is remnant of a past, whose des-

tiny it is to bring a future that connects with that past constituting meaningful history. He is meant to be a hero that does not only transcend the modern, narcissistic society, but also the genre of the novel – he is an epic hero, playing his part in a century-long tragedy of *a people*:

> The epic hero is, strictly speaking, never an individual. It is traditionally thought that one of the essential characteristics of the epic is the fact that its theme is not a personal destiny but the destiny of a community. (Lukács 1971, 66)
>
> *[Der Held der Epopöe ist, strenggenommen, niemals ein Individuum. Es ist von alters her als Wesenszeichen des Epos betrachtet worden, daß sein Gegenstand kein persönliches Schicksal, sondern das einer Gemeinschaft ist. (Lukács 1994, 57)]*

Echo's Binding History

In the previous chapter, we have traced a societal mechanism we called 'narcissistic spectacle', because its orientation on self-referential visuality (spec-ulum, spec-tacle, spec-ulation, spec-tre) resonated with Ovid's famous rendering of Narcissus's story. As in the case of Ovid and Narcissus's story, the societal mechanism or configuration in *Daniel Deronda* has a counterpart, a second thread that is closely interwoven with the first: the story of Echo. Her story will accompany and resonate with our examination of the alternative societal configuration George Eliot's novel unfolds and emphatically advocates. As her name, Echo, already indicates, this societal mechanism or configuration will not primarily be concerned with vision, as has been the one oriented on Narcissus, but with sound, or more precisely, with voice: *ἡ ἠχή*, and later poetically also *ἡ ἠχώ*, denoting sound, noise, cry of sorrow, rumour, talk[33]. In Ovid's narrative, Echo is presented as a "vocalis nymphe" (III, 357): she is articulate, strong-voiced, she can tell a story[34] – so much so that she arouses Juno's anger: the talkative story-teller Echo had repeatedly detained Juno from catching Jove red-handed, amusing himself with nymphs. Juno's punishment aims at Echo's very essence as a "vocalis nymphe": Juno severely reduces Echo's power over her voice to the shortest of uses ("'linguae, qua sum delusa, potestas | parva tibi dabitur vocisque brevissimus usus'" (III, 366-367)) – she cannot start speaking herself, all she can do is repeat the last words she has heard. Juno's punishment transforms the "vocalis nymphe" into "resonabilis Echo" (III, 358), the resounding Echo that has found its way into our vocabulary. This *resonabilis* Echo falls in love with Narcissus, who – despite Echo's ingenious love talk that makes the most of her reduced vocal faculties and, as Gayatri Spivak shows, even transgresses her punishment at one point[35] – rejects her love ("ante […] emoriar,

33 Cf. Liddell/Scott's standard dictionary (2002).

34 This aspect often gets lost in the English translation, where "vocalis nymphe" is translated as "babling Nymph" (Arthur Golding), "babbling Echo" (Dr. Garth), "noisy nymph" (Henry T. Riley) or "a nymph who could not stay quiet" (Stanley Lombardo). We will come back to the importance of Echo's faculties of voice (before the punishment) that seems to have given her some sort of power over a goddess *in the service* of a god.

35 "Ovid 'quotes' her except when Narcissus asks, *Quid…me fugis* (Why do you fly from me)? Caught in the discrepancy between second person interrogative (*fugis*) and the imperative (*fugi*), Ovid cannot allow her to *be*, even Echo, so that Narcissus, flying from her, could have made of the ethical structure of response a fulfilled antiphone. He re-

quam sit tibi copia nostri" (III, 391)). And indeed, instead of returning Echo's love, Narcissus, consumed by the vanity of his impossible, self-referential love, dies – his beautiful body disappears ("nusquam corpus erat" (III, 509)), all that can be found in its place is a "flower with white leaves surrounding a saffron center" (Ovid 2010, 81). Interestingly enough, Echo's body is consumed as well ("et tenuant vigiles corpus miserabile curae, | adducitque cutem macies, et in aëra sucus | corporis omnis abit" (III, 397-398)), what remains are bones and her voice ("vox tantum atque ossa supersunt" (III, 398)), the bones are said to have been transformed into stone ("ossa ferunt lapidis traxisse figuram" (III, 399)). Ovid's "Narcissus and Echo" poem thus narrates the story of unfulfilled, of failing love that is the story of (corporeal) decay and death. However, disregarding the 'products' of the metamorphoses, flower and stone, two important 'forces' withstand the tragedy of Narcissus and Echo as loose ends that stick out of the myth's narrative: *voice* and *love* ("haeret amor" (III, 395), "vox manet" (III, 399)). Echo's voice and love outlast the tragedy of vain, unloving self-referentiality – Narcissus's withering death has been a punishment for his not responding to the desires of others[36] – however, they outlast this deathly tragedy only as potentials. Potentials with quite severe limitations: (1) both are bodyless, separated from a bearing agency that is necessary to effectively realise these potentials. The realisation of Echo's potentials means nothing less than the realisation of the fulfilled, the living unity of love that failed as a result of Narcissus's unloving self-referentiality. This tragic, deathly failing makes Echo's uniting, living love emerge from Ovid's poem as a desideratum. (2) Juno's punishment condemns Echo's voice to a certain passivity – a childish (*in-fans*) *speech*-less babbling, one could say, just imitating the sounds addressed to it – since this voice cannot be initiative, but completely relies on some action directed against it from somewhere else, in order to trigger its resounding, its answering faculties.

George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* uses this "rhetorical philosopheme called Echo" (Spivak 1996, 181) in order to develop a particular configuration of society and time – or rather history. For this configuration, Echo's restricted vocal faculties, her (merely) resounding voice – *resonabilis Echo* – occupy a pivotal, and indeed foundational function: Echo's resounding voice holds a living connection to the past, it guarantees that the memory of the past forms an omnipresent, a binding horizon and basis for future actions and events.

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ports her speech in the name of Narcissus: *quot dixit, verba recepit* – he receives back the words he says." (Spivak 1996, 183)

36 Cf. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1996, 183).

The novel quite cunningly inscribes the philosopheme of resounding Echo in Mirah's and Daniel's biography and personal talents: both are, already as children, blessed with exceptionally beautiful voices. These voices, as turns out, echo their mothers' singing talents and express a maternal tie that firmly connects them to their Jewish ancestry.

Mirah Lapidoth carries the "Narcissus and Echo" story already in her name: *Mir*ah, French *se mirer*, to mirror oneself; and *Lapid*oth, Latin *lapis, lapidis*, 'stone' (remember that Echo's bones are said to have been transformed into stone)[37]. No wonder then that Daniel finds her, Narcissus-like, with "her eyes fixed on the river with a look of immovable, statue-like despair" (187), no wonder that, Echo-like, her "voice was considered wonderful for a child" (213). The "'little hymn'" (373) Mirah sings for Daniel and the Meyricks explicitly links her singing abilities to her mother: the "'little hymn'" "'is the Hebrew hymn she *remembers* her mother singing over her when she lay in her cot,'" (373; emph. J.U.) a hymn Mirah's mother "'sang so often, so often [notice the performative Echo!]: and then she taught me to sing it with her: it was the first I ever sang"' (210). Mirah's singing echoes her mother's, and this echo sets free remarkable capacities of memory:

> "Is it not wonderful how I remember the voices better than anything else? I think *they must go deeper into us than other things*. I have often fancied heaven might be made of voices." (371; emph. J.U.)

This vocal memory that goes "deeper into us than other things" is closely associated with the mother's *love*: "Friendships begin with liking or gratitude – roots that can be pulled up. Mother's love begins deeper down." (374). As unspectacular and loose as this association might seem at the first glance, with regard to the philosopheme of resounding Echo, the fundamental construction of the mechanism or configuration we are examining begins to take shape with this association. The memory of resounding voices and (mother's) love are brought into resonance, establishing a unity of history that is in turn held together by these two transcendental principles.

Significantly, Mirah's maternal, vocal memory is strongly connected with (matrilineal!) Judaism, as not only the little Hebrew hymn, but also the memory of the chanting in the synagogue indicate:

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37 Cf. Claudia Nystul, who reads her name (alluding to *se mirer* and 'lapidary') as sign for a maternal space (1983, 49) and Sarah Gates, interpreting Mirah as "the perfect mirror (as her name, 'Mirah,' suggests) before which [Daniel's] masculine identity can constitute itself" (2001, 715).

> " […] my mother used to take me to the synagogue, and I *remember* sitting on her knee and looking through the railing and hearing the chanting and singing" (214; emph. J.U.).

This third element, (1) echoing memory of the singing voice, (2) maternal love, (3) Judaism, completes the constellation that serves as the basis for the societal, historical configuration the novel develops and that we will retrace in the following. It is this constellation that the central thirty-second chapter of the novel presents and unfolds. What this important chapter does is to exhibit the resonance of Mirah's and Daniel's stories that have been outlined in bits and pieces in the previous chapters. We have not only heard of little Mirah's exceptional voice, but also of Daniel's voice as a child being "one of those thrilling boy voices which seem to bring an idyllic heaven and earth before our eyes" (168). Significantly enough, he performed a song called "'Sweet Echo'" (168) before an enthusiastic domestic audience. However, that this "Sweet Echo" was actually echoing his mother's wonderful voice – and this is to say Daniel's Jewish ancestry, turns out only in retrospect. The parallelism of Mirah's and Daniel's search for their mothers gives the first hint of these two characters' resonance – however, the full field of implications is not revealed until chapter thirty-two.

Chapter thirty-two could roughly be divided into four functional parts: (1) Daniel's visit to the synagogue in Frankfort, interrupted by (2) a flashback recalling Daniel's sympathy and lack of persistent course, (3) Mirah's singing (Beethoven, Gordigiani, Schubert and the little Hebrew Hymn) to Daniel and the Meyricks, (4) Mrs Meyrick's letter to Daniel and dialogues (between the Meyricks and also Daniel, the Meyricks and Mirah) that reflect on voice and religion, explicitly bringing the other functional units together.

The flashback recalling Daniel's sympathy and his lack of persistent course strongly marks the synagogue scene as a crucial scene of initiation. Interrupting the synagogue scene with this flashback unequivocally charges this scene with importance; it cannot but give an answer to Daniel's searching call for "some external event, or some inward light, that would urge [Daniel] into a definite line of action" (365). Daniel experiences an answer to this call in the form of an echo of voices that, *for him*, constitutes a "binding history":

> The Hebrew liturgy, like others, has its transitions of litany, lyric, proclamation, dry statement and blessing; but this evening, *all were one for Deronda*: the chant of the *Chazan's* or Reader's *grand wide-ranging voice* with its passage from monotony to sudden cries, the *outburst of sweet boys' voices* from the little choir, the devotional swaying of men's bodies backward and forward, the very commonness of the building and shabbiness of the scene where a national faith, which had *penetrated* the thinking of half the world, and moulded the splendid

> forms of that world's religion, *was finding a remote, obscure echo – all were blent for him* as *one expression of a binding history, tragic and yet glorious*. (367-368; emph. J.U.)

This scene entails, encrypted and sketchy, the very essence of 'Echo's historical configuration' and Daniel's task/function in that configuration. In order to work that out, it is important to note the fundamental distinction that bifurcates this passage: "transition", "passage", the multiple, versus 'the one'. Deronda is inundated with an abundance of impressions, however, *for him*, and that is important, for him, "all were one", "for him*"*, "all were blent […] as one expression of a binding history, tragic and yet glorious". It is in *him*, and despite the shabbiness of the scene, that the "national faith" finds "a remote, obscure echo". This is the key aspect: Daniel does not experience the unity of an echo, the expression of a binding history, because he has found a place, the old synagogue, where this unity would still be present. In him the national faith – that has sunk into "the very commonness of the building and shabbiness of the scene", that has, so to speak, lost its living body – finds a remote, obscure echo. Daniel resonates with the decayed national faith, he *is* the echo that blends all to one, all to one expression of a binding history. That is why "the frigid idea [darts into his mind] that he had probably been alone in his feeling" (368) – he had indeed probably been alone in his feeling. The important question, why it is (only) Daniel who resonates with the history of the national faith and who is able to (re-)establish the unity of nation and history will have to be answered later, and in great detail. However, we should note that this resonance, this echo spans or generates meaningful, full history: the "union with what is remote" (366) establishes a connection to the past, a "sorrowing memory" (366) that does not have to stay "pathetic" (366), but points towards the future, sets a task, outlines a persistent, eschatological course. The initiation that Daniel undergoes in the synagogue makes him experience that his regarding "Judaism as a sort of eccentric *fossilised* form" (363; emph. J.U.) has led him to wrong conclusions: Judaism, like Echo, may have lost its living body (and thus this lost body may well be fossilised, turned into stone); however, "the soul of Judaism is not dead" (532), "the soul of Israel [is] alive as a seed among tombs" (521), it is "something still throbbing in human lives" (363). This something that has survived are – resounding voices that form the "heritage of memory" (521), and maternal love that binds the whole together, that is the condition of the "divine Unity" (532) and of fulfilled, meaningful history. The effect of combining Daniel's initiatory synagogue scene with Mirah singing the little Hebrew hymn, musing on the extraordinary mnemonic powers of voice and on mother's love that goes deeper

than anything else, in the very little space of one dense chapter, is to crystallise Judaism's two fundamental potentials: resounding, mnemonic voice and binding, uniting love. These two, voice and love, constitute – as potentials that, under very special circumstances, can and have to be realised – the societal and historical configuration *Daniel Deronda* advocates. These two potentials are familiar to us: we know them from the ending of Echo's story. Is it bold to claim that this thread of the novel can be read as a rewriting, a sequel, so to speak, of Ovid's "Narcissus and Echo"? A rewriting attempting to create an alternative, happy ending that realises what Narcissus's unloving deathly self-referentiality and self-sufficiency had foreclosed? In this light, the task is quite clear: Echo has to regain a body and her full power of voice, which seems to be only possible when her love finds a fitting counterpart and thus realises itself. As we will see, the novel enacts this task on several levels. Here is how Mordecai puts this task, on the most abstract, the macro-level:

> Revive the organic centre: let the unity of Israel which has made the growth and form of its religion be an outward reality. Looking towards a land and a polity, our dispersed people in all the ends of the earth may share the dignity of a *national life which has a voice* among the peoples of the East and the West – which will plant the wisdom and skill of our race so that it may be, as of old, a medium of transmission and understanding. (532; emph. J.U.)

Some pages before this abstract definition of the task, the novel had smuggled in – without any comment or motivation – a very telling quotation of Percy Bysshe Shelley:

> "As thought by thought is piled, till some *great truth*
> Is loosened, and the nations *echo* round." (522; emph. J.U.)

One of the participants of the philosophers' club had been reading out this passage from *Prometheus Unbound*, when Daniel entered the room. To underline the symbolic significance of this 'comment' on Daniel's appearance, the reader and Daniel pun with the adjective "great" that prominently features in the quotation Daniel's entrance had interrupted:

> "Is the gentleman anonymous? Is he a Great Unknown?" […]
>
> "My name is Daniel Deronda. I am unknown, but not in any sense great." (522)

Exactly as in the synagogue scene, the sense that Daniel *is himself* this "great truth" that is loosened and makes the nations *echo* round suggests itself very strongly, but remains unknown, unfounded. To put it in Hegelian words, Daniel has not yet come to himself. The circle of voice, love, Judaism and body-to-come has not yet been closed (De*ronda*). This is what the synagogue scene of

chapter thirty-two vividly displays when Daniel's initiatory and jubilatory experience of remote voices finding an echo in him is interrupted by a quite unpleasant event:

> he felt a hand on his arm, and turning with the rather unpleasant sensation which this abrupt sort of claim is apt to bring, he saw close to him the white-bearded face of that neighbour, who said to him in German, "Excuse me, young gentleman – allow me – what is your parentage – your mother's family – her maiden name?"
>
> Deronda had a strongly resistant feeling: he was inclined to shake off hastily *the touch* on his arm; but he managed to slip it away and said coldly, "I am an Englishman." (368; emph. J.U.)

The scene is unpleasant to the hero-to-be of this configuration, because the question of his mother's maiden name very literally touches a sore spot: as his slipping the touch away indicates, Daniel is made aware of the distance that seems to separate himself from what he moments before felt finding an echoing unity in him. He cannot know that it is exactly the fact that his answer reflects, the fact that he *is* (also!) "'an Englishman'" (or, as Mordecai says, "'an accomplished Egyptian'" (657)), that opens the pathetic circle of "sorrowing memory" (*De-ronda*) in order to reclose the finite-infinite circle of meaningful history in the end, "'no longer shrinking in proud wrath from the touch of him who seemed to be claiming you as a Jew'" (721). Through the scene's combination with Mirah's singing and the following dialogue about voice, religion and mother's love, Daniel's apparent lack of maternal bond and love is somewhat soothed by Mirah, who emphasises the importance and significance of the resonance Daniel felt so strongly:

> "Like what you were saying about the influences of voices," said Deronda, looking at Mirah. "I don't think your hymn would have had more expression for me if I had known the words. I went to the synagogue at Frankfort before I came home, and the service impressed me just as much as if I had followed the words – perhaps more."
>
> "Oh, was it great to you? Did it go to your heart?" said Mirah, eagerly. "I thought none but our people would feel that." (374)

What makes the two scenes, Daniel's synagogue scene and Mirah's singing the hymn, resonate is their both being deeply moved by (Hebrew) words that neither Daniel nor Mirah know. This 'lack of knowledge' is paralleled by their lack of knowledge about Judaism in general. Mirah "says herself she […] does not half know her people's religion" (362), that she is "ignorant" (370), Daniel is conscious "of knowing hardly anything about modern Judaism or the inner Jewish

history" (363). The novel conceptualises this not knowing the words, not understanding the language as childish, in-fantile (speech-less): Mirah sings the

> little hymn of quaint melancholy intervals, with syllables that really seemed *childish lisping* to her audience; but the voice in which she gave it forth had gathered even a sweeter, more cooing tenderness than was heard in her other songs (374; emph. J.U.).

However, for both Daniel and Mirah, these "'lisped syllables are very full of meaning'" (374), a fact that Mrs Meyrick explains with a "'mother's love'": "'A mother hears something like a lisp in her children's talk to the very last'" (374). Thus the impression the synagogue visit and Mirah's singing the Hebrew hymn had on Daniel is an expression of the mother's love he is so concerned about. Without any question, he participates in that love, which suggests very much that Mirah is not mistaken with her thought that "none but our people would feel that" – after chapter thirty-two, it is no great surprise that Daniel turns out to be indeed of this people.

Oliver Lovesey is right then that the "singing voice in *Daniel Deronda* is a mythical force that allows access to racial memory and through it, to inheritance" (1998, 515). Moreover, it is, at the same time, an expression of a mother's love that unites this memory and people. However, the in-fantile state of a mere lisping echoing "without understanding" (536) has to be overcome when this unity is to become an "outward reality" (532) and bring forward "a national life which has a voice among the peoples of the East and the West" (532). In order to regain her full power of voice and a living, strong body, Echo, the "remembered voice of the Jewish mother", has to find (herself) "a pathway to the written law of the father" (Lovesey 1998, 515) – and close this circle of mother, child and father by coming to (know) itself in the end. The decisive element in this coming to itself, this overcoming the in-fantile state of babbling voice, is Daniel's interesting relation to Mordecai, who, himself in-fantile (voice-less) in some respect, brings the potential of knowledge into the configuration, the seed, so to speak, which will find its fertile soil in Daniel.

Two dandies – clothes, heroism and waiting for vocation

Despite Grandcourt's and Daniel's striking differences, many, mostly feminist, critics claim a fundamental commonality between these two characters. Are Daniel Deronda and Henleigh Grandcourt "two sides of the patriarchal coin" (Gates 2001, 713), "twins in their desires, if not their methods, for making women submit" (Sypher 1996, 512)? Does only a "transfer of power, […] from

Grandcourt to [Daniel], from tyrant-father to republican-brother" (Doyle 2008, 362) take place? For sure, the feminist observation of patriarchy's continuity through these two characters is a well-founded and important one. However, there might be another, more specific commonality. A commonality that would not only give some account of patriarchy's continuity, but also of the difference that separates Daniel Deronda and Grandcourt. The hint for this, quite surprising, commonality is present in Daniel's name: *Dan*iel (or "*Dan*" as he is sometimes called) *De*ronda – *Dan*iel *De*ronda: Daniel Deronda and Grandcourt are both *dandies* – or, to put it more precisely, between them very different traits that have been ascribed to 'the dandy' by eminent critics have been divided. Thus Daniel and Grandcourt represent strongly differing notions of 'the dandy' – however, as dandies, they are answers to the same problem.

As three influent 'theorists' of 'the dandy' – Thomas Carlyle, Barbey d'Aurevilly and Charles Baudelaire – agree, the phenomenon of 'the dandy' is "the consequence of a certain state of society" (Barbey d'Aurevilly 1988, 40) *["la conséquence d'un certain état de société" (Barbey d'Aurevilly 1966, 679)]* – or of "'distracted times'" (Carlyle 2000, 201) as Thomas Carlyle's Professor Teufelsdröckh puts it. According to Charles Baudelaire, this specific state of society is characterised by the transitory constellation of an old, hierarchical – aristocratic and religious – order that has been overturned and a new order yet to be fully established:

> Dandyism appears above all in periods of transition, when democracy is not yet all-powerful, and aristocracy is only just beginning to totter and fall. (Baudelaire 1978, 28)
>
> *[Le dandysme apparaît surtout aux époques transitoire où la démocratie n'est pas encore toute-puissante, où l'aristocratie n'est que partiellement chancelante et avilie. (Baudelaire 1976, 711)]*

The dandy is a phenomenon of the interval, a phenomenon between the orders, and between the *times*, an untimely transporter of what, in some sense, has already ceased to be. This does not imply any idea of how he might handle the untimely fright he has the potential to actualise – all that is said is that he is an anachronistic figure, an *ekstasis* of a past order that reaches into a present and future order that was constituted as something new, something other.

Charles Baudelaire and especially Thomas Carlyle put this constellation of 'between orders', one ceasing, the other still frail in its presently being established, in connection with religion. For Charles Baudelaire it is "not altogether wrong to consider dandyism as a kind of religion" (Baudelaire 1978, 28) *["considerer le dandysme comme une espèce de religion" (Baudelaire 1976, 711)]*,

Thomas Carlyle's Professor Teufelsdröckh satirically elaborates on this idea: the "Dandiacal Sect" (2000, 202) is one "strange shape" in which a "homeless" Religious principle "bodies itself forth":

> 'In these distracted times, […] when the Religious Principle, driven out of most Churches, either lies unseen in the hearts of good men, looking and longing silently working there towards some new Revelation; or else *wanders homeless over the world*, like a *disembodied soul seeking its terrestrial organization*, – into how many shapes, of Superstition and Fanaticism, does it not tentatively and errantly cast itself! […] [T]hus Sect after Sect, and Church after Church, *bodies itself forth*, and melts again into new metamorphosis.' (2000, 201-202; emph. J.U.)

This passage's resonance with the constellation that George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* develops is astonishing; the 'either/or' construction very much sketches the two strands of the novel and their two very different dealings with "these distracted times": the lying unseen of the Religious Principle in the hearts of good men, longing for some new Revelation is exactly what 'Echo's binding history' is about, the longing and working towards "a time when the soul of man was waking to pulses which had for centuries been beating in him unfelt" (124). The other side of the 'either/or' construction looks familiar as well: the homeless wandering of the Religious Principle resonates with Lukács's severance of the bond with the transcendental home (Lukács 1971, 122), and there are other, more striking, resonances of the 'narcissistic spectacle' with the figure of 'the dandy' that will be worked out in a minute. Before that, however, we have to note that in the passage quoted above, the concept of embodiment, of incarnation, of the "disembodied soul seeking its terrestrial organization", is severed from the Religious Principle in the hearts of good men, from the working towards a new Revelation. Instead, it is the driving motor of "Superstition and Fanaticism". 'The dandy' is one of its incarnations, one of its "strange shape[s]" – a dubious figure that is heavily satirised in the following. It is exactly in breaking this severance, in bringing together the waking to pulses in the hearts of good men *and* the embodiment, the incarnation of the Religious Principle in the 'dandiacal' figure of *Dan*iel *De*ronda, that George Eliot's novel innovatively makes use of dandyism to give birth to a new Revelation that converts distracted times into meaningful history.

However, Thomas Carlyle's/Professor Teufelsdröckh's "Dandiacal Sect", far from incorporating a New Revelation, is "but a new modification, adapted to the new time, of that primeval Superstition, *Self-worship*" (2000, 202). This narcissism, analogue to the mechanism of the narcissistic spectacle we have analysed above, is in its very essence centred around self-fashioning:

> A Dandy is a Clothes-wearing Man, a Man whose trade, office and existence consists in the wearing of Clothes […] as others dress to live, he lives to dress. (Carlyle 2000, 200)

Being, as Barbey d'Aurevilly argues, a product of "vanity" (1988, 23) *["vanité" (1966, 669)]* and "ennui"[38] *["ennui" (1966, 672)]*, the dandy is characterised by a "quenchless thirst for the applause of the gallery" (1988, 23) *["inextinguible soif des applaudissements de la galerie" (1966, 669)]*: "do but look at him, and he is contented" (Carlyle 2000, 201) – the dandy is living (for) spectacle:

> And when they came down again at five o'clock, equipped for their boating, the scene was as good as a theatrical representation for all beholders. This handsome, fair-skinned English couple, manifesting the *usual eccentricity of their nation*, both of them *proud, pale, and calm*, *without a smile on their faces*, moving like creatures who were fulfilling a supernatural destiny – *it was a thing to go out and see, a thing to paint*. The husband's chest, back, and arms, showed very well in his close-fitting dress, and the wife was declared to be a statue. (681; emph. J.U.)

And indeed, the fancy portrait that would have resulted from this theatrical representation would have "epitomized all that was Dandy about the fashionable classes under George III and George IV" (Witemeyer 1979, 96). It is not only the "close-fitting dress" "very well" showing Grandcourt's "chest, back and arms" – a characteristic of the feudal, *male* aristocratic fashion that translated into modern *female* fashion only, being replaced in the 'modern' male fashion by the functionality, uniformity and sobriety of the suit – but also the characteristic traits ascribed to the *English* couple: "the usual eccentricity of their nation, both of them *proud, pale, and calm, without a smile on their faces*". These characteristics strikingly resonate with Barbey d'Aurevilly's description of 'the dandy', stressing that dandies "differ by all the physiology of a race" (1988, 27) *["ils diffèrent de toute la physiologie d'une race" (1966, 671)]*: dandies are "people of the north, lymphatic and pale, cold like their mother the sea" (1988, 27) *["hommes du Nord, lymphatiques et pâles; froids comme la mer dont ils sont les fils" (1966, 671)]*. The dandy is known for his "frigid languor" (1988, 45) *["langueur froide" (1966, 683)]* which results in the fact that his triumphs carry the "insolence of disinterestedness" (1988, 48) *["l'insolence du désintéressement" (1966, 686)]*. This is no coincidence or expression of a mean character – this disinterest or indifference defines the dandy's essence, because "independence makes the Dandy" (1988, 51) *["le Dandy, c'est l'indépendance" (1966, 689)]*:

38 Missing in the English translation due to a paraphrase (cf. Barbey d'Aurevilly 1988, 28).

> His indolence forbade his being lively, for to be lively is to be excited; to be excited is to care about something, and to care about anything is to shew oneself inferior; but he was always cool and said just the right thing. (1988, 56)
>
> *[Son indolence ne lui permettait pas d'avoir de la verve, parce qu'avoir de la verve, c'est se passionner; se passionner, c'est tenir à quelque chose, et tenir à quelque chose, c'est se mettre inférieur; mais de sang-froid il avait du trait, comme nous disons en France. (1966, 694)]*

Thomas Carlyle ironically even goes so far as to question the dandy's being "a living object" – at least, he is "a visual object, or thing that will reflect rays of light" (2000, 201) – which reminds us very much of Grandcourt, whose "faded fairness resembling that of an actress when bare of the artificial white and red" (111) we interpreted as the quite lifeless surface of a mirror. Grandcourt's characteristic gaze, "his long narrow grey eyes express[ing] nothing but indifference" (111) is dandiacal as well:

> Sometimes there came into his clever eyes a look of glacial indifference without contempt, as becomes a consummate Dandy, a man who bears within him something superior to the visible world. (Barbey d'Aurevilly 1988, 54)
>
> *[ces yeux sagaces savaient se glacer d'indifférence sans mépris, comme il convient à un Dandy consommé, à un homme qui porte en lui quelque chose de supérieur au monde visible. (Barbey d'Aurevilly 1966, 692)]*

One of the situations that ask for this *indifference* is gambling loss – we should not forget that one of the greatest dandies, George Brummel, ruined himself with gambling:

> vast sums were lost with that perfect indifference, which was for the Dandies the equivalent of the gladiator's death in the circus. (1988, 64)
>
> *[on perdait des sommes immenses avec l'indifférence parfaite qui, dans ces occasions, était pour les Dandys ce qu'était la grâce pour les gladiateurs tombant au Cirque. (Barbey d'Aurevilly 1966, 704)]*

It is no coincidence that many of the traits ascribed to the dandy do not only resonate with Grandcourt, but also with Gwendolen. The dandy's and the courtesan's *seductive powers* are closely related:

> The qualities that made the power of the Dandy would have made the fortune of the courtesan. (1988, 49)
>
> *[Les qualités d'où le Dandy tirait sa puissance étaient de celles qui eussent fait la fortune de la courtisane. (Barbey d'Aurevilly 1966, 688)]*

The fact that "*Fashionable Novels*" are the Dandiacal Sect's "Sacred Books" (Carlyle 2000, 203) and that the life of the dandy "was an influence, that is to say something which cannot be told" (Barbey d'Aurevilly 1988, 35) *["Sa vie*

tout entière fut une influence, c'est-à-dire ce qui ne peut guères se raconter" (Barbey d'Aurevilly 1966, 676)] shall only be briefly mentioned – they clearly resonate with the narratological/meta-poetical implications of Gwendolen's story worked out above. However, these two details point towards a very important, more fundamental implication: the dandy as an indifferent, cold, pale, clothes-wearing Man of spectacle has a very own, specific concept of time:

> the Dandy has a Thinking-principle in him, and some notions of Time and Space, is there not in this life-devotedness to Cloth, in this so willing sacrifice of the immortal to the Perishable, something (though in reverse order) of that blending and identification of Eternity with Time, which, as we have seen, constitutes the Prophetic character? (Carlyle 2000, 200-201)

This type of dandy, represented in the novel by Grandcourt, is a prophet in reverse. The reversion that separates him from the "Prophetic character" is a reversion *of time*: both, the prophet *and* the dandy as a clothes-wearing Man are phenomena of time, embodiments of the relations of the immortal and the perishable, of *eternity and time*. The clothes-wearing Man opts for the "Perishable"– we have seen the close connection of fashion and death – whereas the "Prophetic character" stands for eternity and the immortal. Being conceptualised in binary opposition, they mutually contain each other in negation: the clothes-wearing man's sacrifice of eternity and of immortality is but a negation of the prophet's sacrifice of time and the Perishable, and the other way round. The prophet's sacrifice might look no real sacrifice at first glance; however, the binary opposition that organises the clothes-wearing man and the prophet is the very opposition we encountered earlier in the either/or construction: it is a variant of the well-known body/soul dualism, of the non-realised pulses in the hearts of good men, longing for a New Revelation and the incarnation in strange and perishable, but real, outward, living – and therefore perishable – shapes. The prophet, in his heart, memory and prophecy, conserves the eternal, the immortal. However, his memory and prophecy have to remain bodiless, unstained by the perishable, in order to protect the eternal from time. The bodying forth in the form of the clothes-wearing dandy, on the other hand, exposes the dandy's historic fright to the power of time by transporting it, incarnating it into the realm of mortality, of death, of the perishable – into the realm of fashion. The binary construction of the two does not allow continuity or a transversal movement between the two: *either* bodiless eternity, immortality, *or* incarnation into the perishable, time, death. In this constellation, memory and eternity cannot find an expression or realisation that has an effect on the world and its "distracted times" – the Religious Principle cannot realise itself in a 'true' "terrestrial or-

ganization", disembodied soul and incarnation in strange shapes coexist without finding a synthesis – no new transcendental home can be constituted. The search of the disembodied soul, its struggle against time proceeds and is caught in an endless circle of "metamorphosis".

Daniel *De-ronda* breaks this circle. He *is* (to be) the synthesis of soul and body – he is capable of incorporating this synthesis, because he is at once dandy and "one of the historical men" (433). The novel very prudently establishes the latter characteristic: Daniel's "boyish love of universal history" (180), the fact that "one of his favourite protests was against the severance of past and present history" (206) and his search for "wide-sweeping connections with all life and history" (188) mark and establish Daniel's very special relation to time – or rather, his affinity to history. He is not himself a prophetic character, but his affinity to history, his longing for "wide-sweeping connections with all life and history" make him susceptible to Mordecai's prophecies, attract him towards the prophet, are the condition of possibility for their future unity. However, despite his quite 'un-dandiacal' affinity to history, Daniel, in other respects, perfectly represents crucial traits of 'the dandy': especially his "distinct type of physiognomy" (Baudelaire 1978, 26) *["physionomie distinct" (Baudelaire 1976, 709)]* plays a strikingly important role in the novel. Already as a boy he is described as embodying the idea of beauty:

> Still he was handsomer than any of them, and when he was thirteen might have served as model for any painter who wanted to image *the most memorable* of boys: you could hardly have seen his face thoroughly meeting yours without believing that *human creatures had done nobly in times past, and might do more nobly in time to come*. The finest childlike faces have this consecrating power, and make us shudder anew at all the grossness and basely-wrought griefs of the world, lest they should enter here and defile. (166; emph. J.U.)

The boy Daniel does not "cultivate the idea of beauty" (Baudelaire 1978, 27) in his person, as Charles Baudelaire says of the dandy *["Ces êtres n'ont pas d'autre état que de cultiver l'idée du beau dans leur personne" (Baudelaire 1976, 710)]*. His beauty has not to be made, to be produced, to be cultivated, is not at all a result of self-fashioning – it is a (God-given) *talent*. Thus Daniel's beauty cannot be read as a *characteristic* that distinguishes him as an individual and arouses admiration – it is the impersonal expression of human beauty itself. Contrary to the fancy portraits discussed above, Daniel's name would not feature in the name of the portrait for whom he was modelling ("Mrs Siddons as …") – this imaginary portrait does not depict an individual, it depicts the idea of the epic hero, who is "never an individual" (Lukács 1971, 66). It images "the

most *memorable* of boys" in whose beauty the heroic deeds of the past and the future find an expression and their historical unity. The implications of time and history of this portrait reverse the implications of time that our analysis of the fancy portrait traced: whereas the fancy portrait cites and mirrors the past in order to create one radiating moment, the imaginary portrait of the most memorable of boys unfolds from itself the noble history of human deeds – one is contraction in one perishable but radiating moment, the other an unfolding of immortal, impersonal, heroic and noble human history.

It is hardly astonishing that this most memorable of boys, whose voice, we remember, "was one of those thrilling boy voices which seem to bring an idyllic heaven and earth before our eyes" (168), grows into a "handsome young gentleman" (393):

> The voice, sometimes audible in subdued snatches of song, had turned out merely a high baritone; indeed, only to look at his lithe, powerful frame and the firm gravity of his face would have been enough for an experienced guess that he had no rare and ravishing tenor such as nature reluctantly makes at some sacrifice. *Look at his hands*: they are not small and dimpled, with tapering fingers that seem to have only a deprecating touch: they are long, flexible, firmly-grasping hands, such as Titian has painted in a picture where he wanted to show the combination of *refinement with force*. And there is something of a likeness, too, between the faces belonging to the hands – in both the uniform pale-brown skin, the perpendicular brow, the calmly penetrating eyes. Not seraphic any longer: thoroughly terrestrial and manly; but still of a kind to raise belief in a human dignity which can afford to recognize poor relations. (186; emph. J.U.)

Without any question, Daniel is one of those men, who, "rich in native energy, may conceive the idea of establishing a new kind of aristocracy" (Baudelaire 1978, 28) *["quelques hommes [...] tous riches de force native, peuvent concevoir le projet de fonder une espèce nouvelle d'aristocratie" (Baudelaire 1976, 711)]*: he will not, as a man "whose soul is set in the royalty of discernment and resolve, deny his rank" (538), hesitate to realise the "aristocracy" of "distinction in sorrow" (517) which will find its true shape in the nation of Israel:

> "If there are ranks in suffering, Israel takes precedence of all the nations – if the duration of sorrows and the patience with which they are borne ennoble, the Jews are among the aristocracy of every land […]" (517).

Daniel's "foreshadowed capability of heroism" (473) does not only show in "his lithe, powerful frame and the firm gravity of his face", but also in "his aristocratic superiority of mind" (Baudelaire 1978, 27) *["la supériorité aristocratique de son esprit" (Baudelaire 1976, 710)]*:

> The strongest tendencies of his nature were rushing in one current – the fervent affectionateness which made him delight in meeting the wish of beings near to him, and the imaginative *need of some far-reaching relation to make the horizon* of his immediate, daily acts. It has to be admitted that in this classical, romantic, world-historic position of his, bringing as it were from its hiding-place *his hereditary armour*, he wore – but so, one must suppose, did the most ancient heroes, whether Semitic or Japhetic – the summer costume of his contemporaries. He did not reflect that the drab tints were becoming to him, for he rarely went to the expense of such thinking; but his own depth of colouring, which made the becomingness, got an added radiance in the eyes, a fleeting and returning glow in the skin, as he entered the house wondering what exactly he should find. (746; emph. J.U.)

Contrary to the dandy as a clothes-wearing Man, Daniel's armour does not consist in the "elegant indifference which he wore like armour", which makes dandies like Grandcourt "invulnerable" (Barbey d'Aurevilly 1988, 64) *["cette élégante froideur qu'il portait sur lui comme une armure et qui le rendait invulnérable" (Barbey d'Aurevilly 1966, 703)]*. He is neither lymphatic nor pale: "his own depth of colouring", the "glow in the skin", the "radiance in the eyes" tell us about the verve, the passion with which Daniel encounters the world, determined "to make a little difference for the better" (365). Daniel, like his mother, has rid himself "of the Jewish tatters" (635) and this difference to Mordecai's "threadbare clothing" (385) plays, as we will see, a vital part in the union of these two characters. However, unlike the clothes-wearing Man, Daniel does not merely live to dress. He lives heroically for the "great outward deed" (536). His hereditary armour ranks him among the few select "*historical* men" (433; emph. J.U.), he is to fulfil a "genuine historical role" (Chase 1978, 216). This hereditary armour does not show like the "drab tints" of Daniel's summer costume – it does not play a part in the vanity of seductive self-fashioning. It is somewhat deeper down, beneath, closer to the memories of a throbbing heart, connecting him with history. However, Daniel brings this armour "from its hiding place"; in him the armour shows itself – without fashioning himself as a hero, he is nevertheless identifiable as that very hero: Kalonymos and Mordecai, both in their first meeting Deronda as a stranger, see in him – or better feel him – the Jewish saviour that he eventually turns out to be. Perhaps Leonorah/Alcharisi was not utterly mistaken in suspecting the identifying feature "'tattooed under our clothes'" (635): significantly, according to the narrator, it was the hands ("Look at his hands") and the "faces belonging to the hands" that showed the "combination of refinement with force" (186). Kalonymos's and Mordecai's asking for Daniel's "'mother's family'" (368) or his belonging to "'our race'" (387) is

quite astonishingly preceded by the very same gesture: in the synagogue, "he felt a hand on his arm" (368), in the bookshop "Deronda felt a thin hand pressing his arm tightly" (387). Daniel recognises his mother – and with that, his own Jewish ancestry – by her hand, that "very much smaller, was of the same type" as his own (633) and her "face that held the likeness of his own" (634). As much as Grandcourt and Gwendolen defined themselves by their clothes, by (self-) fashioning, Daniel's Jewish hereditary armour, his being part of a fulfilled, of an eschatological history, seems to be closely connected with skin, especially with the grasp of hands:

> There was a foreshadowing of some painful collision: on the one side the grasp of Mordecai's dying hand on him, with all the ideals and prospects it aroused; on the other the fair creature in silk and gems […]. (564)

Skin and silk, gems and "radiance in the eyes" are closely related, are connected by an even conventionalised similarity – however, the novel stages their difference: silk and gems are merely mirror-images of skin and eyes, they operate in the distance – they are instruments of *seduction*. For sure touching the silk, feeling its smoothness is possible – it will feel smooth *like* skin, but is *not quite* skin; the surface of the cloth seduces, because it creates desire, the desire for the beneath, for that which is always in the distance, like a mirage, produced by the impenetrable surface. The grasp of the hand, or the face with "penetrating eyes", on the other hand, seems to allow the bridging of this distance in the form of 'tactile immediacy'. As we have seen above, these imaginaries of the seductive distance of the impenetrable surface and the immediacy, the truth of penetration invest in perhaps the most problematic and strongly gendered pattern of western philosophy. Contrary to the dandy as clothes-wearing Man, Daniel, *as a dandy of hand and face, a dandy of flesh*, so to speak, is also a man of this phallo- and phonocentric philosophical tradition.

Mirah is not really fully aware of the good reasons for her being "'glad [Daniel] is of high rank'" (225): in order to play his historical, heroic role, it is not enough that Daniel excels with a distinct physiognomy and an aristocratic esprit:

> [The dandies] possess a vast abundance both of time and money, without which fantasy […] can hardly be translated into action. (Baudelaire 1978, 27)
>
> *[Ils possèdent aussi […] le temps et l'Argent, sans quel la fantaisie […] ne peut guère se traduire en action. (Baudelaire 1976, 710)]*

Despite his unknown parentage, Daniel, thanks to his being brought up in Sir Hugo's family, has time and money ready at hand. In combination with his

strong frame, his sense of sympathy and his verve he seems indeed to be made to translate fantasies into action. Without reading Daniel as a dandy, critics have been aware of Daniel's capacities as a translator: Felicia Bonaparte notes that "Daniel translates […] religion into a secular, modern language" (Bonaparte 1993, 35) and that "Daniel translates Mordecai's dream into a material reality" (Bonaparte 1993, 41); Natalie Rose stresses that "[a]s a cultural translator, the English gentleman becomes the ideal nationalist leader of disenfranchised peoples" (Rose 2007, 131). However, what is it that makes Daniel the ideal translator? A first, short, merely allusive answer that will have to be elaborated on in subsequent chapters: he transverses the soul/body, soul/incarnation, immortal/perishable distinction. He is dandy and historical man at the same time. In him, Charles Baudelaire's famous phrase that "dandyism is the last spark of heroism amid decadence" (Baudelaire 1978, 28) *["Le dandysme est le dernier éclat d'héroïsme dans les décadences" (Baudelaire 1976, 711)]* is taken seriously. The novel attempts to turn this untimely seed of heroism against the "distracted times" that harbour it among tombs: Daniel's task is to realise his dandiacal potential, his frame, esprit, time and money in an outward deed that restores meaningful history – he is to bring eternity and the immortal to the world of the perishable. But, just like Echo, he cannot be initiative, does not know how to begin. All he can do is wait and long for something to happen:

> A too reflective and diffusive sympathy was in danger of paralyzing in him that indignation against wrong and that selectness of fellowship which are the conditions of moral force; and in the last few years of confirmed manhood he had become so keenly aware of this that what he most longed for was either some external event, or some inward light, that would urge him into a definite line of action, and compress his wandering energy. […] But how and whence was the needed event to come? – the influence that would justify partiality, and make him what he longed to be, yet was unable to make himself – an organic part of social life, instead of roaming in it like a yearning disembodied spirit, stirred with a vague social passion, but without fixed local habitation to render fellowship real? To make a little difference for the better was what he was not contented to live without; but how to make it? (364-365)

Clearly, before meeting Mordecai, Daniel is an "out-of-work Hercules" (Baudelaire 1978, 29) *["un Hercule sans emploi" (Baudelaire 1976, 712)]* – waiting for an "overwhelming *vocational call*" (Thurschwell 2004, 96; emph. J.U.).

Echo's incarnation – birth of the nation

Daniel and Mordecai are both, before they meet, disembodied spirits – each in their very own way. They can only embody themselves in a mutual movement – a movement the novel explicitly captures with the concept of love. At the heart of this movement is a double incarnation: the incarnation of Mordecai's and Daniel's unity in Daniel's body – and a second incarnation in the historical and transcendental body of the nation of nations: the Jewish nation. It is this body of a nation that completes the re-writing of Ovid's story of Echo – Echo's fossilised body is restored to a living, a powerful, and a historical one, to a body with "*a voice* among the peoples of the East and the West" (532; emph. J.U.). The movement towards this full, historical body follows a tripartite dialectical pattern, and so does our analysis: it dedicates a section to each of the three steps.

Mordecai, the hoarse pro-phet

As Gertrude Himmelfarb notes, there is an obvious and significant difference between the biblical Mordecai, and Eliot's fictional Mordecai:

> The biblical Mordecai was strong and triumphant, succeeding not only in rescuing the Jews in Persia but also in becoming a power in the land, rich and influential, "second to the king." The fictional Mordecai is frail and sickly, barely able to support himself and agonizing over his failure to communicate his message of faith and redemption to the Jewish community. (2009, 102)

The novel draws Mordecai as a "consumptive Jewish workman in threadbare clothing" (545) whose outward appearance is characterised by abundant "signs of poverty and waning breath" (472). This poverty, expressed mainly by his "threadbare clothing", and his deathly sickness both receive so much emphasis in the course of the novel that they cannot but be symbolically charged:

> A man in threadbare clothing, *whose age was difficult to guess* – from the dead yellowish flatness of the flesh, something like an old ivory carving – was seated on a stool against some bookshelves that projected beyond the short counter […], the thought glanced through Deronda that precisely such a physiognomy as that might possibly have been seen in a prophet of the Exile, or in some New Hebrew poet of the mediaeval time. It was a fine typical Jewish face, wrought into intensity of expression apparently by a strenuous eager experience in which all the satisfaction had been indirect and far off, and perhaps by some bodily suffering also, which involved that absence of ease in the present. The features were clear-cut, not large; the brow not high but broad, and fully defined by the crisp black hair. It might never have been a particularly handsome face, but it must always have been forcible; and now with its dark, far-off gaze, and yellow pallor in relief on the gloom of the backward shop, one might have imagined one's self coming

> upon it in some past prison of the Inquisition, which a mob had suddenly burst upon; while the look fixed on an incidental customer seemed eager and questioning enough to have been turned on one who might have been a messenger either of delivery or of death. (385-386; emph. J.U.)

Daniel's first impression of Mordecai sets free two rather paradoxically entangled notions: on the one hand, Mordecai's clothing and especially his sickly yellow skin connote decay and impending death; on the other hand, Mordecai's physiognomy conjures up a rich past, its typicality seems to function as a sort of memory radiating past phenomena: the prophet of the Exile, the New Hebrew poet, the past prison of the Inquisition, and also Mordecai's own forcible face. This first impression is confirmed by a second, very similar one:

> Mordecai had no handsome Sabbath garment, but instead of the threadbare rusty black coat of the morning he wore one of light drab, which looked as if it had once been a handsome loose paletot now shrunk with washing; and this change of clothing gave a still stronger accentuation to his dark-haired, eager face which might have belonged to the prophet Ezekiel – also probably not modish in the eyes of contemporaries. (397)

Again, it is the notion of decay, of waning, evoked by the shrunk paletot that gives "a still stronger accentuation" to the impression of Mordecai's prophet-like face. Obviously, the notion of death that accompanies the figure of Mordecai differs significantly from the notion of death inherent in Gwendolen's and Grandcourt's self-fashioning: his shrunk paletot is not "modish", does not summon time in a moment of brilliance. On the contrary, it establishes continuity with the past, its still being the same, once handsome, now shrunk, signifies history. In Thomas Carlyle's words, what it characteristically does is a "blending and identification of Eternity with Time, which […] constitutes the Prophetic character" (Carlyle 2000, 201). The shrunk paletot is a metonymic metaphor for the consumptive prophet Mordecai – its *tertium comparationis*, the decay of shrinking, marks the fatal danger inherent in the way Mordecai realises the prophetic character: the memory of the rich past expresses itself through the decay that his physiognomy, his face, his sickness, his clothing and, as we will see, his voice exhibit. The "blending identification of Eternity with Time" that Mordecai, as a prophetic character, realises only works by taking the perishable power of time on board, functionalising decay as a memory of the past. Paradoxically enough, as the metonymy of Mordecai's clothing shows, the bearer of eternity has to wield to the power of time in order to give this eternity, this memory an expression. Mordecai's age is "difficult to guess", because he incorporates the paradox of perishing eternity – although eternity cannot, as eternity, age, it is on

the verge of dying. Again we encounter a Nietzschean situation: the death of eternity, the death of memory is near. It is so near that Mordecai's look on the entering Daniel "seemed eager and questioning enough to have been turned on one who might have been a messenger either of delivery or of death" (386). However, Mordecai's prophetic tactics work out: as the passage quoted above shows, Mordecai's physiognomy, his sickly state lead Daniel to recognise him as a prophet, arouse his interest, resonates with his search for a persistent course, for a definite line of action. Daniel is to become Mordecai's – and eternity's deliverer.

On this background, we may be able to shed some more light on the complex implication of voice for the novel. Dawn Coleman rightly stresses "George Eliot's persistent interest in the power of the human voice to provide moral and religious leadership" (2008, 408). However, the concept of the "sermonic voice", which derives its effect from "eloquent conviction", leads her analysis of voices in the novel astray. What Dawn Coleman's analysis of voices does not adequately take into account is that Mordecai's voice is not only "muted […] by [Eliot's] making it so private and thus so limited in its consequences" (2008, 413), it has to be, as a voice that transports – or rather is – a people's memory, inherently hoarse. Mordecai's voice shows the same decay like his threadbare clothes and his consumptive body: "The consumptive voice, originally a strong high baritone, with its variously mingling hoarseness, like a haze amidst illuminations, and its occasional incipient gasp" (477) exhibits its past force through its decay, through its present hoarseness. Thus, his voice's hoarseness is no coincidence – it is this hoarseness that, at the same time, renders it a prophetic, eternal, historic voice *and* impedes him from realising his prophecies all by himself. Mordecai's "hoarse, excited voice, not much above a loud whisper" (387) is not the only voice participating in some sort of Jewish memory that is characterised as hoarse or frail: Jacob's "small voice was hoarse in its glibness, as if it belonged to an aged commercial soul, fatigued with bargaining through many generations" (390), Mordecai's father speaks in a – probably faked – voice of "plaintive hoarseness" (777), but most importantly, the novel's excessive characterisation of Mirah's voice helps to understand its complicated play of voices: we have seen above how Mirah's singing voice is connected to her mother's voice and thus operates as a sort of memory of the Jewish people – her voice is an expression of eternity. However, the novel is eager to summon up several experts' opinion to proof that "'her voice was too weak'" (435), that "'it will never do for the public'" (216), at least not "'in any larger space than a private drawing-room'" (485). Her voice "'is gold, but a thread of gold dust'" (216)

"that gives the impression of being meant like a bird's wooing for an audience near and beloved" (372). It is important to note that the weakness of her voice, the fact that it will not do for the public, is not a failure that flaws an otherwise perfect voice. On the contrary, it is her voice's weakness that contributes significantly to its distinction as a memory summoning up the past:

> "Her voice is just perfect: not loud and strong, but searching and melting, *like the thoughts of what has been*. That is the way old people like me feel a beautiful voice." (361; emph. J.U.)

In order to function as a memory, in order to evoke history, a voice must not be loud and strong, but searching and melting. The novel gives a weighty example for this exclusive opposition of loudness and memory – *either* loud and powerful *or* expression of eternity: "the novel's loudest voice, that of Leonora Alcharisi" (Herzog 2005, 49), is constructed as the opposite of Mirah's – it is loud, a success on the stage, but completely severed from its Jewish legacy; it does not echo the past at all, on the contrary, it is a means to escape the past, to set herself off from the past. The weakness of Mirah's voice, like Mordecai's hoarseness, is inherent to their resounding voices as memories, as capable of "blending identification of Eternity with Time". As a consequence, these voices as expressions of history and eternity lack a strong embodiment, cannot reach a greater audience, cannot translate themselves into action. The 'prophecy' of the Italian singer living with her father in Mirah's childhood that Mirah "'will have no more face and action than a singing-bird'" (213) holds true for the same structural reason that hindered Mordecai "from making any world for his thought in the minds of others" (529). This lack of agency that is inseparably linked to the connection with history and eternity merely takes on – not too – different shapes in Mordecai and Mirah: whereas it is Mordecai's fatal sickness that prevents him from action, Mirah is drawn as a child. She is addressed by Mrs Meyrick as a "'poor child'" (200), her father calls her "'little girl'" (742), Daniel's impression of her when they first meet is that of a "pale image of unhappy girlhood" (188), a "girlish image of despair" (808), she looks "down at her own feet in a childlike way" (209). These "little feet" (201), in contrast to Leonora's/Alcharisi's feet, do not have to "be pressed small, like Chinese feet" (631), they have never stopped being "infantine" (808). Despite his spiritual authority, Mordecai's sickness puts him in a comparable situation: he lives in complete dependence on the Cohen family, he cannot reach a wider audience, as a consequence of his consumptive illness, his body 'shrinks' so that his age is difficult to guess: he looks very old, but his consumptive body is of childish proportions.

This striking resonance of Mordecai's and Mirah's constitution is no coincidence. Not only Mirah, but also Mordecai are both drawn as "personification[s] of that spirit which impelled men […] that they might […] say, 'I am a Jew'" (376). George Eliot's characterisation of the two heavily draws on the contemporary discourse of the comparative studies of languages: an influent discourse that produced the famous, opposing couple of the Semitic and the Indo-European ('Aryan') languages – and their respective speakers that are characterised by these languages and their impact on the cultural and religious surrounding. As Maurice Olender summarises in his *Les langues du Paradis*, the Semites,

> [i]mmobile in time as well as space, they played little if any part in what the nineteenth century saw as universal historical progress. The polytheistic dynamism of the Aryans was contrasted with the monotheistic stagnation of the Semites. (1992, 12)
>
> *[Immobiles dans le temps et dans l'espace, ils ne participent pas, ou peu, aux progrès de l'histoire universelle telle que le XIXe siècle la décrit. Face à la dynamique polythéiste des Aryens, on pose la stagnation monothéiste des Sémites. (1989, 36)]*

For this couple of Semites and Aryans the parts are neatly cast:

> […] they constitute a pair with unequal virtues. […] The Aryans bring the West mastery over nature, exploitation of time and space, the invention of mythology, science, and art, but the Semites hold the secret of monotheism (1992, 13-14)
>
> *[[…] ils forment un couple aux vertus inégales. […] Si les Aryens assurent à l'Occident la maîtrise de la nature, l'exploitation du temps et de l'espace, l'invention de la mythologie, des sciences et des arts, les Sémites détiennent cependant le secret du monothéisme. (1989, 39)]*

As "arbiter and bearer of a truth that time could not diminish" (1992, 16) *["arbitre et porteur d'une vérité que le temps n'épuise pas" (1989, 44)]*, the 'Hebrew people' is excluded from the profane history: "required eternally to bear witness, the Hebrew people were exempted from change" *["le peuple hébreu demeure figé pour cause de témoignage éternel" (1989, 44)]*. Thus the secret of monotheism and the eternity it harbours can only be preserved at the price of an enclave, an outside of the living and progressing profane 'history', an outside of progress and development which embodies itself in the 'Hebrew people'. As a consequence of this 'functional' and exclusive opposition of living history and conservation, the Hebrew people are the testimony of the eternal. Excluded from the profane history – following from their function as testimony – they are identified with stagnation, with lack of development:

> At a time – the nineteenth century – when everything was measured by its historical potential and teleological contribution to evolution and progress, the monotheistic miracle was linked to Semitic stagnation. (1992, 56)
>
> *[Dans ce XIXe siècle où tout se mesure au potentiel de l'histoire, à l'intensité téléologique de l'évolution et du progrès, c'est la stagnation sémitique qui caractérise l'essence du miracle monothéiste. (1989, 112)]*

Regarded from the Indo-European perspective of progress, of dynamics, of development, the "sublime secret lay buried in sterile ground" (1992, 53) *["Le secret sublime s'était enfoui dans une terre stérile" (1989, 106)]*, because the Hebrews "did nothing with their treasure, nothing to spread the illumination vouchsafed first to Adam, then to Noah, Abraham and the prophets" (1992, 53) *["de ce trésor non partagé, de cette lumière révélée successivement à Adam, à Noé, à Abraham et aux prophètes, les Hébreux n'ont rient fait" (1989, 106)]*. The Hebrew civilisation, as a civilisation of testimony of the eternal, is, as its languages show, "not only primitive and crude but incapable of evolution" (1992, 52-53) *["bien fruste, grossière et incapable de la moindre évolution" (1989, 106)]* – the "languages in which monotheism was first formulated were […] *petrified*, hence unalterable" (1992, 55; translation slightly altered; emph. J.U.) *["les langues qui ont formulé le premier monothéisme sont […]* [p]étrifiées*, elles sont inaltérables" (1989, 111; emph. J.U.)]*. The Semitic languages

> constituted a kind of 'skeleton,' and since these languages had remained fundamentally unchanged from the beginning, a philologist might venture to propose a kind of anatomy" (1992, 54)
>
> *[constitue un véritable 'squelette' autorisant une anatomie de ces langues, précisément parce qu'elles sont fondamentalement immobiles" (1989, 110)]*.

The Hebrew language in particular is, as the language of lacking action and development, also regarded as a "tongue of adult children" (1992, 36) *["langue de grands enfants" (1989, 77)]*. Since language is expression and important driving force of culture at the same time, what holds true for language finds its expression in culture and religion as well: the "Semitic monotheism […] remains stuck at an infantile stage of human development" (1992, 66) *["le monothéisme sémite est […] caractérisé par une fixation au stade infantile de l'humanité" (1989, 127; emph. J.U.)]*, it is a "petrified religion" (1992, 80) *["religion pétrifiée" (1989, 154)]*. However, the Hebrew language is not only characterised by its "expense of time without an exit" (1992, 54) *["durée sans issue" (1989, 110)]* with its idiom "strikingly similar […] 'since language first appeared'" (1992, 54) *["idiomes [qui] ont conservé la plus frappante identité 'depuis les premiers jours de l'apparition du langage'" (1989, 110)]* resulting in "an ex-

cessively simple language" (1992, 64) *["la simplicité excessive de leur langue"]* which Ernest Renan sees responsible for the 'fact' that the Semites are "incapable of abstraction, metaphysics, and creative intellectual activity in general" (1992, 63-64) *["les Sémites sont incapables d'abstraction, de métaphysique et, d'une manière générale, de toutes les opérations intellectuelles créatrices" (1989, 124)]*. Its characteristic notational system that does not write vowels asks for and creates "other forms of expression" (1992, 64) *["d'autres formes d'expressions" (1989, 124)]*:

> The Hebrew word is described as mute, an opaque substance [*corps*] whose occult meaning emerges only *when it is voiced*. In order to be read, the text must be chanted, infused with animating breath according to rules distilled from centuries of vocalisation. (1992, 24; emph. J.U.)
>
> *[Muet, le mot hébreu se présente* comme un corps obscur*, à la signification cachée. Celle-ci ne peut se découvrir que dans* l'éclat de la voix. *Pour lire le Texte, il faut le chanter, lui prêter ce souffle qui l'anime et que des siècles de vocalisations ont légitimé. (1989, 57; emph. J.U.)]*

Hebrew is a "musical language" (1992, 64) *["langage musical" (1989, 125)]*, it maintains a very special, intrinsic relationship with the voice, with chanting. The (chanting) voice acts as a supplementary body to the obscure, infantine, infertile, fossilised body resulting from its testimony of eternity:

> The sensual nature of the Semitic tongues is well suited to the singular affective character of Semitic poetry. The only art of which the Semitic peoples are masters, moreover, is 'music, the subjective art *par excellence*'. Melody comes into being instantaneously, without effort. Rhythm leaves no perceptible trace yet lives on in the body as blind or unreflective memory. (1992, 64)
>
> *[Ainsi, la nature si sensuelle des langues sémitiques s'adapte au caractère éminemment affectif de leur poésie. Et le seul art qu'ils maîtrisent est « la musique, l'art subjectif par excellence ». Mélodie qui naît dans l'instant, sans effort. Rythme dont la mémoire aveugle* envahit le corps sensible sans laisser de traces ni dans le temps ni dans l'espace. *(1989, 124; emph. J.U.)]*

A body that is a skeleton, that is fossilised, that cannot act and uses voice as a supplement: the resonances of this constellation produced by comparative linguistics with George Eliot's novel and the myth of Echo are striking. The most important of these resonances is the intrinsic connection of memory and fossilisation: the two, memory and fossilisation, cannot be separated; only by *not* partaking in the development and progress of profane history, by stagnation, can the eternal be testified and preserved. Memory demands the sacrifice of the living body. Eliot uses the philosopheme of Echo's voice to conceive this negative correlation: *resonabilis Echo*, the resounding Echo that can only repeat what has

been said is brought into resonance with the Hebrew people. Her resounding is paralleled with the testifying memory of the past, with an expression of eternity – and costs the same price: she cannot act, she cannot be initiative, her stagnation showing itself in first shrinking to her bones, and then fossilising to stone. Mordecai's and Mirah's voice is structurally homologous to Echo's: they have extraordinary resounding voices, voices of memory – and at the same time they are bereft of a voice that could make a difference for the better, a voice that has an influence, a voice that initiates action.

The task the novel sets itself is to (re-)unite the resounding voice of memory and the voice of influence and action ("*a voice* among the peoples of the East and the West" (532; emph. J.U.)). This implies uniting memory and progress to a notion of meaningful history. In order to achieve this, Echo's voice, the voice of memory has to find an embodiment, has to be incarnated, so that she can grow to an active agent of history.

The aspect of Mordecai's – and Judaism's – quite desperate need to find an embodiment, the stagnation and non-historicity that the discourse of comparative studies of language assigned to the Semitic part of the Semitic-Aryan couple and that the novel reflects, has not found adequate attention in the critics' readings of the novel: it is much too simple to say that "Christianity for Eliot is a moribund religion" (Bonaparte 1993, 32) and that "the whole East was a source of regeneration but the Jews were of special interest" (Bonaparte 1993, 33). Judaism, as Judaism, is, *on its own*, certainly *not* "able to adapt to the needs of the secular age" (Bonaparte 1993, 34), it is, as Mordecai's and Mirah's frail voices, their dependency and lacking power of action shows, on its own, *not* "a historical tradition that embodies the ideal and unites it with the world of real human activity" (Putzell-Korab 1982, 173). Mary Wilson Carpenter has found an interesting point when she claims that "Eliot has ironized her historical model, for in the novel it is the English Christian stream that must be 'converted' and restored to the great river of human history by Hebrew prophetic vision" (1984, 58). However, the constellation of converting and restoring that the novel unfolds is much more complex than one existing entity being restored by a messiah coming from the outside, bringing restoration. Is Daniel's mission in the East really related to Moses Hess's and Benjamin Disraeli's "idea of revitalizing the old stock of Europe via Judaism" (Wohlfarth 1998, 207)? Is it really about Europe, about "the purity of the English national tradition" (Wohlfarth 1998, 190)? It is, for sure, about a "middle term that conjoins both sequence and rupture, tradition and a burst of new energy" (Wohlfarth 1998, 190) – what is restored is nothing less than meaningful human history. The *production of the unity* of memory and

progress, of tradition and new energy, of the ideal and real human activity asks for a *double*, a *chiastic delivery*: Daniel acts as a deliverer for the bodiless Mordecai, Mordecai as a deliverer for the course-less Daniel.

Mordecai is "conscious of an ebbing physical life" (472), he is aware of the fact that he is merely a very "frail incorporation of the national consciousness, breathing with difficult breath" (517) that cannot initiate a spreading of this consciousness and the realisation of this consciousness in the outward reality of a newly founded nation: "'While it is imprisoned in me, it will never learn another'" (489). Mordecai's awareness of his own incapacity to realise his visions induce his "yearning for some young ear into which he could pour his mind as a testament, some soul kindred enough to accept the spiritual product of his own brief, painful life, as a mission to be executed" (472):

> Some years had now gone since he had first begun to measure men with a keen glance, searching for a possibility which became more and more a distinct conception. Such distinctness as it had at first was reached chiefly by a *method of contrast*: he wanted to find *a man who differed from himself*. (472; emph. J.U.)

By and by, "his imagination had constructed another man" (473), "a blooming human life, ready to incorporate all that was worthiest in an existence whose visible, palpable part was burning itself fast away" (473):

> Tracing reasons in that self for the rebuffs he had met with and the hindrances that beset him, he imagined a man who would have all the elements necessary for *sympathy with him*, but *in an embodiment unlike his own*: he must be a Jew, intellectually cultured, morally fervid – in all this a nature ready to be plenished from Mordecai's; but his face and frame must be beautiful and strong, he must have been used to all the refinements of social life, *his voice must flow with a full and easy current*, his circumstances be free from sordid need: he must glorify the possibilities of the Jew, not sit and wonder as Mordecai did, bearing the stamp of his people amid the sign of poverty and waning breath. (472; emph. J.U.)

Clearly, Mordecai's plan to find a blooming incorporation for "all that was worthiest" in him is bold: as we have seen above, the frail incorporation of the national consciousness, of the memory of the Jewish people, of the testimony of eternity is no coincidence, it is rather the condition for much of what was worthiest in him – remember the intrinsic connection of fossilisation and memory; Mordecai's finding a new body in a man who differed from himself would unify what is opposed: the dandy and the prophet, time and eternity, the characteristics of the Semite and the Aryan, tradition and progress, the resounding voice of memory and the voice of influence, of action. In abstract words: Mordecai attempts to produce a universal unity, a unity without a without, a unity uniting

opposites. Mordecai's argument that "'I have the more to give him, since his treasure differs from mine'" (657) also implies its reversion: Mordecai has the more to receive, since the blooming human life he envisions is exactly what he lacks. For this reason, "sympathy" seems to be too weak a notion to bring his envisioned counterpart to realise the union with the consumptive visionary. On Mordecai's part, it is not sympathy but *love* that attracts him to his 'other' self:

> the more beautiful, the stronger, the more executive self took shape in his mind, he *loved* it beforehand with an affection half identifying, half contemplative and grateful. (473; emph. J.U.)

As worked out above, the reciprocation of Mordecai's love for his imaginary counterpart is contained in his counterpart's being Jewish, in the mother's love that binds him to the line of ancestors, that makes him part of that one great unity.

Mordecai's imaginary self holds an interesting and telling double connection to painting and portraiture. The main traits of the "blooming human life" Mordecai looks out for seem to be containable, representable in the form of the portrait:

> Sensitive to physical characteristics, he had, both abroad and in England, looked at pictures as well as men, and in a vacant hour he had sometimes lingered in the National Gallery in search of paintings which might feed his hopefulness with grave and noble types of the human form, such as might well belong to men of his own race. (472)

Although the kind of portraiture to which this passage alludes differs markedly from the fancy portraits suited to Gwendolen's and Grandcourt's self-fashioning practices, the fact that Mordecai falls back to the medium of painting is significant: bearing in mind the distinction of Grandcourt as the dandy as clothes-wearing Man and Daniel as the dandy of flesh, of frame, we could well say that the portraits Mordecai is looking at "epitomized all that was Dandy" (Witemeyer 1979, 96) not about the fashionable classes, but about the universal frame and beauty, the nobility of the human form. Mordecai is looking for the "foreshadowed capability of heroism" (473), for an unemployed Hercules. He is looking for influence, for heroics, for action in time, he is looking for the counterpart of his eternity, for an agent in time, with momentary power and force to realise the great outward deed.

The "prophetic picture" (Witemeyer 1979, 66) that grows in Mordecai's imagination follows what Hugh Witemeyer calls "typological thinking" (1979, 101):

> the words youth, beauty, refinement, Jewish birth, noble gravity, turned into hardly individual but typical form and colour: gathered from his memory of faces seen among the Jews of Holland and Bohemia, and from the paintings which revived that memory. (473)

Hugh Witemeyer explains that "a type is an Old Testament prefiguration of a New Testament truth" (1979, 75) so that the "ennobling portraiture" (1979, 92) that is not only alluded to in Mordecai's pictorial practice to imagine a blooming human life, but, as we will see in a minute, also exercised in the novel's characterisation of Mordecai and Daniel, takes the form of a "renewal of biblical types" (1979, 89). Mordecai is indeed a rather visionary pro-phet (*φάναι*, to speak): his prophecy is typological, it is pictorial. However, what he fore-sees is not a transcendental truth that has been revealed to him from above. The type he prophesies receives its truth from being an 'anti-type', a counterpart to another type, a counterpart to the type he himself embodies: "Eliot's idealization of Mordecai is [itself!] pictorial and overtly typological" (Witemeyer 1979, 96). Thus Daniel is not only "the antitype of some visionary image" (510), this visionary image is, by the "method of contrast", defined as the 'anti-type' of the image of the prophetic, "consumptive Jew" (510) with the hoarse but mnemonic voice. The novel lays another pictorial trace to illustrate this chiasmic pictorial typology. Mordecai imagines the fulfilment of his longing for a new, blooming self, the encounter with this new self, in a pictorial way:

> Thus, for a long while, he habitually thought of the Being answering to his need as one distantly approaching or turning his back toward him, *darkly painted against a golden sky*. […] Thus it happened that *the figure* representative of Mordecai's longing was mentally seen *darkened by the excess of light in aerial background*. (473-474; emph. J.U.)

Daniel's first encounter with Mordecai strikingly mirrors *and* reverses the pattern of the contrast of dark figure and golden sky; this time it is the figure, or rather the face that is yellow and the background that is dark:

> The features were clear-cut, not large; the brow not high but broad, and fully defined by the crisp black hair. It might never have been a particularly handsome face, but it must always have been forcible; and now with its dark, far-off gaze, and *yellow pallor in relief on the gloom of the backward shop* (386; emph. J.U.).

Hugh Witemeyer discovers this *chiastic, pictorial typology* in a scene that is explicitly modelled on a painting by Titian:

> In ten minutes the two men, with as intense a consciousness as if they had been two undeclared lovers, felt themselves alone in the small gas-lit book-shop and turned face to face, each baring his head from an instinctive feeling that they

> wished to see each other fully. Mordecai came forward to lean his back against the little counter, while Deronda stood against the opposite wall hardly more than four feet off. I wish I could perpetuate those two faces, as Titian's "Tribute Money" has perpetuated *two types presenting another sort of contrast*. Imagine – we all of us can – the pathetic stamp of consumption with its brilliancy of glance to which the sharply-defined structure of features reminding one of a forsaken temple, give already a far-off look as of one getting unwillingly out of reach; and imagine it on a *Jewish face* naturally accentuated for the expression of an eager mind – the face of a man little above thirty, but with that age upon it which belongs to time lengthened by suffering, the hair and beard, still black, throwing out the yellow pallor of the skin, the difficult breathing giving more decided marking to the mobile nostril, the wasted yellow hands conspicuous on the folded arms […]. Seeing such a portrait you would see Mordecai. And opposite to him was *a face not more distinctively oriental than many a type seen among what we call the Latin races*; rich in youthful health, and with a forcible masculine gravity in its repose, that gave the value of judgment to the reverence with which he met the gaze of this mysterious son of poverty who claimed him as a long-expected friend. (495-496; emph. J.U.)

Clearly, "Titian's handling of a traditional biblical type inspires Eliot to reincarnate the same type in a more contemporary setting" (Witemeyer 1979, 101), "we are meant to visualize Deronda in terms of Titian's Christ" (Witemeyer 1979, 102). However, Hugh Witemeyer's claim that "Daniel Deronda achieves his full meaning only in his figural relation to Titian's image of Christ giving the world its due" (Witemeyer 1979, 172) has wider implications than merely associating Daniel with Jesus Christ: the analogy the novel constructs between Mordecai and Daniel in the book shop with Titian's "Tribute Money" (fig. 10) is established through the coupling of two contrasting figures, or more precisely, "two types" presenting a contrast. The novel differentiates this couple explicitly with regard to racial characteristics ("Jewish face" – "a face not more distinctively oriental than many a type seen among what we call the

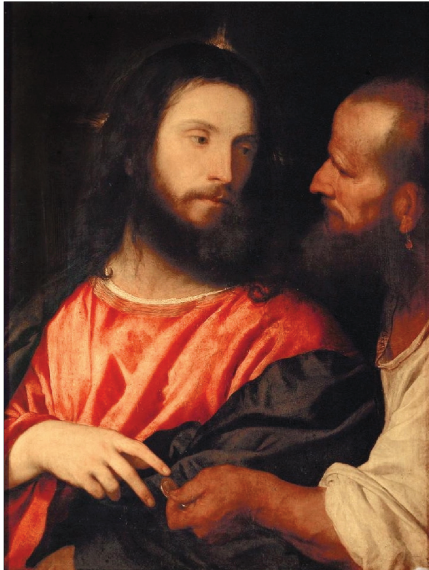

Fig. 10: Titian
The Tribute Money

Latin races") – what we encounter here is the "providential couple" (1992, 20) *["couple providentiel" (Olender 1989, 49)]* of Semite and Aryan. Identifying the latin-faced Daniel with Christ, the novel seems to follow those, who, like Ernest Renan, "'aryanized' Christ" (1992, 70) *["aryanisent le Christ" (Olender 1989, 135)]*. However, the novel does not deliver its Jesus, Daniel, from Judaism *["après avoir délivré Jésus du judaïsme" (Olender 1989, 135)]*: on the very contrary, its chiasmic, mutual structure of typology and delivery attempts to create a unity that *sublates* Semite and Aryan, tradition and progress, time and eternity, memory and development – a unity that realises itself in the outward reality of a nation.

Without any doubt, Daniel is "the type Mordecai has been searching for" (Thurschwell 2004, 95), in him Mordecai sees "face and frame which seemed to him to realize the long-conceived type" (479). However, the novel's very extensive staging of the fulfilment of Mordecai's prophecies tends to cover up the mutual, the chiasmic structure of typology and delivery: Mordecai may not only "be said to create Daniel according to Mordecai's own interpretive desires" (Jackson 1992, 239), he is himself also created after Daniel's desires. For sure, the hoarse prophet receives from Daniel a voice that is heard, the voice of action and influence that is embodied in a beautiful and strong frame – but it is Mordecai who gives Daniel something to say, something to do, a persistent course, a definite line of action to pursue: Hercules finally finds an employ.

Daniel, vocalis poet *sans emploi*

Although Daniel "set himself against authorship – a vocation which is understood to turn foolish thinking into funds" (185) – his way of encountering the world, of being attracted by certain events and persons is that of a poet:

> To say that Deronda was romantic would be to misrepresent him; 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 every-day life. (205)

Before searching and finding a persistent course, a definite line of action, his life is a stroll, driven by this poetical fervour, following the poetry and romance among the events of every-day life. Clearly, Gwendolen's 'performance' in the casino resonated with this poetical fervour; Daniel's questions rendered in free indirect discourse that open the novel are questions of a poet reflecting on his potential heroine:

> Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or the evil genius

> dominant in those beams? Probably the evil; else why was the effect that of unrest rather than of undisturbed charm? Why was the wish to look again felt as coercion and not as a longing in which the whole being consents? (7)

The mystery, the contradictions that the person of Gwendolen radiates and the event of her gambling loss set the poet Daniel on her heels. Gwendolen's suspicion that Daniel's eyes "might follow her up to Mr Wiener's door" (19) where she pawns her father's necklace as a recompense for her losses were well founded: "he must have seen her go into the shop; he must have gone in immediately after, and repurchased the necklace" (20) that she finds redeemed when coming back to her room. As Daniel's redeeming Gwendolen's necklace shows, the 'romantic' poet Daniel is not interested in representing the poetry of every-day events – he does not tell stories for others to read, he *tells upon others' lives*:

> All this implied a nature liable to difficulty and struggle – elements of life which had a predominant attraction for his sympathy, due perhaps to his early pain in dwelling on the conjectured story of his own existence. Persons attracted him, as Hans Meyrick had done, in proportion to the possibility of his defending them, rescuing them, telling upon their lives with some sort of redeeming influence; and he had to resist an inclination, easily accounted for, to withdraw coldly from the fortunate. (324)

However, as the narrator tells us, Gwendolen is only the heroine of a deficient, a *plotless* story; her life moving "strictly in the sphere of fashion" does not resonate with Daniel's own "conjectured story of his existence":

> but her horizon was that of the genteel romance where the heroine's soul poured out in her journal is full of vague power, originality, and general rebellion, while her life moves strictly in the sphere of fashion; and if she wanders into a swamp, the pathos lies partly, so to speak, in her having on her satin shoes. (53)

Daniel's horizon and his notion of poetry in every-day life is not that of journals and genteel romance. The pathos that appeals to his fervour is *not fashionable*, but *tragic*: he is unconsciously searching for the pathos of sorrow. Significantly, he, the poet, sings of this sorrow – the epigraph of the chapter gives Lord Alfred Tennyson's rendering of Dante's words set to music by Rossini – when rowing on the Thames and meeting Mirah:

> This is truth the poet sings,
> That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things. (185)

These lines echo precisely what we have analysed above in great detail: sorrow as a memory, as a key to history and eternity, Echo's tragic fate of resounding, historic, mnemonic voice and fossilisation as its condition of possibility – it is

these words that introduce, or conjure up, the figure that will lead Deronda to realise this meaningful history:

> Deronda, awaiting the barge, now turning his head to the river-side, and saw at a few yards' distant from him a figure which might have been an impersonation of the misery he was unconsciously giving voice to (187).

However, at this point, Daniel has no idea about his historic, inherited task. It is his poetic fervour that marks the beautiful but tragic "image of unhappy girlhood" as something very special, that arouses his interest in this scene:

> He had no right to linger and watch her: poorly-dressed, melancholy women are common sights; *it was only the delicate beauty, picturesque lines and colour of the image that was exceptional*, and these conditions made it more markedly impossible that he should obtrude his interest upon her. He began to row away and was soon far up the river; but no other thoughts were busy enough quite to expel that pale image of unhappy girlhood. He fell again and again to *speculating on the probable romance that lay behind that loneliness and look of desolation*; then to smile at his own share in the prejudice that interesting faces must have interesting adventures; then to justify himself for feeling that *sorrow was the more tragic when it befell delicate, childlike beauty*. (188; emph. J.U.)

As Gwendolen's beauty and radiating fascination had induced Daniel to follow her, he cannot help being attracted by Mirah and the "probable romance that lay behind that loneliness and look of desolation". However, it is not only the "attractiveness of the image" that makes it last: the pathos of the scene he witnessed is not one of wearing satin shoes in a swamp. The "wide-sweeping connections with all life and history" of "girl-tragedies" like Mirah's resonate with his own longing for "some external event, or some inward light, that would urge [Daniel] into a definite line of action" (365). He becomes aware of the "uncertainties about his own course" and senses a remedy:

> "I should not have forgotten the look of misery if she had been ugly and vulgar," he said to himself. But there was no denying that the attractiveness of the image made it likelier to last. It was clear to him as an onyx cameo; the brown-black drapery, the white face with small, small features and dark, long-lashed eyes. His mind glanced over the girl-tragedies that are going on in the world, hidden, unheeded, as if they were but tragedies of the copse or hedgerow, where the helpless drag wounded wings forsakenly, and streak the shadowed moss with the red moment-hand of their own death. Deronda of late, in his solitary excursions, had been occupied chiefly with *uncertainties about his own course*; but those uncertainties, being much at their leisure, *were wont to have such wide-sweeping connections with all life and history* that the new image of helpless sorrow easily blent itself with what seemed to him the strong array of reasons why he should shrink from getting into that routine of the world which makes men apologize for all its wrong-doing, and take opinions as mere professional equipment – why he

> should not draw strongly at any thread in the hopelessly-entangled scheme of things. (188; emph. J.U.)

In contrast to Gwendolen's life in the sphere of fashion that has no connection with great history, whose plotlessness can only find expression in the genre of the journal, Mirah's life seems to have wider implications: her tragedy is embedded in historical sorrow, is testimony of a great historical tragedy. Without yet knowing the details about her fate and the connections of this fate to the fate of a people, Daniel's associating "wide-sweeping connections with all life and history" and a shrinking from the "routine of the world" indicates that he is already sensing the scope of the tragedy he is witnessing. His poetical instincts turn out to have led him on the right track: Mirah tells him that her "suffering was part of the affliction of [her] people, [her] part in the long song of mourning that has been going on through ages and ages" (215). His romantic poetical fervour has finally found a great tragedy in life, has finally found a plot. As his own search for a definite line of action, for a persistent course has shown, his poetical fervour has always been a longing for (belonging to) history – which is at the same time a longing for his story: telling upon Mirah's life promises to secure Daniel a part in this world-historical tragedy, a heroic part even, since redeeming Mirah – and the Jews – of their fate is of greater dimension than redeeming Gwendolen's necklace. This is the part he has been dreaming of as a child:

> "Since I began to read and know, I have always longed for some ideal task, in which I might feel myself the heart and brain of a multitude – some social captainship […]."(750)

> "I don't want to be a Porson or a Leibnitz, […] I would rather be a great leader, like Pericles or Washington." (173)

The novel establishes this 'acting according to a historical plot' that Mirah epitomizes as a sort of pseudo-moral standard: Daniel's aesthetic taste expressing itself in his poetical fervour – and narrator-focalised comments – as that of the satin shoes – crystallise to a value scheme that the novel's enactment of poetic justice emphasises:

> [Leonora, Lapidoth, Gwendolen] act roles which destiny has not made for them, and they are bound to be just as shipwrecked metaphorically as Gwendolen's fate-mocking husband Grandcourt is shipwrecked literally. (Lessenich 1989, 124)

Mirah's "theatrical training had left no recognisable trace" (225) not because she would keep away from theatricality, from staging herself; it has left no trace,

because, as in her youth, she is acting a part that "was one that [she] could be [her]self in" (217). This importance of acting a part that has been assigned to oneself by a greater plot, a tragedy of wide-sweeping connections with history, is emphasised in a scene that the novel constructs as a counterpoint to the fashioning of Gwendolen that exactly lacks these congruency with a greater, historical plot:

> "This would be thought a very good stage-dress for me," she said, pleadingly, "in a part where I was to come on as a poor Jewess and sing to fashionable Christians."
>
> "It would be effective," said Hans, with a considering air; "it would stand out well among the fashionable *chiffons*."
>
> "But you ought not to claim all the poverty on your side, Mirah," said Amy. "There are plenty of poor Christians and dreadfully rich Jews and fashionable Jewesses."
>
> "I didn't mean any harm," said Mirah. "Only I have been used to thinking about my dress for parts in plays. And I almost always had a part with a plain dress."
>
> "That makes me think it questionable," said Hans, who had suddenly become as fastidious and conventional on this occasion as he had thought Deronda was, apropos of the Berenice-pictures. "It looks a little too theatrical. We must not make you a *rôle* of the poor Jewess – or of being a Jewess at all." Hans had a secret desire to neutralize the Jewess in private life, which he was in danger of not keeping secret.
>
> "But it is what I am really. I am not pretending anything. I shall never be anything else," said Mirah. "I always feel myself a Jewess." (488)

The novel is not concerned with the distinction of good and bad theatricality – it is concerned with finding and establishing a wide-sweeping historical plot, discovering the meaningful story of history and attempting to participate in that story, to tell on that story. Daniel, as *the* poet, finds to himself when he discovers Mirah. She is *his* perfect heroine, because her fate transcends her individual life and sorrows, she is acting a part of a greater tragedy, her story participates in history:

> "But I have seen nothing in her that I could wish to be different. She has had an unhappy life. Her troubles began in early childhood, and she has grown up among very painful surroundings. But I think you will say that no advantages could have given her more grace and truer refinement." (438)

Daniel is so obsessed with his poetical fervour and with his longing for acting a great part in the tragedy of history that the ethical implications of what he says remain unnoticed: he explicitly affirms Mirah's "unhappy life" her "troubles"

that began early in her childhood, her growing up "among very painful surroundings"; he affirms her sufferance, her misery, because *for him*, for the poet who attempts to tell on others' and his own life, who aspires for himself the world-historical, heroic part of the redeemer in a tragedy of immense scope, Mirah's miseries serve an important function: she is the "impersonation of the misery he was unconsciously giving voice to" (187), she connects the poet and hero Daniel with a tragic plot that reserves the part of the redeemer for him. The "'figure' of Mirah is constituted by [Daniel's] projections" (Gates 2001, 714):

> Mirah […] is […] portrayed as a projection of Deronda's need to find a cause or motivating force outside himself, just as Deronda's identity is shown as a projection of Mordecai's. (Thurschwell 2004, 97)

Mirah is functionally overdetermined; despite the love story the novel sketches, the poet Daniel cares for her mainly "as a makeshift link" (631). She (1) "encodes racial otherness in the novel" (Lovesey 1998, 505), which contributes significantly to her poetical attractiveness: the Meyrick family "watch her and listen to her as if she were a native from a new country" (361), the tragic sorrow, poverty, misery Mirah embodies, is coded as an intrinsic characteristic of this "new country", it is foreign to Daniel's elegant world. (2) Mirah "provides Deronda access to his essential difference" (Lovesey 1998, 505). It is the encounter with her that brings Daniel into contact with the Jewish world and tradition: "Mirah leads Daniel to Mordecai and provides the female body across which, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick might say, these two can enact their unification" (Gates 2001, 715). (3) "Mirah generates the novel's typology of otherness" (Lovesey 1998, 505). She marks the border of the corrupted theatre world and the mnemonic voice of her mother, of tradition and alienation – the border separating opposing realms that her parents stand for. (4) Mirah as "impersonation of […] misery" enables Daniel to play a heroic part in history:

> [I]ronically, it is exactly by way of the woman's story of exile and alienation that Daniel has entered race history […]. At every turn Daniel enters the stream of history through the text's ruined women. (Doyle 2008, 365)

He himself has not suffered from troubles in his boyhood, his life had not been unhappy, the circumstances among which he grew up had not been very painful. As Laura Doyle writes, "he absorbs that plight [of the ruined women] as his tragedy" (2008, 362) – and, because of his having escaped suffering and poverty, is able to play the role of the powerful, the heroical, the dandiacal redeemer.

With regard to the text of Daniel's tragedy, with regard to his world-historical role as the saviour of a people, another of Hans's cynical comments holds true: once the connection to her brother Mordecai is established, Mirah's fate, her role in "'the company of [one] of those men with a fixed idea'", Daniel, is indeed reduced "'to be small foot-notes to [Daniel's] text'" (580) – in contrast to Daniel, Mirah has to stay "'under a petrifying wall'" (580) – as a "perfect exemplar of Moral Femininity, Mirah does not act in any sense" (Weisser 1990, 9). However, her story, as Leonora puts it, "'is poetry – fit to last through an opera night'" (665).

With Mirah's poetry in mind, Daniel undertakes his 'excursions' into the 'Jewish' world. His experiences there are experiences of historical otherness that appeal to his poetical fervour:

> I have said that under his calm exterior he had a fervour which made him easily feel the presence of poetry in everyday events; and the forms of the Juden-gasse, *rousing the sense of union with what is remote*, set him musing on two elements of our *historic life which that sense raises into the same region of poetry*; – the faint beginnings of faiths and institutions, and their obscure lingering decay (366; emph. J.U.).

This 'historical otherness' differs 'historically' in a deeper sense: The Juden-gasse is – if at all – a very special heterotopia, not merely an enclave of a 'past' time, not a space 'not-yet-modern'. The forms of the Juden-gasse rouse "the sense of union with what is remote", they are the seed of history, they radiate a concept of Time as History, the concept of a meaningful, full time. This meaningful time unites what is remote, unites past and future, decay and faint beginnings. It is exactly this sense of unity that "raises" it "into the same region of poetry": *History is a union of events, the unity, the mastery of change, a plot*. In contrast to Time as the power of contingency that drove the spinning wheel of speculation, a dangerous, violent power with incalculable effects that shakes stability, this concept of historical Time is a rational power of order:

> "But what is it to be rational – what is it to feel the light of the divine reason growing stronger within and without? It is to see more and more of *the hidden bonds that bind and consecrate change as a dependent growth* – yea, consecrate it with kinship: the past becomes my parent and the future stretches toward me the appealing arms of children." (528; emph. J.U.)

However, as much as the "picturesque old houses" and the "human types" Daniel's eyes "dwelt on" while wandering through the Juden-gasse, "busily connecting them with the past phases of their race", "stirred that fibre of historic

sympathy" (363), a fundamental discrepancy separates Daniel's poetical thoughts and the reality he contemplates:

> The fact was, notwithstanding all his sense of poetry in common things, Deronda, where a keen personal interest was aroused, could not, more than the rest of us, continuously escape suffering from the pressure of that hard unaccommodating Actual, which has never consulted our taste and is entirely unselect. (380)

The "dingy shops and unbeautiful faces" he sees in the Jewish quarters of London do not have too much in common with "the crouching figure of the reviled Jew turn[ing] round erect, heroic, flashing with sublime constancy in the face of torture and death" Daniel imagines "on the borders of the Rhine at the end of the eleventh century, when in the ears listening for the signals of the Messiah, the Hep! Hep! Hep! of the Crusaders came like the bay of blood-hounds", those "devilish missionaries with sword and firebrand" (380-381). "Enthusiasm, we know, dwells at ease among ideas" (380), "[t]o glory in a prophetic vision of knowledge covering the earth, is an easier exercise of believing imagination than to see its beginning in newspaper placards, staring at you from the bridge beyond the corn-fields" (381). However, it is these placards, these dingy shops and unbeautiful faces,

> nothing but impartial midday falling on commonplace, perhaps half-repulsive, objects which are really *the beloved ideas made flesh. Here undoubtedly lies the chief poetic energy: – in the force of imagination that pierces or exalts the solid fact, instead of floating among cloud-pictures*. (381; emph. J.U.)

Daniel has arrived at a point where he is to become a true poet (*ποιεῖν*, to make, create, produce, to compose, write): his poetical fervour, his imaginations triggered by tragic and beautiful scenes, his poetical sense that rouses the sense of union with what is remote, have to *incarnate* themselves, they have to stop merely floating among cloud-pictures and pierce or exalt the solid fact. As a true (romantic) poet he does not "turn foolish thinking into funds" (185) – he tells upon other lives, he is to make "a difference in the history of the world" (772). This difference consists in nothing less than re-establishing, re-incarnating the hidden bond of History, the union with what is remote that his poetical fervour was sensing when wandering through the Jewish quarters. Mordecai's sickness and Mirah's childishness symbolise what is lacking for this concept of meaningful, full time: surely not "'resolved memory'" or "'choice'", but the third component of the "'divine principle'", "'action'" (538). "Deeds are the pulse of Time, his beating life" (698) – in order to establish the hidden bonds that bind and consecrate change, the actual and the ideal have to become one, so that the

idea is made flesh and imagination pierces or exalts the solid fact. It is the poet Daniel's task to realise, to actualise in a "great outward deed" (536) what the *pro-phet* Mordecai speaks about – the poet's task is the process of 'ideas made flesh', to tell upon lives, to re-establish the plot of History in time, not just among the clouds of imagination.

Similar to his finding Mirah, it is again Daniel's poetical fervour that leads him to Mordecai. In contrast to Ezra Cohen, Mordecai resonates with Daniel's longing for tragedy:

> Deronda, not in a cheerful mood, was rashly pronouncing this Ezra Cohen to be the most unpoetic Jew he had ever met with in books or life: his phraseology was as little as possible like that of the Old Testament: and no shadow of a suffering race distinguished his vulgarity of soul from that of a prosperous, pink-and-white huckster of the purest English lineage. (391)

Although Ezra Cohen, "proud of his vocation, was not utterly prosaic" (396), "[t]his Jeshurun of a pawnbroker was not a symbol of the great Jewish tragedy" (517); yet the consumptive Mordecai he shelters under his roof differs remarkably from this unpoetic Jew:

> there could hardly have been a stronger contrast to the Jew at the other end of the table. It was an unaccountable conjunction – the presence among these common, prosperous, shopkeeping types, of a man who, in an emaciated threadbare condition, imposed a certain awe on Deronda, and an embarrassment at not meeting his expectations. (400)

> This Mordecai happened to have a more pathetic aspect, a more passionate, penetrative speech than was usual with such monomaniacs; he was more poetical than a social reformer with coloured views of the new moral world in parallelograms, or than an enthusiast in sewage; still he came under the same class. (510)

Mordecai's obvious suffering, his threadbare clothing and hoarse voice do not only point to the part of the tragedy he incorporates – as did Mirah's desperate attempt of suicide. His prophecy knows about, it scripts the great "'National Tragedy lasting for fifteen hundred years, in which the poets and the actors were also the heroes'". This Tragedy is not "'like a farce or a vaudeville, where you find no great meanings'" (216) – it envisages a world and life of "'tragedies and grand operas, where men do difficult things and choose to suffer'" (216-217), a "mighty drama" (124). The evaluation of Daniel's and Mordecai's world-historical project of re-founding the nation of Israel is clearly an aesthetic one; Israel's "precedence of all the nations" is a precedence according to ranks in (tragic) suffering, Israel's great National tragedy surpasses the rich literature of other nations because it is not a literature floating among cloud pictures, but be-

loved ideas made flesh, imagination piercing solid fact. However, the novel's staging of this poetical and world-historical project implies also a meta-narrative reversion: besides Daniel's longing for becoming a political leader, his longing for social captainship, his interest in Mirah and especially Mordecai, his enthusiasm for the Jewish National Tragedy, there is also a strong longing for (his) story, for a closed, a grand, a meaningful plot. Regarded from this perspective, the novel is as much concerned with narrative as it is with nation. It rather uses the topic of the Jewish National Tragedy, because it resonates with the (quite desperate) meta-narrative search for "narratable teleology" (Litvak 1992, 174) – the novel's Jewish "nationalism seem[s] to serve the […] domestic literary purpose in providing alternative vocational plotlines" (Cohen 1998, 347). Mordecai as the poet Daniel's ghost-writer occupies a key-function in this meta-narrative texture: he "remains as a symptom of George Eliot's desire for original meaning". But is he really "a metaphoric portrait of a woman novelist" (Cho 2006, 203)? Yes, but of a certain generation, as Julia Kristeva would say. And, Walter Benjamin would add, Mordecai is rather not a novelist, who "is himself uncounselled, and cannot counsel others", who "gives evidence of the profound perplexity of the living" (Benjamin 1999, 87) , but a sage story-teller. Mordecai, and Daniel as his agent, both long for a "certain conception of time":

> time as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding: time as departure, progression and arrival – in other words, the time of history. (Kristeva 1999, 192)
>
> *[temps comme projet, téléologie, déroulement linéaire et prospectif ; le temps du départ, du cheminement et de l'arrivée, bref le temps de l'histoire. (Kristeva 1979, 7)]*

This "conception of linear temporality […] is readily labelled masculine and […] is at once both civilizational and obsessional" (Kristeva 1999, 193) *["cette conception de la temporalité linéaire qu'on qualifie facilement de masculine et qui est aussi bien civilisationnelle qu'obsessionnelle" (Kristeva 1979, 8)]* – "A psychoanalyst would call this 'obsessional time', recognizing in the mastery of time the true structure of the slave." (Kristeva 1999, 192) *["Un temps d'obsessionnel, dirait le psychanalyste, reconnaissant dans la maîtrise de ce temps soucieux la véritable structure de l'esclave." (Kristeva 1979, 7)]*. In the anachronistic distinction of a suffragist feminist and a post-68 feminist generation, Mordecai as "woman novelist" would clearly belong to the first; this first generation "is more determined by the implications of a national problematic" (Kristeva 1999, 190) *["la première reste davantage déterminée par ce qui relève d'une problématique nationale" (Kristeva 1979, 6)]*, it fights for "*insertion*

into history" (Kristeva 1999, 195) *["*insertion *dans l'histoire" (Kristeva 1979, 9)]* and thereby affirms the dominant masculine conception of time as teleology, prospective, the time of history. It follows "the *logic of identification* with certain values: […] with the logical and ontological values of a rationality dominant in the nation-state" (Kristeva 1999, 194) *["cette* logique d'identification *avec les valeurs […] logiques et ontologiques de la rationalité dominante dans la nation et dans l'Etat" (Kristeva 1979, 8)]*. It is no coincidence that Julia Kristeva begins her famous article "Women's Time" with the words: "The nation […]" (Kristeva 1999, 188) *["La nation […]" (Kristeva 1979, 5)]*. The conception of teleological time, meaningful time, time of history is intrinsically linked to the concept of the nation as a unity:

> [M]obilization takes place in the name of a nation, of a oppressed group, of a human essence imagined as good and sound; in the name, then, of a kind of fantasy of archaic fulfilment […]. (Kristeva 1999, 204)
>
> *[La mobilisation se fait au nom d'une* nation*, d'un* groupe *opprimé, d'une* essence *humaine imaginée bonne et saine, au nom donc d'une sort de fantasme de complétude archaïque […]. (Kristeva 1979, 14)]*

It is this mobilisation, this fantasy of archaic fulfilment bound by the 'good' essence of a nation or of an oppressed group that constitutes a plot, a story. It is here that nation and narration find their inseparable, mutually constitutive resonance: they are, at once, conditions of possibility and effects of an obsessive mastery of time as rational, teleological, narratable, scripted history.

George Eliot's novel is a novel in search of "the conditions of narratability" (Lesjak 1996, 37). As shown above, its first part centring on Gwendolen testifies that "the ground of narration itself is fundamentally shaken" (Lesjak 1996, 37). Daniel Deronda as the novel's title hero is given the task to re-establish that ground of narration, to re-establish the "'internal continuity'" of a story that is more than the genteel romance of a journal or the shallow entertainment of farce and Vaudeville. *He is a poet analysing the conditions of possibility of narration* – longing for his-story – and what he finds is – the 'first generation woman novelist' Mordecai and the story of archaic fulfilment, the realisation of an oppressed people's fantasy, a nation to be founded. However, the meaningful, teleological, *masculine* conception of time as history is not the only conception of time that features prominently in the novel. As the analysis of the spec(tac)ular narcissistic mechanism has shown, Gwendolen and Leonora move in a sphere (of fashion and speculation) that follows another conception of time: not a historical time, but a rather cyclical conception of time that "retains *repetition* and *eternity*" (Kristeva 1999, 191) *["retient essentiellement la* répétition *et*

l'éternité*" (Kristeva 1979, 7)]*, a time "rhythmed by accidents or catastrophes" (Kristeva 1999, 192) *["rythmé par des accidents et des catastrophes" (Kristeva 1979, 8)]*, a time that takes the attitude of "radical *refusal* of the subjective limitations imposed by this history's time" (Kristeva 1999, 195) *["*réfus *radical des limitations subjectives qu'impose son [l'histoire] temps" (Kristeva 1979, 9)].* This "women's time" is a correlate to the female imaginary our analysis of the narcissistic spectacle worked out with the help of Luce Irigaray. Julia Kristeva emphasises that the struggles of insertion into history and refusal, the struggles of two different generations of the women's movement "is situated within the very framework of the religious crisis of our civilization" (Kristeva 1999, 208) *["se situe au lieu même de la crise religieuse de notre civilisation" (Kristeva 1979, 17)]*. In this framework 'Jews' hold a very special role: it is not only 'women' who occupy a "non-essential or even non-existent" (Kristeva 1999, 196) *["inessentiel, sinon inexistant" (Kristeva 1979, 10)]* position according to "the logical and ontological values of a rationality dominant in the nation-state", who face the question whether to fight for insertion into history or refusal: "this same egalitarian and in fact censuring treatment has been imposed, from Enlightenment Humanism through socialism, […] in particular, on Jews" (Kristeva 1999, 196) *["le même traitement […] a été imposé, par l'humanisme des Lumières et jusqu'au socialisme, aux spécificités religieuses. En particulier aux Juifs" (Kristeva 1979, 10)]*. George Eliot's novel stages the "framework of the religious crisis of our civilization" Julia Kristeva speaks of with astonishing precision. The complex, two-threaded structure of *Daniel Deronda* exposes and unfolds the two imaginaries and their respective conceptions of time that Julia Kristeva interprets as frameworks for two generations of the women's movement. Astonishingly enough, the novel's decision for the masculine imaginary, for a time of history, for the rationalities of the nation-state, for insertion of the Jewish people into history finds its legitimacy on aesthetic, on meta-narrative grounds: the poet Daniel's narrative does not so much ground "itself in an *innate* sense of race" (Lesjak 1996, 37), but in the narratability that the Zionist fantasy of archaic fulfilment, this epitome of "time as a project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding – time as departure, progression and arrival […], time of history" (Kristeva 1999, 192) – offers. In order to narrate narratability, in order to self-referentially ground his story as a meaningful, an aesthetically convincing story, Daniel has to connect with the 'woman'-'novelist' Mordecai – and write against a female imaginary, sacrifice the cyclical, the eternal, the open 'women's time'. The novel has to decide against these positions, these strategic possibilities that are prominently present in the novel: Leonora's and Gwendo-

len's fate, the astonishing importance of the project of the Jewish nation, are all expressions of a longing for his-story. The plot of this his-story, the constitutive failure of its 'feminist' figures, very overtly shows that the woman-writer is willing to sacrifice feminist potential she is well aware of – and invest instead in the narratable insertion of another minoritarian group in the majoritarian[39] logics of meaningful history and national axiomatics, an insertion that serves as the self-referential foundation of a meaningful story that tells itself the story of being in full control of time.

Incarnation's sublating force: the na(rra)tion's divine unity

Mordecai and Daniel are brought together by a mutual, but quite different attraction: the prophet Mordecai is looking for a counterpart with a beautiful body and frame who is capable of acting out his prophecy in 'time'; Daniel, the poet and hero, is looking for a tragic, historical plot that provides him with a heroic part and secures a teleological time of history that is the condition of possibility for the meaningful story he envisages as a story-teller. In Carole Robinson's words:

> George Eliot has mated Daniel and Mordecai with a shameless lack of subtlety: the former seeking an avenue of committment, a 'social captainship,' a task to be imposed as an irrefutable duty; the latter a dying visionary requiring a Jewish disciple. (1964, 294)

In her influent article "The Decomposition of the Elephants: Double-Reading Daniel Deronda", Cynthia Chase has shown that the novel is itself well aware of what Carole Robinson calls "a shameless lack of subtlety": Cynthia Chase convincingly reads Hans Meyrick's letter as a "deconstruction of the concept of cause" (1978, 217) that comments on the rather startling outcome of Daniel's story. The narrative breaks with the illusion of the contingent development of the plot and exposes its constructedness. As already alluded to above, the novel sketches Hans as an important 'counter-artist', an artistic representative of time as power of contingency, a critical voice that cynically comments on the heroic poet Daniel's project. Although the novel overtly ridicules Hans as an artistic figure, his comments, comparable to Leonora's strong-voiced complaints, cannot be included in Daniel's visionary project, they remain lose threads, outside the newly composed unity, critically questioning the whole project. However, despite being aware of the problematic constructedness of its plot, its "shameless lack of subtlety" in "mating" Daniel and Mordecai, of the too perfect, too

39 For the concepts of minority and majority see the fourth and the tenth plateau of Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (2004b).

beautiful to be true alliance of Mordecai and Daniel via Mirah, the novel affirms this complex and melodramatic 'solution' that Hans criticises: "'But now, confound you! you turn out to be in love in the right place – a Jew – and everything eligible'" (785). Without any doubt, this "shameless lack of subtlety", this "deconstruction of the concept of cause", this transgression of *vraisemblable* realist narration is significant. The construct, the improbable "mating" of Mordecai and Daniel seems to be of such an outstanding importance that it justifies the infringements and transgressions that follow from its fabrication. The novel can afford Hans Meyrick voicing criticism: his appropriate comments merely underline the importance, the eminence of the historical encounter the novel stages. Although the narration of this encounter transgresses aesthetical and narratological borders, although the plot resembles that of a medieval romance rather than a Victorian, realist novel, although the concept of cause and effect is somehow unhinged, *although* it is strongly improbable and *non-vraisemblable* that Mordecai's and Daniel's search find a mutual fulfilment – the story of *Daniel Deronda* tells exactly the story of this construct's fabrication.

What renders this construct highly improbable is the complementarity, the range of difference that it binds into a unity:

> "Ezra, does it ever hurt your love for Mr Deronda that so much of his life was all hidden away from you – that he is amongst persons and cares about persons who are all so unlike us – I mean unlike you?"
>
> "No, assuredly no," said Mordecai. "Rather it is a precious thought to me that he has a preparation which I lacked, and is an accomplished Egyptian." Then, recollecting that his words had reference which his sister must not yet understand, he added. "I have the more to give him, since his treasure differs from mine. That is a blessedness in friendship." (657)

It is this complementarity of Deronda's making "a splendid contrast with all that was sickly" (185) and the sick Mordecai's persistent course, constituting "two markedly different figures" (573), that does not only render this construct, this unity, improbable, but also very special and powerful. Carole Robinson touches on an interesting point in claiming that "Mordecai's pursuit of Deronda is intense [the same holds true for Deronda's pursuit!]: indeed, their relationship has more of the aspect of a love affair than that of Daniel and Gwendolen" (1964, 295). It has more of the aspect of a love affair, because the relation between Mordecai and Daniel epitomizes and exposes the novel's important conception of love: despite being attractive and searching for admiration, Gwendolen is portrayed and characterises herself as an unloving, narcissistic person: "'I shall

never love anybody. I can't love people. I hate them.'" (82) Leonora shares this 'problem' and explains it in plain words:

> "It is a talent to love – I lack it. Others have loved me – and I have acted their love. I know very well what love makes of men and women – *it is subjection*. It takes another for a larger self, enclosing this one," – she pointed to her own bosom. "I was never willingly subject to any man. Men have been subject to me." (666; emph. J.U.)

Love, in *Daniel Deronda*, means subjecting oneself to a larger self that encloses oneself, that sublates oneself. This 'loving' self-subjection to a larger unity, a larger bond approximates love and duty. Mirah, in contrast to Gwendolen, is capable of love, because she is "'capable of submitting to anything in the form of duty'", whereas Gwendolen's submission "could not take the shape of duty, but was submission to a yoke drawn on her by an action she was ashamed of, and worn with a strength of selfish motives that left no weight for duty to carry" (556). As Mirah's submissive, dutiful 'love' to Daniel and his returning this 'love' with "blessed protectiveness" (808) and "an enfolding of immeasurable cares" (796) shows, this love is a strongly patriarchal concept – the patriarchal counterpart of the notion of seduction that is Gwendolen's and Leonora's talent. However, this conception of love is patriarchal, it belongs to a male imaginary, also on a more abstract level; this love is love for a larger self, love for a greater, binding unity, it is love for the *One*: the one plot, the one course, the one history, the one nation. It is submission to the One – love's duty is duty to love the One, it is "submission of the soul to the Highest" (803).

It is this love, love for the One, that unites Mordecai and Daniel. This love frames the complementarity of these "two markedly different figures", *sublates* the contrasting differences and thus fabricates a unity of immense dimensions. On the one hand, this sublating characteristic of the notion of love reminds of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's concept of love, which he develops in his early texts on Christianity and Judaism:

> The practical activity destroys the object and is completely subjective – only in love one is one with the object, it does not dominate and is not dominated. This love, made essence by imagination, is deity; the separated human has then awe, respect for it, – the unified [human] love; the latter's bad conscience, his consciousness of division, gives fear for it.
>
> That union can be called the union of subject and object, of freedom and nature, of the real and the possible.
>
> *[Die praktische Tätigkeit vernichtet das Objekt und ist ganz subjektiv – nur in der Liebe allein ist man eins mit dem Objekt, es beherrscht nicht und wird nicht*

> *beherrscht. Diese Liebe, von der Einbildungskraft zum Wesen gemacht, ist die Gottheit; der getrennte Mensch hat dann Ehrfurcht, Achtung vor ihr, – der in sich einige [Mensch hat] Liebe; jenem gibt sein böses Gewissen, das Bewusstsein der Zerteilung, Furcht vor ihr.*
>
> *Jene Vereinigung kann man Vereinigung des Subjekts und Objekts, der Freiheit und der Natur, des Wirklichen und Möglichen nennen. (Hegel 1999c, 242)]*

On the other hand, however, the concept of love with which George Eliot's novel operates has not fully overcome the Kantian ethics – that G.W.F. Hegel associates with Judaism's notions of duty and awe before the law – against which G.W.F. Hegel posits his sublating concept of love. The approximation of love and duty that features so prominently in the novel's conception of love is not compatible with the Hegelian concept of love, "because in love all thought of duties vanishes" (Hegel 1948a, 213) *["weil in der Liebe aller Gedanke von Pflicht wegfällt" (Hegel 1999a, 325)]*. This important difference is significant: in contrast to G.W.F. Hegel's philosophy, the unity that sublates the opposing differences in the novel does not already subsist in a *Weltgeist* – it has to be fabricated. This implies (1) that this unity is limited, is finite, that it has an outside – in the novel this finitude shows itself in founding the unity of the nation on a concept of Jewish race. According to G.W.F. Hegel,

> Love can only take place against the same, against the *mirror*, against the *echo* of our essence.
>
> *[Liebe kann nur stattfinden gegen das Gleiche, gegen den* Spiegel*, gegen das* Echo *unseres Wesens. (Hegel 1999c, 243; emph. J.U.)]*

At the first glance, it seems as if the novel exactly stages this dictum: Daniel literally loves the echo that emanates from Mirah's voice or Mordecai's threadbare clothing – and he is only allowed to realise, to live that love when he gets to know that he is of the same 'people': "'We have the same people. Our souls have the same vocation. We shall not be separated by life or by death.'" (748). However, Hegel writes this sentence critically aiming at the deep trench that in (his reading of) Judaism separates the transcendent god and his law from his people on earth – making love – the sublation of all differences – impossible, resulting in 'mere' awe and duty. The Jewish people cannot love god, because he is not 'the same', he is not an echo of their essence. In this light, the sameness that links Mordecai and Daniel is not the sameness Hegel speaks of when he explicates the conditions of possibility for love; their belonging to the same people and their same vocation are distributed to them by a transcendent authority (is it god, or the author, the author-god?); it is not an essential sameness that is an expression of the sublation of differences like transcendent/immanent, sub-

ject/object, etc. Instead of sublating differences, their sameness is an effect of new differences: Jew/Non-Jew, blessed-with-vocation/not-blessed-with-vocation. These differences mark the limitation of the unity their coupling fabricates – a limitation that is an important factor for linear history (Hegel's is, at least formally, circular) and the narratability of this history.

It implies (2) that in order to realise itself, it has to be believed in. The realisation of this unity has to take the shape of a *duty*, because the fabrication is not governed by any necessity, it does not realise itself of and by itself. The constitution of this unity is stabilised in a self-referential way: the *love for the unity* grounds and realises the *unity of love*. This chiastic, self-referential foundation of the unity's fabrication links the mechanics of the novel's *content*, of its plot – the process that is to lead to the founding of a nation – to the mechanics of its performance as narration: it is in fact the very same mechanism that governs the novel's narration of narratibility and the fabrication of a nation. Narration and fabrication of unity – closed plot and universal nation – are one and the same self-referential operation of constituting the universality of closure. The duty for that closure, however, finds its legitimacy, its foundation, in nothing but a love: a longing for this closure, a longing for his-story, a longing for the unity of a nation that is always also the longing for fabrication, the longing for narration, the longing for a meaningful, closed plot – a story-teller's "'loving purpose'" (769) – and duty.

The novel renders the unity that it fabricates in the encounter of the dandiacal poet Daniel and the hoarse prophet Mordecai in terms of a love affair: it tells the story that leads "two undeclared lovers" (495) to "a betrothal, a marriage, and to the relationship of a mother with her son" (Meyer 1993, 738):

> "It has begun already – the marriage of our souls. It waits but the passing away of this body, and then they who are betrothed shall unite in a stricter bond, and what is mine shall be thine. Call nothing mine that I have written, Daniel; for though our masters delivered rightly that everything should be quoted in the name of him that said it – and their rule is good – yet it does not exclude the willing marriage which melts soul into soul, and makes thought fuller as the clear waters are made fuller, where the fullness is inseparable and the clearness is inseparable. For I have judged what I have written, and I desire the body that I gave my thought to pass away as this fleshly body will pass; but let the thought be born again from our fuller soul which shall be called yours." (751)

The relationship between Daniel and Mordecai is clearly not devoid of "the erotics of affect" (Mahawatte 2009, 61); however, it is not erotics that brings and holds these two together:

> Daniel and Mordecai are less bride and groom in the sexual sense than they are in the sense of apocalyptic metaphorics, where gender is not essence but figure of speech (just as the church is considered metaphorically to be the bride of Christ). (Gates 2001, 715)

Joanne Long DeMaria confirms this reading by observing "echoes of the last chapter of Revelations where Christ is the Bridegroom" (DeMaria 1990, 413). In her interesting reading "'marriage' as defined by Mordecai *is* his and Deronda's vocation" (DeMaria 1990, 413). Again we encounter the self-referential configuration of their vocation of marriage being the "same" – "Our souls have the same vocation" (748) – their vocation '*is*' the same in so far as it is to *become the same*, their vocation of marriage is the same vocation for the same, for the One.

The unity of Mordecai's and Daniel's 'marriage' does not stay a mere 'spiritual' bond; as Susan Meyer indicates with her metaphor of "the relationship of a mother with her son", this marital unity incarnates itself in Daniel. The novel gives a first hint of this mother-son relationship by comparing Mordecai's glancing with "the slowly dying mother's look" (495) in the scene where the two meet as "undeclared lovers" (495). The long passage quoted above explicates this first incarnation in terms of authorship: in this marriage Daniel accepts "the infused action of another soul, before which we bow in complete love" (769) *and* is himself reborn as the child resulting from this marital unity. In him, as the child born of this loving unity, the loving forces of sublation are testified, he incarnates the unity sublating the differences of his 'parents':

> Deronda serves as the focal point in a novel that appears to move toward a series of re-embodiments – Mordecai's re-embodiment in Deronda, Deronda's discovery of his Jewish origins, and the ''becoming-body'' of a Jewish national home. However, to many readers Eliot inexplicably relies on a figure of disembodiment for the resuscitation of a dispersed national, religious, and racial body – the figure of Daniel Deronda. It seems that Eliot can only redeem the heterogeneous body-politic of Israel as an organic whole through a body that is not a body. (Novak 2004, 60)

In Daniel, the novel "synthesizes" (Doyle 2008, 349) a "conglomerate persona" (Swann 1974, 44) which "serves as the meeting place of difference at which difference is at once affirmed and effaced" (Novak 2004, 77). Daniel's 'body' is "a cultural fusion" (Swann 1974, 41) constructed to sublate binary oppositions into a mighty unity, thus creating a unity of "universal meaning" (Swann 1974, 41). Caroline Lesjak is certainly right to claim that "Daniel's own figuration testifies to the hybridity underlying any construction of racial or national purity that the narrative attempts to create" (1996, 35). However, the question of purity is not

central to the creation of the construct's universal meaning. Despite the contradiction of hybridity and purity that Caroline Lesjak works out, the construct may well unfold its sublating force and create a unity of universal meaning. As Daniel Novak noted in the passage quoted above, the realisation of the construct, the fabrication of this unifying, sublating 'body' is rather in danger of failing for narratological reasons: Daniel "fails as a fully rounded character" (Ward 2004, 106), "he is not a character: he is the embodiment of a compromise" (Robinson 1964, 279), a "faulty construction" (Robinson 1964, 278), "the most exasperating and least convincing hero in Victorian fiction" (Robinson 1964, 294).

The notions of "fusion", "conglomerate" or "compromise" are not precise enough to mark the concise demands of the sublating function that governs the construction of Daniel as a literary 'character'. In order to construct a unity with universal meaning, the literary figure of Daniel has to "fuse many of the sharp dichotomies of the nineteenth century" (Law-Viljoen 1997, 88), it has to 'marry' one part of a binary with its opposite and incarnate this bond into a sublating unity. Technically speaking, this operation transforms the distinction of *either ... or ...* into the conjunction of *... and ...* :

> Jew and Gentile […] insider and outsider, god and man, […] male and female (Swann 1974, 42),
>
> East and West, God and man, male and female, the inner and the outer life, public and private, duty and passion, past and present, other and self (Law-Viljoen 1997, 88).

The novel explicates this operation with regard to three fundamental distinctions: Daniel is shown to be (1) Jew *and* Christian/Englishman, (2) female *and* male, (3) not belonging to the theatre *and* belonging to the theatre. The similarity of the way the 'fusion' of these dichotomies is introduced leads Natalie Rose to speak of "Eliot's 'but' principle of identity" (2007, 131): as we will see in the following passages, the novel affirms a character's belonging to one category of identity, *but* supplements this categorisation by 'qualifying' the categorisation, adding another quality or characteristic that hints at his/her belonging to the opposed category as well:

> he must be a Jew, intellectually cultured, morally fervid – in all this a nature ready to be plenished from Mordecai's; *but* his face and frame must be beautiful and strong, he must have been used to all the refinements of social life, his voice must flow with a full and easy current, his circumstances be free from sordid need (472; emph. J.U.).

The readers' attention is drawn to the workings of these three important distinctions by the novel's repeatedly confronting the characters with direct questions about their identity's belonging to a specific category, as is most obvious with regard to Daniel's English- or Jewishness:

> "Deronda – Mr Deronda."
>
> "What a delightful name! Is he an Englishman?"
>
> "Yes. He is reported to be *rather closely related* to the baronet. You are interested in him?"
>
> "Yes. I think he is not like young men in general." (13-14; emph. J.U.)

Gwendolen's seemingly irrelevant question does not only attract attention to the allusive richness of Daniel's name, it also introduces the novel's central theme of ambiguous, non-straightforward identity. This problematic identity will finally find its solution and closure in the unfolding of Daniel sublating all the differences at play around his identity. As Terence Cave notes in his edition of the novel, Daniel being "reported to be rather closely related to the baronet" is the first hint at his illegitimacy and the obscurity of his ancestry. Structurally, this hint takes the place of the '*but*' that will feature in later answers to the same question. Yes, Daniel is an Englishman, *but* his relation to the Baronet is an illegitimate one, thus not excluding a non-English ancestry.

In his first encounter with Mirah, Daniel mirrors Gwendolen's question:

> "You are English? You must be – speaking English so perfectly."
>
> "Yes, I will tell you. I am English-born. *But* I am a Jewess." (193; emph. J.U.)

This is one of many examples that show Mirah functioning as a shadow of Daniel; she is his twin, foreshadowing the outcome of the search for his identity. The resonance with Gwendolen's question about Daniel's Englishness and Vandernoodt's allusive answer creates at least a suspicion of a possible sublating, unifying solution – Englishman *and* Jew. However, this conclusion is retarded by Daniel's twice denying his possible Jewish ancestry. The uneasiness that accompanies these denials and the fact that he keeps being asked about his Jewishness give further evidence for the suspicion and charges the question of Daniel's background with importance:

> "Excuse me, young gentleman – allow me – what is your parentage – your mother's family – her maiden name?"
>
> Deronda had a strongly resistant feeling: he was *inclined to shake off hastily the touch on his arm*; but he managed to slip it away and said coldly, "I am an Englishman." (368; emph. J.U.)

> "You are perhaps of our race?"
>
> Deronda coloured deeply, *not liking the grasp*, and then answered with a slight shake of the head, "No." (387; emph. J.U.)

The similarity of the grasp or touch that accompanies Kalonymos's and Mordecai's question symbolises, as already noted above, the bond, from which Daniel, at this stage, still tries to separate himself. However, when Mordecai insists on his prophecy that Daniel "'will take the sacred inheritance of the Jew'" (500) he, for the first time, admits his obscure ancestry:

> "I have never known my mother. I have no knowledge about her. I have never called any man father. *But* I am convinced that my father is an Englishman." (501; emph. J.U.)

Although his 'biological' father turns out not to be an Englishman, Daniel is not entirely mistaken in his claim of an English father; there is a symbolical level to the family relations Daniel is sketching that is far more important than the 'biological' one. This symbolical level plays with the semantics of gender as well as with the semantics of ancestry, matri- and patrilineality. With regard to the question of his Jewishness, it is important that the position of Daniel's mother is occupied by a Jewish ancestor. On the important symbolical level, this position is as much occupied by Mordecai, as it is by his 'biological' Jewish mother. Whereas Daniel's Jewish mother establishes his bond with the Jewish people only 'legally', without any enthusiasm or spiritual instruction, Mordecai introduces him to this bond, makes him accept and *love* this bond and assigns him the historic part he is to play in the history of that people. The fact that the English and the Jewish tradition follow a different way of lineality enables the novel to fuse these two traditions in the figure of Daniel: his symbolical 'father', Sir Hugo, being an accomplished Englishman may pass on the English heritage to his 'son' – in perfect symmetry with Daniel's spiritual Jewish 'mother' Mordecai passing on the Jewish heritage. Patrilineality and matrilineality are sublated:

> "What shall you do then?" said the Princess, with more sharpness. "Make yourself just like your grandfather – be what he wished you – turn yourself into a Jew like him?"
>
> "That is impossible. The effect of my education can never be done away with. The Christian sympathies in which my mind was reared can never die out of me," said Deronda, with increasing tenacity of tone. "*But* I consider it my duty – it is the impulse of my feeling – to identify myself, as far as possible, with my hereditary people, and if I can see any work to be done for them that I can give my soul and hand to I shall choose to do it." (661; emph. J.U.)

Daniel is Jew and Englishman, at the same time. He is, as Kalonymos puts it, "'something more than an Englishman'" (720) – *and* he is something more than a Jew; he is, according to Mordecai, an "'accomplished Egyptian'" (657). "Like Jesus, who is both Jew and not-Jew, Daniel is both not-Jew and Jew." (Scheinberg 2010, 816) Establishing this sublating unity renders Daniel "a highly christianized figure, a Jesus-type" (Levenson 2008, 132). Daniel may certainly be an expression of George Eliot's concern about "the incarnation of ideas", as Alessandra Grego claims (2007, 126). However, the novel as a "historical reworking of the Apocalypse theme" (Grego 2007, 128), as "a study of the possibility for such a man as the Christ of the Scriptures to be living and acting in the late 19th century" (Grego 2007, 129) claims for this incarnation more powerful implications than a mere play with reflections on biblical motives. "As one who is both Jewish and English, the saintly (if not Christ-like) Daniel" (Litvak 1992, 175)

> *came to embody universalism within national culture* and thus became a model of both citizenship and masculinity, the universal-particular male subject at the core of the liberal nation-state (Dekel 2007, 788; emph. J.U.).

Receiving the patrilineal English and the matrilineal Jewish heritage as the son of both traditions, incarnating the sublation of the difference of Jew and Christian, "Daniel, with his Jewish blood and English upbringing, is the perfect candidate to be a Zionist leader" (O'Brien 2007, 114). He is this perfect Zionist leader, because the binding of mutually exclusive terms in a unity creates the "universalism", the "universal meaning" that can then incarnate itself a second time in the nation of nations, the "heart of mankind, if we mean by heart the core of affection" (530), "which carries the culture and the sympathies of every great nation in its bosom" (535). It is this "universalism", this "universal meaning" Daniel had been searching; he finally finds in himself the condition of possibility and the realisation of "universal history" (180) he had been dreaming of with "boyish love" (180).

The sublation of the difference of woman and man that takes place in the literary figure of Daniel follows a similar pattern and produces the same effect. Although Daniel is never confronted with a direct question concerning his gender, his "ambiguous sexuality" (Cho 2006, 191) has found the critics' attention: they agree that he is "ambivalently gendered" (Gates 2001, 708), "presented as a womanly man" (Jackson 1992, 234). His "latent femininity" (Cho 2006, 191) is too obvious to be missed, for example, when he, in his encounter with Gwendolen, "enacts the part of idealized Woman, teaching one who lacks essential

femininity how to be healed by imitating him" (Weisser 1990, 7). It is finally Sir Hugo who explicates Daniel's 'ambivalent' gender:

> his affection for Deronda was not diminished by the deep-lying though not obtrusive difference in their notions and tastes. Perhaps it was all the stronger; acting as *the same sort of difference does between a man and a woman* in giving a piquancy to *the attachment which subsists in spite of it*. Sir Hugo did not think unapprovingly of himself; but he looked at men and society from a liberal-menagerie point of view, and he had a certain pride in Deronda's differing from him, which, if it had found voice, might have said – "You see this fine young fellow – not such as you see every day, is he? – *he belongs to me in a sort of way*. I brought him up from a child; but you would not ticket him off easily, he has notions of his own, and he's *as far as the poles asunder* from what I was at his age." This state of feeling was kept up by the mental balance in Deronda, who was moved by *an affectionateness such as we are apt to call feminine*, disposing him to yield in ordinary details, while he had a *certain inflexibility of judgment, and independence of opinion, held to be rightfully masculine*. (321-322; emph. J.U.)

Interestingly enough, this passage presents the sublation of sexual difference/the difference of gender in a double movement, exposing the mechanics of this construction: firstly, the "deep-lying though not obtrusive difference" between Daniel and Sir Hugo is compared to the "difference between a man and a woman". Thus Sir Hugo's "affection for Deronda" is structurally homologous with the "piquancy" of "the attachment which subsists in spite of" the deep-lying difference between man and woman – *love*. Sir Hugo and Daniel are "as far as poles asunder", however, Daniel "belongs to [Sir Hugo] in a sort of way" – the binary opposition is sublated in a unity of love, of affection. This unity of love, as the passage shows, is incarnated in Daniel: in his person a feminine affectionateness and a masculine independence of opinion are unified. The difference between him and Sir Hugo, a difference as deep-lying as the difference between a man and a woman is sublated, Daniel is man and woman. The mechanism's astonishing similarity to Daniel's loving unity with Mordecai, and his incarnation of the unity of Jew and Christian is more than obvious. This further testifies to the symmetry of the patrilineal heritage Daniel receives from his 'father' Sir Hugo – incarnating the unity of man and woman – and the matrilineal heritage Daniel receives from his 'mother' Mordecai – incarnating the unity of Christian and Jew. The effect of both incarnations is the same: they create a unity of universal meaning, a unity that can claim to be at the root of all, a unity that is defined by itself, because it binds binary oppositions.

Carole Robinson's claim that "Deronda should have been a woman" (1964, 278) has become a commonplace in feminist readings of the novel. Instead of further investing in the polemical complaints about this "initial fallacy, the faulty construction of a masculine Deronda" (Robinson 1964, 278) we are interested in the reasons critics have worked out to explain George Eliot's choice of a male title hero. According to Carole Robinson, "[t]he political burden of George Eliot's last novel demanded a man in the title role". (Robinson 1964). Bronwyn Law-Viljoen's reading is quite similar: George Eliot "is unable to conceive a politically and socially emancipated role for a female character so she creates a feminised Messiah" (1997, 88). Joanne Long DeMaria takes up this criticism of George Eliot's affirmation of conservative gender roles:

> Eliot may have found it difficult to draw a female character forceful enough to counter the examples of Gwendolen and the princess who would yet remain within the definition of feminine virtue she exalted; by using feminized male figures, Eliot attempts to marry masculine and feminine virtues without compromising the feminine (1990, 411).

Daniel is indeed "socially a male" (Jackson 1992, 234). However, this is not only a question of 'appropriate' gender roles. The marriage "Eliot attempts" merely superficially expresses "a 'feminine' instinct for love" (DeMaria 1990, 403) – marriage and sublating love are both central notions of a male imaginary that is governed by a longing for unification, for universalism, for the One. As Mikhal Dekel so brilliantly puts it, it is "the universal-particular male subject" who comes "to embody universalism within national culture" (Dekel 2007, 788). Whether this "universal-particular male subject" is represented by a forceful, emancipated woman or a "womanly man" does not change anything with regard to the male logics this creation of a powerful, universal sublating unity follows. Leonora confronts Daniel, the "feminised Messiah" with exactly this statement, setting limits to his sublating capacities:

> "No," said the Princess, shaking her head and folding her arms with an air of decision. "You are not a woman. You may try – but you can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl." (631)

The minoritarian positioning of 'women' can never be translated, never be sublated into a majoritarian unity. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak shows convincingly in her article "Displacement and the Discourse of Women" (1997), the sublation of woman and man in love, family and state that G.W.F. Hegel prominently conceptualises with regard to Adam and Eve in his *Philosophy of Right* is the epitome of the phallogocentric "discourse of man" (1997, 44). Despite the

universalism that this majoritarian discourse's construction produces, there always remains a minoritarian other that resists the majoritarian longing for the One, resists universalism; that is not bound by love but operating with seduction; that defies a unified history and creates its own mechanism that deals with the contingencies of time as a powerful agent. The fact that George Eliot's novel gives these minoritarian resistances a voice in Gwendolen and especially Leonora, the fact that it quite elaborately sketches a female imaginary, although its 'actual' project consists in writing the realisation of the male longing for unity in the nation of nations makes it so interesting: *Daniel Deronda* can be re-read as a critical, symptomatic analysis of the discourse of man.

The third sublation the novel explicates, the binding in a unity of belonging to the theatre and not belonging to the theatre, may be regarded as the least obvious. However, it is marked by two explicit questions. Sir Hugo directs the first question at Daniel in his boyhood:

> One morning after he had been singing "Sweet Echo" before a small party of gentlemen whom the rain had kept in the house, the baronet, passing from a smiling remark to his next neighbour said:
>
> "Come here, Dan!"
>
> The boy came forward with unusual reluctance. He wore an embroidered holland blouse which set off the rich colouring of his head and throat, and the resistant gravity about his mouth and eyes as he was being smiled upon, made their beauty the more impressive. Every one was admiring him,
>
> "What do you say to being a great singer? Should you like to be adored by the world and take the house by storm; like Mario and Tamberlik?"
>
> Daniel reddened instantaneously, but there was a just perceptible interval before he answered *with angry decision* –
>
> "No; I should hate it!" (168-169; emph. J.U.)

Only moments after Daniel has rescued her from suicide, Mirah asks Daniel a question that echoes the situation of Daniel's decision against the career as an opera singer in his youth:

> Still she hesitated, and said more timidly than ever –
>
> "Do you belong to the theatre?"
>
> "No; I have nothing to do with the theatre," said Deronda, *in a decided tone*. (191; emph. J.U.)

At the first glance, what these two situations have in common is a *decision* against the theatre. In his youth, Daniel "with angry decision" defies a theatre career; his answer to Mirah's question confirms this decision "in a decided

tone". However, quite similar to Kalonymos's and Mordecai's questions about his Jewishness, the resonance of these questions about his future or possible belonging to the theatre hint at something in Daniel that seems to trigger these questions, that seems to link him to the theatre. Clearly, this is Daniel's singing voice; in both situations, the question is preceded by his singing – "Sweet Echo" as a boy, "the gondolier's song in the Otello" (187) before rescuing Mirah. Daniel's voice echoes what he is not aware of: it echoes his mother's voice – and his belonging to the theatre. Again, Mirah serves as his twin, his shadow that mirrors Daniel's unknown story: the novel constructs and exposes the astonishing parallelism of their beautiful voices, emphasising the special level on which they seem to communicate via song. The theatrical background, rooted in a family tradition, is explicated in the case of Mirah's story – her asking Daniel whether he belongs to the theatre creates the suspicion that his story may be quite similar to hers. Leonora's revelations finally confirm this suspicion: like for Mirah, Daniel's decision against belonging to the theatre gains its implications from the fact that he does belong to it beforehand. Daniel's 'belonging to the theatre' even serves as the condition of possibility for his decision against belonging to the theatre: his becoming an English gentleman rather than an opera singer is made possible by his mother's decision for her theatre career and against raising her child herself. Daniel's and Mirah's decision against their belonging to the theatre sublates their deep-lying belonging to it that finds expression in their exceptional voices. This hidden sublation of theatre and non-theatre taking place in the figures of Daniel and Mirah realises itself explicitly in their "sincere acting […] – tragic as well as real" (629) after abandoning the theatre: following their Jewish vocation provides them with a "part in the long song of mourning that has been going on through ages and ages" (215). Acting in the *National* Tragedy of Israel sublates belonging to the theatre and not belonging to the theatre:

> "If there are ranks in suffering, Israel takes precedence of all the nations – if the duration of sorrows and the patience with which they are borne ennoble, the Jews are among the aristocracy of every land – if a literature is called rich in the possession of a few classic tragedies, what shall we say to a National Tragedy lasting for fifteen hundred years, in which the poets and the actors were also the heroes?" (517)

This quotation of Leopold Zunz[40] forms the conceptual centre of the novel. George Eliot does not merely quote, though:

40 Leopold Zunz re-interprets, he inverts a central, anti-Semitic passage of G.W.F. Hegel's early writing: "The great tragedy of the Jewish people is no Greek tragedy; it can rouse

> Eliot adds the qualifier 'National' to the word 'Tragedy.' The move is of one with Eliot's larger effort to bring the rhetorical frames of nation-thinking to the historical experience of the Jews. (Mufti 2007, 100)

George Eliot's relating the tragedy of the Jewish people to the concept of the nation gives this tragedy a lasting, recognisable, 'real' appearance and unity. "[T]he nation, touching everyone as well as every aspect of life, is the ultimate empowerment" (Bonaparte 1993, 39) – it is the ultimate incar*nation*, the Jewish tragedy is finally (re-)given a body, and a voice:

> Looking toward a land and a polity, our dispersed people in all the ends of the earth may share the dignity of a national life which has a voice among the peoples of the East and the West (532).

Echo's tragic story is re-written with a good ending: her body and full capacity of voice are restored in a unity holding together by fulfilled love. This unity of fulfilled love that incarnates itself at first in Daniel and then, a second time, in the Jewish nation, is not any unity. It does not only sublate the differences of fictional world of the theatre *and* reality, man *and* woman, Jew *and* Englishman; this Jewish nation is *the* incarnation of *the* principle of unity and universalism, of the One, and thereby the condition of possibility for any other expression of that male imaginary:

> "the *Shemah*, wherein we briefly confess the divine Unity, is the chief devotional exercise of the Hebrew; and this made our religion the fundamental religion for the whole world; for the divine Unity embraced as its consequence the ultimate unity of mankind. See, then – the nation which has been scoffed at for its separateness, has given *a binding theory* to the human race." (734; emph. J.U.)

This "binding theory" also accounts for the taming of time in the form of a concept of unified, universal, meaningful history:

> "It is to see more and more of *the hidden bonds that bind and consecrate change as a dependent growth* – yea, consecrate it with kinship: the past becomes my parent and the future stretches toward me the appealing arms of children." (528; emph. J.U.)

The passage quoted above is a prime example of the notion of "the family" as "one of Mordecai's most frequently used metaphors for his vision of the future

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neither terror nor pity, for both these arise only out of fate which follows from the inevitable slip of a beautiful character; it can arouse horror alone." (1948b, 204-205) *["Das große Trauerspiel des jüdischen Volks ist kein griechisches Trauerspiel, es kann nicht Furcht noch Mitleiden erwecken, denn beide entspringen nur aus dem Schicksal des notwendigen Fehltritts eines schönen Wesens; jenes kann nur Abscheu erwecken." (1999b, 297)]*

of the Jews" (DeMaria 1990, 411). As Brian Swann writes, "[n]ationalism is an extension [or, rather, the sublation, J.U.] of the family. […] That which should hold a family together is love" (Swann 1974, 43). Contrary to "Sir Hugo in his bachelorhood", who "had been beguiled into regarding children chiefly as a product intended to make life more agreeable to the full-grown" (715), Mordecai discovers the conceptual potential of the child-bearing family for a "binding theory" of humankind – "making patriarchally based family ties the paradigm for humane social relations" (Linehan 1992, 325). The family is indeed, as Brian Swann paraphrases Edward T. Hurley, "George Eliot's instrument for immortality" (1974, 42): incarnating the "vital connection between past, present, and future" that inheres in the concept of family in the body of the Jewish nation creates a synthesis of time that Daniel's mortal body could not incarnate. The nation is not "a mixture of prophetic desire for a unified future and nostalgia for a lost past" (Thurschwell 2004, 93), but incarnates the meaningful unity of future and past in a national present:

> the future is resurrected from its death in the present by a commemorative return to the past, the eternal stock of national energy. It is this intricate relation between the three temporal moments of past, present, and future that made nationalism into such a seductive form of politics to Eliot. (Wohlfarth 1998, 196)

A very short excursus to Ernest Renan's famous conceptualisation of 'the nation' may help to exemplify this "intricate relation" of the concept of the nation and the concept of meaningful history: According to Ernest Renan, what constitutes a nation is not speaking the same language or belonging to the same ethnographical group, *["Ce qui constitue une nation, ce n'est pas de parler la même langue ou d'Appartenir au même group ethnographique," (1996a, 245)]*, but "in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, […] in the future, [a shared] programme to put into effect" (1990, 19) *["Dans le passé, un héritage de gloire et de regrets à partager, dans l'avenir un même programme à réaliser" (1996b, 241)]*. As a result of this importance of inheritance and memory of the past for the commonality of a future programme, "suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort." (1990, 19) *["la souffrance en commun unit plus que la joie. En fait de souvenirs nationaux, les deuils valent mieux que les triomphes, car ils imposent des devoirs, ils commandent l'effort en commun." (1996b, 241)]* With regard to the resonance of Ernest Renan's theory of the nation as a future project resulting from past suffering with Leopold Zunz's conceptualisation of the Jewish fate as a tragedy of sorrows, George Eliot's adding the qualifier 'National' to Zunz's notion of Jewish

tragedy seems almost natural. The fact that the Jewish 'project' is charged with messianic force, that it is not any contingent nationalistic project but incarnates the sublation of man and god, transcends Ernest Renan's empiricism and assigns a transcendental role to this "particular-universal" project: as Marc E. Wohlfahrt notes, "Hess's notion that Jewish history forms all of human history into an unbroken divine history – what Karl Löwith has called *Heilsgeschichte* – must have impressed Eliot" (1998, 208). It has impressed George Eliot, because this "particular-universal" project holds a double relation to narration: (1) in order to sublate "all of human history into an unbroken divine history" Jewish history and its connection to human history in general must be narrated; sublation has to be fabricated, the unity, the One, are complicated constructions that have to be carefully produced. They form a plot, following the paradoxical teleological logic of the final effect acting as a cause from the very beginning, constituting universal closure. (2) The "particular-universal" project of the Jewish tragedy exercises a transcendental function also with regard to the meaningful narration George Eliot envisages: the narration of the fulfilment of the One, the fabrication of *meaningful history*, the transcendental plot serves as the condition of possibility for the narratability of a *meaningful story*; a meaningful story receives its closure, its sense, its experience, its counsel, its exemplarity, only on the background of the transcendental plot of history, with the One plot of History acting as horizon. George Eliot's novel *Daniel Deronda* unfolds this double relation of nation and narration: it fabricates the sublating forces of the universal nation – and thereby narrates its own narratability as a meaningful story.

Echo's Clinamen: Mothers Making the Difference

The role of the mother in *Daniel Deronda* has found a lot of critical attention. 'Mothers' seem to occupy a foundational, structuring function in the novel:

> In *Daniel Deronda*, the quest for racial origins is carried out through this search for the mother and the distinguishing of false and true mothers, and ends with the establishment of a transformed, racially coherent family, a grouping that radically resists the goals of assimilation. (Lovesey 1998, 514)

Indeed, one of the key structural elements of the novel's plot is Daniel's and Mirah's parallel search for their mothers – a search that finally reveals a dissimilar pair: the 'false', *unloving*, *spectacular* mother Alcharisi and the *vocal memory* of Mirah's dead mother who is sketched as the epitome of 'true' maternal love. The dichotomy of 'true' and 'false' mothers thus incorporates the dichotomy that structures the novel and our analysis: Narcissus and Echo, narcissistic spectacle and Echo's binding history, two opposing concepts of time and society. The novel exposes both 'false' and 'true' mothers, in order to opt for the 'true' mother and establish a mighty family around her. However, a look at the important events that the novel excludes from its "history proper" (Chase 1978, 223) and reports as prior to the novel's time undermines this morally charged binary opposition:

> But just as the 'betrayal' of Mirah's father is the condition for the moral greatness of Mirah's self-determination, Charisi's 'betrayal' on her faith and her father is the precondition for the fact that Daniel can liberate himself from the irrelevance of his English existence in a voluntary decision, can turn to Judaism and accept the great mission.
>
> *[Doch ebenso wie der ‚Verrat' von Mirahs Vater die Bedingung für die moralische Größe von Mirahs Selbstbestimmung darstellt, ist Charisis ‚Verrat' an ihrem Glauben und ihrem Vater die Voraussetzung dafür, daß sich Deronda in freiwilliger Entscheidung aus der Belanglosigkeit seiner englischen Existenz befreien, dem Judentum zuwenden und die große Mission annehmen kann. (Kuczynski 1994, 81)]*

The opposition of true and false mothers, of time and history, of spectacle and memory is haunted by a transcendental level of conditions of possibility that hides behind the dichotomic surface it produces. Mirah's father's and Charisi's betrayal turn out not to be mere loose threads, instances of moral corruption; on this transcendental level, they are highly functional, necessary parts of the cluster of conditions of possibility that enables the "history proper" to be fabricated. The establishment of the coherent, loving family that forms the backbone of the great Jewish mission is only superficially opposed to the false mother's spec-

tacle; in fact, the false mothers' – Mirah's father may also be called a false mother – interventions are the decisive steps in the production of the Jewish nation's universal unity. These false mothers make – in the sense of 'create' – the 'difference in the same' that the "history proper" of the novel can then re-bind in the name of maternal love and historical memory. In order to be productive, in order to bear fruit as a unity binding differences, the true mother's love relies on this creation of 'differences in the same' effected by the false mothers' interventions. To put it in Hegelian words, the false mothers are responsible for the work of the negative that charges the sublating unity with universality.

Daniel's mother's abandoning her son, giving it to Sir Hugo does not merely provide "Daniel with a great deal of emotional and ethical capital" (Cohen 1998, 333) – the "effect of [his] education" (661), his being brought up as an English gentleman is constitutive for his being selected by Mordecai as his mate and disciple: "'he has a preparation which I lacked, and is an accomplished Egyptian'" (657). Symmetrical to Daniel's beautiful body and frame and his wealth, Mordecai's sickly condition is the effect of a false mother's intervention, as Mirah narrates:

> "Once – twelve years ago – he was strong and happy, going to the East, which he loved to think of; and my mother called him back because – because she had lost me. And he went to her, and took care of her through great trouble, and worked for her till she died – died in grief. And Ezra, too, had lost his health and strength. The cold had seized him coming back to my mother, because she was forsaken." (740)

"Mordecai's own executive self was hindered by his having to care for his mother and by his own health." (Kelly 1987, 524) His "exile from his religious vocation is an exile *to* his mother. She becomes a kind of imprisonment for him, preventing him from acting the great role to which he is called". (Jackson 1992, 241) The fact that he is "summoned back to England by a letter from his mother" (Rignall 2006, 151) links this event structurally to the letter Gwendolen receives from her mother telling her that all the family money is lost. Both letters express the incursion of fate, both letters are provoked by the speculation of others and fatal loss: Gwendolen's family money is lost by financial speculations, Mirah's father robs his daughter in order to turn her into a spectacular asset that will yield the stakes for his gambling. The novel is quick and determined to judge these events in moral terms and condemn the gambler Lapidoth and applaud Mordecai's "unapplauded heroism"

> which turns off the road of achievement at the call of the nearer duty whose effect lies within the beatings of the hearts that are close to us, as the hunger of the unfledged bird to the breast of its parent. (545)

However, the moral greatness of "Mordecai's heroism in giving up his Zionist hopes in order to care for his grieving mother" (DeMaria 1990, 405) and the corruption of "the sin of the father" (542) cover a hinge of the novel's structure that contributes strongly to "*Daniel Deronda's* extraordinary deconstructive spin" (Cho 2006, 156); is Mordecai right to claim that

> "Mine was the lot of Israel. For the sin of the father my soul must go into exile. For the sin of the father the work was broken, and the day of fulfilment delayed" (542),

was he really called to act the "great role"? Does the delay of the day of fulfilment only happen as an accident to Mordecai's project – or is it in fact constitutive for the project's success? Following the findings presented above, the universality Mordecai claims for his project of a Jewish nation could only be achieved through the 'marriage' of Mordecai and Daniel that sublates deep-lying differences. George Eliot's novel narrates exactly this interesting and complex 'delay', this detour – why does it exclude the 'essential' events of Mordecai's "road of achievement" from its "history proper" and narrate the 'accidental' detour instead? Clearly, the detour is constitutive, it is the title hero Daniel Deronda who is to act the great role in his-story – the One story that wins over Gwendolen's mere episodes that suffer from the dominance of the plotlessness of time as an agent of contingency. However, the 'accidents' leading to this constitutive delay act as the constitutive conditions of possibility for this delay *without* being part of the One story of history: they are constitutive but effected by the plotlessness of time. In plain words, it is Charisi's spectacle and Lapidoth's speculation that make the fabrication of the nation's historical, loving unity possible. These 'false mothers'' interventions are the *clinamen* of the novel's construct of meaningful, closed history:

> The *clinamen*, as the minimum angle, has meaning only between a straight line and a curve, the curve and its tangent, and constitutes the original curvature of the movement of the atom. The clinamen is the smallest angle by which an atom derives from a straight path. It is a passage to the limit, an exhaustion, a paradoxical "exhaustive" model. (Deleuze and Guattari 2004b, 398)
>
> *[Le* clinamen*, comme angle minimal, n'a de sens qu'entre une droite et une courbe, la courbe et sa tangente, et constitue la courbure première de l'atome. Le clinamen, c'est le plus petit angle par lequel l'atome s'écarte de la droite. C'est un passage à la limite, une exhaustion, un modèle « exhaustif » paradoxal. (Deleuze and Guattari 2009, 447)]*

The cleavages they create – Englishman-Jew, theatre-non-theatre, male-female – introduce the differences in the same that opens the self-identical 'point' of the same, inflating it to encompass more and more, growing towards universality, with the certitude that the recognition of its initial, underlying sameness – what Hegel calls 'love' – will finally re-close the circle. They create the constitutive interval between sound and re-sounding, the interval of the echo, that will take shape as the closed, meaningful and mastered space of History. It is, however, not surprising that the novel attempts to dismiss its 'clinamatic' agents of difference – Gwendolen, Alcharisi, Lapidoth – as morally corrupt, failed and punished characters: their standing (quite!) outside the unity of history, their not being a casted part of history's plot is an unequivocal sign that the Hegelian circle never quite closes, that there, analytically, *has to* remain an outside that at once makes the circle possible *and* questions the circle, questions the unity, questions the One, questions History and its universal meaning. This outside is an agent of time – unbound – whose cleavages only in the most constructed and least probable cases can be tamed in an abstract unity. George Eliot's novel *Daniel Deronda*, narrating the majoritarian project of meaningful history, story and nation cannot but narrate, at the same time, the ~~story~~ of this minoritarian agent of time and cleavage, of speculation and spectacle – in short: the ~~story~~ of creatively resisting the One.

Figures

Figure 1: Reynolds, Sir Joshua. 1775. *Mrs. Sheridan as Saint Cecilia*. Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire: Waddesdon Manor.

Figure 2: Reynolds, Sir Joshua. 1789/90. *Mrs. Billington as Saint Cecilia*. New Brunswick: The Beaverbrook Art Gallery.

Figure 3: Kneller, Sir Godfrey. 1703. *Lady Elizabeth Cromwell as Saint Cecilia*. From a private collection.

Figure 4: Romney, George. Not dated. *Mrs. Billington as Saint Cecilia*. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts.

Figure 5: Reynolds, Sir Joshua. 1784. *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse*. London: Dulwich Picture Gallery.

Figure 6: Zoffany, Johann. ca 1780. *Elizabeth Farren as Hermione in the Winters Tale*. Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria.

Figure 7: Buck, Adam. 1802. *Mrs. Siddons in the Role of Hermione*. Engraved by J. Alais. Fribourg: Department of Art History, University of Fribourg.

Figure 8: Hamilton, Lady Mary. Not Dated. *Constance, Act III, Sc. II. June 26, 1802. "A Widow Cries, Be Husband to Me Heaven"*. London: British Museum.

Figure 9: Hamilton, Lady Mary. Not Dated. *Hermione (the Winter's Tale), Act III, Sc. II. July 31, 1802. "Life! I Prise It Not a Straw"*. London: British Museum.

Figure 10: Titian. 1516. *The Tribute Money*. Dresden: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen.

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George Eliot's late novel Daniel Deronda *tackles big, fundamental political questions that radiate from the societal circumstances of the novel's production and reach deep into our present-day life. The novel critically analyses the capitalistic, morally flawed and standard-less English society and narrates the title hero's proto-Zionist mission to found a Jewish nation that re-establishes history, meaning and ethical values.*

This study attempts to trace the novel's two models of society and time by bringing them into resonance with the myth of Narcissus and Echo famously rendered by Ovid. The unloving, self-referential, visual Narcissus is read as the model for the capitalistic world of spectacle and speculation. Echo's loving, memory-bearing voice forms an important part in the construction of the sublating unity of the Jewish nation-to-come. Guided by this resonance between George Eliot's novel and Ovid's myth pieces of critical theory and philosophy are woven into the study's fabric. The resulting analysis dissects and deconstructs the novel's fascinating and highly complex patterns of conditions of possibility for the fabrication of the redeeming Jewish nation, the very same conditions that the novel presents as the conditions of possibility for narrating a meaningful story.

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