Nineteenth-Century Nar*race*ons: Race, Gender, and (National) Identity in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin and Dred* and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*

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Abstract:
George Eliot's inquiry into Jewishness as racial origin in her last novel, Daniel Deronda (1876), was motivated by the American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe's exploration of the subject of race in Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) and Dred (1856). Eliot's continued interest in how individual and social identity is constituted made her go beyond Stowe's considerations of race and (national) identity and focus on the teachings of Jewish Kabbalah1 in Daniel Deronda. Her investigation of the ancient Jewish faith caused her to incorporate into her novel a very interesting meditation on identity that explores the identity constituting power of the socio-biological determinants of "race" or (homo)eroticism; this fascinating aspect of Daniel Deronda will be discussed in the second part of my paper.

Constructing "Race"

1 George Eliot's inquiry into Jewishness as racial origin in her last novel, *Daniel Deronda* (1876), was motivated by the American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe's exploration of the subject of race in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and *Dred* (1856). Eliot's continued interest in how individual and social identity is constituted made her go beyond Stowe's considerations of race and (national) identity and focus on the teachings of Jewish Kabbalah[1] in *Daniel Deronda*. Her investigation of the ancient Jewish faith caused her to incorporate into her novel a very interesting meditation on identity that explores the identity constituting power of the socio-biological determinants of "race" or (homo)eroticism; this fascinating aspect of *Daniel Deronda* will be discussed in the second part of my paper.

2 Throughout *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe, like Eliot after her in *Daniel Deronda*, investigates the meaning of otherness as racial, sexual, cultural and religious difference. While she never takes a definite essentialist position on racial difference, her description of her black characters as mostly childlike together with her persistent linkage of superior intelligence (such as George Harris's) with lighter skin color suggests that she viewed blacks as evolutionary and culturally less developed. Yet because it was her life's aim to abolish the enslavement of human beings, she nevertheless actively tried to debunk the stereotypical

[1]According to Harold Bloom, "'Kabbalah' has been, since about the year 1200, the popularly accepted word for Jewish esoteric teachings concerning God and everything God created" (15). Gershom Scholem, in *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, points out that Kabbalah first "surfaced" in twelfth-century France (it remained a vital form of Judaism until the seventeenth century) and reached its zenith in thirteenth century Spain with the publication of the *Zohar*, the kabbalists' holy book, by Rabbi Moses de Leon's (see 89).

presentation of Africans as naturally savage and brutal by endowing them with the best "white qualities" such as "natural religiousness" and motherliness.

3 In writing *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot shared some of the same concerns. Like Stowe, she addresses the subject of racial otherness and considers the consequences of race mixing. To stress the romantic element that she apparently also deemed a necessary ingredient in writing about racial strife, Eliot borrowed a number of ideas from Stowe for her own novel about race. With her character Mordecai, who resembles Stowe's "race prophet" Dred, she introduces a Jewish prophet who hands down ancient kabbalistic wisdom and prophesies the founding of a Zionist state. George Eliot explained her rationale for writing a novel about Jews in one of her letters to Stowe: she meant to work towards the rectification of a racial wrong by "treat[ing] Jews with such sympathy and understanding as my nature and knowledge could attain to" because she felt that "towards the Hebrews we western [sic] people who have been reared in Christianity, have a peculiar debt and, whether we acknowledge it or not, a peculiar thoroughness of fellowship in religious and moral sentiment" (*George Eliot Letters* VI 301-02).

4 Harriet Beecher Stowe's aims in writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* also went much beyond the romancer's interest in writing an engaging story about racial strife and the lives and customs of black people. In her anti-slavery novels the political purpose of abolishing slavery takes precedence over any aesthetic considerations; for Stowe the liberation of African American slaves was absolutely necessary on religious grounds since she viewed slavery as a dangerous impediment to the advent of the millennium which would precede Christ's second coming (see Westra 156). The subject of race therefore always ties in with religion in Stowe's writing.

5 Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, like Stowe's novels, also serves a purpose that combines religion and politics. While *Uncle Tom's Cabin* proposes both to solve America's slavery problem and to further millennialism in America by relocating free blacks to Liberia, *Daniel Deronda* advocates the establishment of a Jewish nation in Palestine. Beyond these obvious parallels, there are quite a few other similarities in Stowe's and Eliot's thematic conceptions and strategies of characterization. In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot evidently follows Stowe's lead in strategically feminizing some of her male protagonists as well as stressing the "natural religiousness" of her "racially other" protagonists. Mordecai, Daniel's spiritual leader, adheres to an old form of religious faith like Stowe's *Dred*. And *Daniel Deronda*, whom one commentator describes as "Jesus the Jew [with] the manners of a nineteenth-century Englishman" (Cave xxxii), is very much like Stowe's feminized black males, the Christ-like

Uncle Tom and the maternal Tiff, in that he likes to console young women in distress by talking religion and ethics with them. By turning Daniel into a "stereotypical Victorian heroine" - to borrow Elizabeth Ammons's description of Tom (167) - Eliot makes her Jewish main hero, Daniel, a harmless, "normal" person much in the same way in which Stowe automatically forecloses the possibility that Tom might be viewed as a savage native male. "Victorian heroines" simply cannot be equated either with stereotypically "savage black males" prone to violence and rape or with "swarthy, cunning, unsavory Jewish pawnbrokers." But Daniel also has something in common with the mulatto George Harris, whose masculinity and initial rebelliousness, according to Stowe, stem from his white father. George is deprived of his birthright because he is the illegitimate black son of a white man; he seeks and finds a racial identity by becoming one of the founders of a free black nation in Liberia. Daniel, who has been deprived of his Jewish birthright, establishes his personal identity as racial identity and becomes the co-founder of a Zionist state.

6 Through the incorporation of this nationalist plot, *Daniel Deronda* ends on a similar note as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: those who are racially other leave the West out of their own volition and decide to move to other countries. Nearly all of the surviving African American characters from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* move to the paradisiacal Liberia, whereas Daniel Deronda and his wife Mirah emigrate to Palestine in order to help establish a Jewish colony. Incidentally, these endings which propose emigration of the "other race" have been received quite differently by Stowe's and by Eliot's public; Jewish commentators welcomed George Eliot's support of the foundation of a Jewish state (see Lewis 203), whereas at least some of Stowe's black contemporaries did not appreciate her possible hint that Africans should live in Africa (see Yarborough 69).

7 Stowe's presentation of blacks drew immediate protest and thus established a long tradition of criticizing Stowe for her portrayal of African Americans as racially inferior. From the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin on it has been obvious to critics that Stowe, in spite of her commitment to the abolition of slavery and in spite of her professed sympathy for blacks, actively promoted racial stereotypes. In his landmark article "Strategies of Black Characterization in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Early Afro-American Novel," Richard Yarborough has meticulously listed aspects of Stowe's characterization of blacks that have met with critical disapproval - from her tendency to endow mulatto characters with more intelligence than pure black ones over her use of "comical darky" figures to her annoying presentation of little black children "mopping and moving and grinning all between railings, and tumbling over the kitchen floor" (UTC 353). A tradition of criticizing Stowe for what

appears to be a racist presentation of blacks was established early on. As Yarborough points out, black male commentators immediately noticed that Tom seems to lack masculine virtues: "To blacks like Allen and George T. Downing, Harris is 'the only one that really betrays any other than the subservient, submissive, Uncle Tom spirit, which has been the cause of much of the disrespect felt for the colored man'" (69).

8 The fact that twentieth-century critics were usually somewhat put off by Stowe's conviction that there are essential racial characteristics[2] can be explained by changes in attitudes towards race that have taken place since the mid-nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century race theory, whose views influenced popular attitudes towards race, usually held the belief that there are differences between races, that there is a gradation from "lower" to "higher" races, and that racial differences are innate and essential. During the first half of the nineteenth century, scientific opinion on race actually experienced a paradigm shift which caused at least some scientists to forgo the assumption of a monogenetic human origin in favor of a polygenetic one. Polygenetic theories maintained that racial difference originated in the separate creation of different human species. Liberal late-twentieth century scientific theories about race, however, having of course long dismissed these ideas, usually proceed from the hypothesis that if there are any differences between races - other than obvious morphological differences - these differences are culturally constructed.

9 In order not to contradict the Bible's version of human creation, Stowe, as a devout Christian, had to side with monogenetic race theory, which argued that blacks and whites were of the same species.[3] Miss Ophelia, one of the "religiously correct" characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, thus declares Stowe's view "that the Lord made them of one blood with us" and that "they've [also] got immortal souls" (268). But this does not necessarily mean that Stowe thought that America was the best place for African Americans. In keeping with nineteenth-century race theory, she enthusiastically depicts a golden future for Africans in Africa:

> If ever Africa shall show an elevated and cultivated race,- and come it must . . . life will awake there with a gorgeousness of which our cold western tribes faintly have conceived. In that far-off mystic land of gold and gems, and spices, and waving palms and wondrous flowers, and miraculous fertility, will awake new forms of art, new styles of splendor; and the negro race, no longer despised and trodden down will, perhaps, show forth some of the latest and most magnificent revelations of human life. (275)

[2]Rachel Bowlby has argued persuasively in her article "Breakfast in America: Uncle Tom's Cultural Histories" that Stowe, in spite of believing in the effectiveness of education, does not concede that the "raw, or human material" is the same for whites and blacks (200).

[3]Stowe might have derived her racialist view about blacks from lectures delivered in 1837 and 1838 by Alexander Kinmont in Cincinnati, where she lived (see Nuernberg 260).

The flowery language of this passage might at first conceal the dark subtext that runs through it and tries to make palatable the idea that Africans, who are environmentally adapted to the African continent, should live in Africa. Immediate protest against Stowe's colonizationist stance made her revise her politics. According to Yarborough, Stowe "reportedly regretted her decision, explaining that she would end the novel differently if given the opportunity to write it over again" (69).

10 *Dred*, Stowe's second anti-slavery novel, avoided some of the pitfalls of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Instead of sending her black characters to Liberia, Stowe projects integrated utopian communities of black grandparents and "white, black, and foreign" (333) grandchildren in Northern cities and in Canada. Moreover, Stowe's main hero, after whom the novel is named, proves that a purely black character can exhibit masculine valor and intelligence. But with the character of Tiff, who instead of wearing pants sometimes wears two aprons-one in front and one in back-and who constantly worries about what he can do to inculcate religion in the two white children he takes care of, Stowe again portrays a black male as maternal and devoutly religious. In an often quoted passage from *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she gives her rationale for such depictions:

> The negro race is confessedly more simple, docile, childlike, and affectionate, than other races; and hence the divine graces of love and faith, when in-breathed by the Holy Spirit, find in their natural temperament a more congenial atmosphere. (41)

11 Anthony Appiah notes that this myth of the "naturally religious African" (which is mirrored by Eliot's "naturally religious" Jews) was also common among missionaries who had come back from Africa impressed with the Africans' "natural religiosity" and "the yearning of the native African for a higher religion" (*My Father's House* 23). According to Appiah this supposed naturalness of religious worship among Africans was fabricated in the minds of those who observed the behavior of enslaved African Americans through a "racialized" lens:

> It is tempting to see this view as yet another imposition of the exile's distorting vision; in the New World, Christianity had provided the major vehicle of cultural expression for the slaves. It could not be denied them in a Christian country-and it provided them with solace in their "vale of tears," guiding them through "the valley of the shadow." Once committed to racialist explanations, it was inevitable that the rich religious lives of New World blacks should be seen as flowing from the nature of the Negro-and thus projected onto the Negro in Africa. (23)

12 For Stowe, this "natural religiosity" always ties in with "childlikeness." Both in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and in *Dred*, individual African Americans and also "the race as a whole" are described as childlike and dependent. In *Dred*, the narrator sermonizes, "The Negro race, with many of the faults of children, unite many of their most amiable qualities in the simplicity and

confidingness with which they yield themselves up in admiration of a superior friend" (46). Her character Clayton, who compares "the Ethiopian race" to "a slow-growing plant," predicts that "if they ever become highly civilized, they will excel in music, dancing, and elocution" (74). Even though, as I think, these descriptions veer away from what Appiah defines as "racialist" views into what one might have to label "racism,"[4] it is evident that Stowe believed in a certain dynamism within the Great Chain of Being. Apparently, Stowe had internalized the popular belief that lower "races," like children, could actually grow up.

13 In this context, it is interesting to note that throughout her novels dealing with race, Stowe consistently equates women with children and black men-thus, in *Dred* Harry Gordon, Nina's slave brother, never addresses his wife, Lisette, by her first name, but always calls her child instead. From a twenty-first-century point of view one might certainly wonder what kind of self-image Stowe had if she associated women with children. Did she mean to imply that their intelligence was less developed than that of white males? If this was the case one could almost exonerate Stowe from the reproach of racial discrimination because in the light of this conviction, she would put herself on par with black males. But by the same token one could, of course, also argue that Stowe's socialization necessarily made her adopt racist and sexist viewpoints.

14 During the mid-eighties of the twentieth century white female critics-who wanted to save Stowe from the charge of racism-called attention to the fact that by making Tom "soft like a woman," Stowe introduced a matrifocal vision into American literature. Elizabeth Ammons, for example, very astutely identified what Stowe accomplished when she created Tom:

> Stowe's Tom is soft. He personifies the motherly Christ. . . . That Tom is not classically masculine-that he does not fight for his life but instead puts the lives of others first, that he refuses to meet violence with violence, that he remains compassionate, giving, and emotional to the end-illustrates Stowe's political genius in Uncle Tom's Cabin. What better way to inflame the culture against slavery than by characterizing her hero as a stereotypical Victorian heroine: pious, home-centered, self-sacrificing, nonviolent? The characterization does rely on the antebellum stereotype of blacks as loyal, faithful retainers. At the same time, however, it contradicts the widespread racist categorization of blacks as brutes, subhuman creatures incapable of emotions and ideas. (168)

[4]In *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* Appiah distinguishes between "racialism," the view "that there are heritable characteristics, possessed by members of our species, which allow us to divide them into a small set of races, in such a way that all the members of these races share certain traits and tendencies with each other that they do not share with members of any other race" (13) and "racism" which justifies the belief that "members of different races differ in respects that *warrant* the differential treatment-respects, like honesty or courage or intelligence, that are uncontroversially held . . . to be acceptable as a basis for treating people differently" (13).

Stowe expands this strategy of turning black men into harmless "Uncle Toms" by also presenting the spirituality of women in terms of the childlikeness that she attributes to some black men.[5] Her rather strange position that women have no sexual desire[6] and that most - or at least some - black men are like women might be viewed as an ingenious move because it allows her to sidestep the issue of sexual desire between white women and black men. Her presentation of Tom evokes the image of an aged avuncular black male, even though at the beginning of her novel her narrator describes him as the father of small children and "a large powerfully-made man" (68). In *Dred*, her character Tiff even becomes "doubly maternal" by virtue of the two aprons he always sports. Stowe's narrator comments the scene of Tiff sleeping between his two white stepchildren-whom he has saved from their licentious alcoholic stepmother-with the words: "How innocent, soft and kind are all of God's works" (170). Sarah Smith Ducksworth and Hortense Spillers, two recent critics who identify themselves as African American, have nevertheless remained unconvinced by Stowe's description of innocent relations between old black men and young white children and discover subtexts of sexual deviance behind Stowe's presentation of Tom as a motherly savior[7] (a role that, arguably, Daniel Deronda also fulfills in reference to Gwendolen). The fact that contemporary black critics have such powerfully negative reactions to Stowe's depiction of relations between black men and little white girls shows that even in the late twentieth century the intersection of gender and race-which is always an intersection of power relationships as well-still seems to be considered dangerous territory.

15 Stowe's presentation of sexual desire between adult members of different races in terms of violence or transgression has to be understood in light of nineteenth-century race theory, which harbored fears of degeneration and annihilation as the result of the mixing of "higher" and "lower" races and tried to establish whether or not the hybrid progeny of different races-who according to polygenism were also different species-would be infertile

[5]Jan Nederveen Pieterse points out that it was common to associate "lower races" with women and children: "Like Africans and blacks, the Irish have been referred to as 'savages' and likened to 'apes,' to 'women' and to 'children,' just as the Celts were often described as a 'feminine' race, by contrast with the 'masculine' Anglo-Saxons" (214). It seems that through her positive application of the term "childlike" to women and non-white races, Stowe is trying to debunk the negative stereotype.

[6] Gayle Kimball-who does not acknowledge the discriminatory politics underlying Stowe's views on gender and race-states a bit naively that "Stowe explained that [women] did not have the sexual temptations that men had; HBS took her own case to be the norm, writing to Calvin that she had no sexual passion and therefore felt no jealousy . . . "(72). This position was not altogether uncommon in the nineteenth century, as Barbara Welter describes similar attitudes in her landmark article "The Cult of True Womanhood" (1966).

[7] Ducksworth poses the question "how could [the nineteenth century reading audience] have read the passages dealing with [Tom and Eva's] mawkish display of affection without a mustard seed of suspicion that Tom, though simple-minded, could have been a dangerous pedophile?" (227). Spillers also allows for an interpretation of Tom as a "sweet tempered, Bible-toting dirty old man under wraps" (46). She, furthermore, views Little Eva's affection for Tom as a manifestation of Stowe's displaced sexual desire for black men (42-43).

like mules. Stowe's narrative strategy clearly entails ruling out any desire between different races; in those cases where she deems it necessary to hint at biracial sexual relations, she presents sexual desire between adult members of different races in terms of violence or transgression. Most of the mixed race characters in Stowe's work indicate that they are either the product of sexual violence perpetrated against their mothers by their white fathers or at least the offspring of a very uneven relationship between a white father and a dependent black mother. If sexual relations between different races seem to be in any way motivated by sexual desire, this desire is marked by transgression rather than love. Thus, in *Dred*, Stowe cites the negative example of Anne's uncle who "lived with a quadroon woman, who was violently tempered, and when angry ferociously cruel and so the servants were constantly passing from the extreme of indulgence to the extreme of cruelty" (47). And in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* she depicts the sexually exploitative relationship between Cassy and Legree which ultimately brings about Legree's doom since Legree does not dare to alienate Cassy completely because of the sexual hold that the memory of their relationship still exerts over him. In Stowe's novels biracial sexual attraction must necessarily lead to repulsion and her ideal of domesticity cannot flourish in mixed race relationships.

16 In spite of Stowe's debatable attitudes about race, there is no doubt that both of her novels are political novels that seek to expose the corruptness of the dominant cultures of the country that they are set in. The same is true for Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*. Yet while Stowe's objective of denouncing slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* is more than obvious, Eliot's purpose of uncovering the decadent aimlessness of the British gentry by juxtaposing it with a healthy Jewish communal alternative that busily devises the building of a Zionist nation is a little more difficult to detect. Eliot very obviously seems to have wanted to present the Jewish race in a sympathetic light in *Daniel Deronda*.[8] Here, I think, it is only fair to point out that it may well have been easier for Eliot to depict Jews as a cultural asset for England than for Stowe to present Africans as an integral part of American society. To Eliot, Jews must have seemed physically and culturally much less "other" than people of African descent appeared to Stowe. Eliot might have chosen Jews as the particular ethnic group for her fictional

[8] Eliot had not always been positively inclined towards Jews, as an 1848 letter to John Sibree, written almost thirty years before the publication of *Daniel Deronda*, indicates: "My Gentile nature kicks most resolutely against any assumption of superiority in the Jews . . . . Their stock has produced a Moses and a Jesus, but Moses was impregnated with Egyptian philosophy and Jesus is venerated and adored by us only for that wherein he transcended or resisted Judaism. . . . Everything *specifically* Jewish is of a low grade. (*George Eliot Letters* I 246-47)" In the same letter Eliot also voices her "puzzlement" over the black race (one has to concede that Eliot seems to have changed her view of racial alterity considerably in her later years):"The negroes certainly puzzle me-all the other races seem plainly destined to extermination or fusion not excepting even the "Hebrew-Caucasian." But the negroes are too important physiologically and geographically for one to think of their extermination, while the repulsion between them and the other races seems too strong for fusion to take place to a great extent." (246)

evaluation of "race" not only because Jewish people presented the only large racially other group in Britain, but also because they do not necessarily look physically different from English people. By studying a racial minority that can mingle undetectably with the majority, Eliot might have felt better equipped to explore whether or not race is an essential determinant of human behavior or whether it really is only skin-deep.

17 As Jan Nederveen Pieterse observes in his book *White on Black*, there are some similarities between anti-black racism and anti-semitism in spite of the difference in the ability "to pass for white":

> [B]oth groups were regarded as non-Christian. The early medieval tripartite division of the world based on Sem, Ham and Japhet, as the ancestors of Asia, Africa and Europe respectively . . . portrayed Semites and Hamites, although both were descendants of Noah, as peoples "external" to Christendom, and later as external to "Europe." The nineteenth-century theory of Aryan race, from the Comte de Gobineau to Houston Stewart Chamberlain, again excluded both "Semites" and "Africans" from the hallowed ground of the Nordic, or Indo-European race. "Africans" were placed at the foot of the human ladder and "Semites" were cast in the role of historical counterparts to the Aryans. (218)

But Pieterse argues that there were also some differences in the ways in which these different racial groups were discriminated against. Jews, unlike blacks, were "envied for their success at money-making" and "hated for their religion and their clannishness" (218). Ivan Hannaford points out that in medieval times the particular branch of Jewish believers who are the ancestors of Mirah and Mordecai in *Daniel Deronda*, namely the Sephardic Spanish Jews, became something like a separate "caste" in Spain because they were discriminated against by both Muslims and Christians and also because they themselves did not want to "lose a distinct identity not as an expression of racial difference but as a passionate desire to preserve a noble spiritual lineage" (106). The trajectory of the Jewish plot of *Daniel Deronda*, and especially its identity-theme, suggests that Eliot's own idea of Jewishness does not rule out such a definition of Jewishness as clan, or caste, which tries to preserve its unique identity. Eliot certainly does not agree with nineteenth-century race theory which defines Jews as a separate, inferior race.

18 Her presentation of Jews in *Daniel Deronda* is very different from Stowe's presentation of blacks in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Unlike Stowe's African Americans, her Jewish characters are obviously not enslaved and for the most part highly educated; if they want to, they can easily deny their Jewish origin. Quite a few of them are even socially on a par with the purely English characters. While Stowe does not seem to be able to let a "comical darky" go unnoticed, Eliot, for the most part, does not single out behavior patterns as essentially Jewish (for example, she takes great care to present "stereotypically Jewish" greed as

stereotypically English as well) and she does not make intelligence dependent on her characters' degree of "whiteness" or Englishness. She also does not dwell much on physical descriptions of her Jewish characters. The musician Herr Klesmer is described as an amalgam, "a felicitous combination of the German, the Sclave [sic], the Semite" (47), but beyond this description, he is a stereotypical musician rather than a stereotypical Jew, just as the Alcharisi is a stereotypical diva rather than a stereotypical Jewish mother. The English-Jewish brother and sister, Mordecai and Mirah, are also not primarily defined by racial markers. Mirah comes across as an almost generic frail woman in need of male protection and Mordecai is depicted as a consumptive, sick-looking workman with "wasted yellow hands" and "a consumptive glance" (495). It is primarily this description of him that stays with the reader. His face is initially described as "a finely typical Jewish face" (386), but there are so few physical descriptions of him throughout the hundreds of pages of the novel that readers might easily forget this initial description. Daniel Deronda's ethnic background does not seem readily discernible, either. Eliot presents him as a very handsome, only slightly foreign looking man who does not have any of the typically English features of his "uncle," Sir Hugo Mallinger, and whose face is "not more distinctively oriental than many a type seen among the what we call the Latin races: rich in youthful health, and with a forcible masculine gravity in its repose" (495-96). Because Jewish racial origin is rendered as rather inconspicuous, Eliot, unlike Stowe, can present various ways of dealing with it - including racial amalgamation through marriage. Unlike Stowe's protagonists, Eliot's characters, as, for example, Daniel and his mother, seem to have the freedom of accepting or denying their racial identification.

19 Eliot, I would argue, uses her Jewish novel, *Daniel Deronda*, to investigate possible meanings of "race" and racial identification through a dialogic presentation of the subject which encompasses short comments that characters make about "race" as well as complex issues of racial identification. This investigation of racial identification is made possible by the fact that Eliot's Jewish characters do not seem to look much different from her Gentile characters. But the issue of "race" is a topic of discussion within the Jewish community of *Daniel Deronda* as well as in the English community after it has come into contact with Jews. As soon as Mirah has become an adopted member of the Meyrick family, "race" starts to matter within the Meyrick family circle because Mirah's presence hints at the possibility of "race mixing." Comments range from Mrs. Meyrick's anxious wish that Mirah convert to Christianity over Mirah's apologies for being Jewish and therefore possibly "bad" to Hans's plea for racial amalgamation which, of course, results from his desire for Mirah who, after all, might not want to convert.

20 Eliot's presentation of Jews, like her presentation of gentiles, includes sympathetic as well as unsympathetic depictions and introduces her readers to a wide range of Jewish personalities. Her somewhat depreciatory characterization of the greedy and rather vulgar, yet still kind, Cohens has met with recent criticism because it invokes a negative racial stereotype. But Eliot debunks the Jewish stereotype, almost as soon as she has invoked it. She compares the greedy behavior of a member of the marginal group to "hegemonical" English greed: "[N]o shadow of a Suffering Race distinguished his vulgarity of soul from that of a prosperous pink-and-white huckster of the purest English lineage" (39). This comparison indicates that Jewish shortcomings need not be interpreted as racially motivated, but might also be viewed as one of the many instances of class discrimination in Eliot's work.[9]

21 The - perhaps a bit too aptly named - Jewish musician Klesmer, whom Bryan Cheyette describes as "an assimilated 'Wandering Jew'" (51), however, is an entirely positive figure of racial integration. The fact that he refuses to tell Gwendolen any lies about her artistic capabilities, combined with his refusal to give up his love for his English fiancée when faced with her parents' resistance to their union, stresses his independence from his (potential) employers and attests to his personal integrity. As a person whose racial origin is already described as mixed, he actively pursues racial amalgamation through his marriage to the "purely English" heiress Catherine Arrowpoint. Besides the example of Klesmer, there are various other Jewish characters who yearn for assimilation into the Gentile population. In the *Hand and Banner*-scene Pash and Gideon, members of the Jewish Philosophers' Club, argue that Jewish nationalism is dead. Gideon holds that because it is "the order of the day in point of progress" Jews should assimilate into the Gentile population and "[get] rid of all . . . superstitions and exclusiveness. There's no reason why [Jews] shouldn't melt gradually into the populations we live among. . . . I would as soon my children married Christians as Jews. And I'm for the old maxim, 'A man's country is where he's well off'" (527).

22 By violently denying her Jewish heritage throughout most of her adult life, Daniel's mother, the Alcharisi, even goes one step beyond the assimilation postulated in the *Hand and Banner*-scene. She rejects all racial and gendered ascriptions applied to her, and at one point she even actively chooses not to be Jewish any longer: "I made myself like the people I lived among" (635). As she explains to Daniel, her reason for disowning her race-along with her gender-can be located in her father's sexism which reflects the overall sexism of Jewish patriarchy: "To have a pattern cut out-'this is the Jewish woman; this is what you must be; . . .

[9] Gillian Beer draws attention to the correspondences between Eliot's treatment of "race" and "class": "The fascination with race is for many Victorian writers essentially a fascination with class. Race and class raise the same questions of descent, genealogy, mobility, the possibility of development and transformation" (202).

a woman's heart must be pressed small, like Chinese feet; her happiness is to be made as cakes are, by a fixed recipe.' That was what my father wanted. . . " (631). Ardently pursuing her goal of making her own life differ from this "fixed recipe," the Alcharisi decided to pursue her stage career as a singer at the expense of her son:

> Every woman is supposed to have the same set of motives, or else to be a monster. I am not a monster, but I have not felt exactly what other women feel-or say they feel, for fear of being thought unlike others. When you reproach me in your heart for sending you away from me, you mean that I ought to say I felt about you as other women say they feel about their children. I did not feel that. I was glad to be freed from you. (628)

Eliot's decision to present a woman who does not feel any "natural" love for her child has met with critical disapproval well into the late twentieth-century. In "George Eliot and Feminism," Bonnie Zimmerman suggests that the figure of the Alcharisi shows that "the rejection of the traditional female role . . . would entail the loss to society of love, sympathy, tenderness, affection and nurturance" and that "George Eliot . . . identified this hatred and intolerance, as well as the rejection of feminine sympathy and nurturance, as a potential danger in the emerging feminism of her day" (235). Even though I assume that the characterization of Daniel's mother as an "unmotherly mother" might also have been inspired by Stowe's unsympathetic description of the unloving Marie St. Clare from Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, I do not think that Eliot meant for the Alcharisi to be viewed in such a negative light. Like Klesmer, Daniel's mother is honest and upright and remains true to herself under pressure.

23 The Alcharisi who boasts "I am not a loving woman . . . . I was never willingly subject to any man. Men have been subject to me" (666) fits into Eliot's larger project of showing that, provided that they are willing to pay a price for it, women can, at least for some time, escape their gender along with their patriarchal interpellation as subjected female. Yet strangely enough, as soon as Eliot seems to have asserted the Alcharisi's independence from the current ideology of gender she apparently reinserts her into the ideology of race-if not gender-and seems to force her to confess the truth about Daniel's racial inheritance to him:

> It is illness, I don't doubt that it has been gathering illness,-my mind has gone back; more than a year ago it began . . . . Then a great horror comes over me: what do I know of life or death? and what my father called "right" might be a power that is laying hold of me-that is clutching me now. Well, I will satisfy him. I cannot go into the darkness without satisfying him. I have hidden what was his. I thought once I would burn it. . . . I thank God I have not burnt it!" (636)

Ultimately, it cannot be known whether it is feelings of guilt, her bad health, or a strange "call of the blood" that motivates the Alcharisi's confession, or whether her father's friend Joseph Kalonymous "bullied" her into her confession: "My father may have God on his side. This

man's words are like lion's teeth upon me" (638). But what can definitely be said is that the motif of being interpellated by "Race" is also closely connected with Daniel's (also very "gendered") recovery of his racial identity.

From "Race" to (National) Identity

24 Daniel heeds Mordecai's call to become a Jewish national leader as soon as he finds out that he really is of Jewish origin. Eliot's decision to focus on Jewish nationalism in her novel on race was certainly inspired by Stowe's portrayal of an incipient African American nationalism in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred*. Her characterization of George Harris as a future national leader and the eponymous Dred as a race prophet serve both as models and foils for Eliot's Daniel and Mordecai. But there are also some important differences in Eliot's and Stowe's presentation of race-based national (and individual) identity. Eliot's exploration of the identity constituting powers of the ancient Jewish Kabbalah caused her to go much beyond Stowe's exploration of racial identity by introducing into her novel a fascinating meditation on identity that investigates "race" and (homo)sexuality as socio-biological determinants. Unlike Stowe, who assigns a mostly extrinsic (Western) cultural identity to her characters by disregarding their ethnic and cultural origins, Eliot fully embraces her characters' Jewish origins. George's vision of Liberia reflects a biblical paradise just as Dred's spirituality is based primarily on the Old Testament. Even though Stowe was aware of African American folk traditions, her Christian world view kept her from validating non-Christian African spiritual practices. George Eliot, however, romanticized the ancient kabbalistic Jewish tradition that she presents in *Daniel Deronda* after having meticulously researched it.

25 In her unpublished 1994 dissertation "Originating Fictions: Harriet Beecher Stowe and George Eliot," Nancy Henry has investigated the many parallels between Stowe's and Eliot's depiction of race and national identity in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Daniel Deronda*. Thus she points out that "Eliot and Stowe differ from other nationalist movements of the period because members of the Diaspora community define themselves by 'returning to a place where they have never been'" (18) and that George's and Daniel's "returning to other lands" (64) is part of a process of recovering "absent parental ties" (67) and an unfamiliar personal past. All of this, she argues, is embedded in a larger argumentative strategy which the two authors employ to suggest "that individual identity could be reconstructed on the basis of an origin transmitted to the individual person through textually preserved cultural memories" (62-63). Henry's main thesis is that while "the second origin . . . looks to be essential, racial, fixed" the return to this

"homeland" where George and Daniel have never been is a matter of intellectual choice rather than a genetic "call of the blood." At several instances in her dissertation she argues that the genetic "binding ties in these novels are not imposed or inescapable" (77):

> Stowe's and Eliot's interpretations of returning underlie a similar critique of fixed geographic and racial origins. George, the mulatto, French-educated former slave and Daniel, the Ox-bridge-educated gentleman Jew, embody a comparable mixture of cultural inheritances and experiences. George's choice to identify himself as African and Daniel's to identify himself as Jewish represent a self-conscious, retrospective positing of origins. (18)

Henry identifies important similarities in Stowe's and Eliot's depiction of race and nationality, but I disagree with her about the freedom of choice she assigns to an-albeit fictitious-African American character in choosing his national and racial affiliation. In the above quote, Henry obviously alludes to George Harris's "letter to one of his friends" in which he proclaims his refusal "to pass for an American, or to identify myself with them" (UTC 608). While it might have been possible for George, whose "shade of color" is "slight" to "mingle in the circle of whites" (608)-where societal power is located-this would not have been the case for most other former slaves who could not have chosen to become "white Americans" in the same manner in which the racially inconspicuous Daniel chooses to become the Jew that he actually is. Contradicting her above statement about the ready availability of "textually preserved memories" for the characters of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Henry further expounds her understanding of Harriet Beecher Stowe's racial politics by explaining that "[i]n Stowe's imagined Liberian nationalism, the cultural basis of the community which wants to return, reverts to "race" because it seems to have no coherent alternative culture-in the sense of textually or orally transmitted practices, rituals and beliefs to unify and distinguish it" (73).

26 As part of her optimistic evaluation of Stowe's racial politics, Henry further maintains that Stowe contests "the attribution of behavior to essential or biological characteristics" (10). She also concludes that "there is no ambiguity in [Eliot's] conviction that bonds of obligation by which we understand such terms as 'blood' and 'race' are the product of habit" (5). While Henry might not be too far off the mark in her assessment of Eliot's racial politics in *Daniel Deronda*, I cannot agree with her statement about Stowe's stance since in Stowe's novels as well as in her explanatory essay *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* enough evidence of her conviction that race is a decisive determinant of human behavior, intelligence, and identity can be found.

27 While many critics feel that Stowe's overall dubious racial politics culminate in a scheme for African repatriation, Nancy Henry argues that Stowe's investigation of national identity finally made her revise her racial politics and present the result of this in *Dred*:

> For Stowe, national identity follows from national origin and in Dred, it is precisely the concept of America's origins that she must revise. Dred emphasizes a continuous revolutionary process rather than a fixed and exclusively white democratic ideal. . . . The trajectory from Uncle Tom's Cabin to Dred is the move from Africa for Africans and America for Anglo-Saxons to America as a process for achieving a coherent national character with people possessed of different cultural memories. (104)

Even though Dred, the swamp prophet, cannot bring about racial integration by means of a revolution, Henry celebrates *Dred* as a novel featuring a "utopian vision" in "the final resolutions of plot in *Dred* which imagine a radical disregard for national, racial and gender roles" (124-25). Since, as I have pointed out earlier, Stowe carefully avoided any hint at the possibility of racial amalgamation within her utopian community of mixed-raced grandparents and grandchildren, I cannot agree with this optimistic conclusion about the trajectory of Stowe's racial and national politics.

28 A closer examination of the race theme in *Daniel Deronda* in fact shows that Henry's statement that Eliot "unambiguously took Stowe as a literary model" (20) is untenable - especially in light of Stowe's and Eliot's divergent treatment of the essentiality of "racial" characteristics and of the interface of gender and race. Yet there are, nevertheless, some similarities in the ways in which both authors romanticize race in conjunction with religion. Eliot seems to have borrowed plot elements from both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* and incorporated them into a single plot in *Daniel Deronda*. She heightens the effect of the race/religion theme taken from Stowe's novels by combining the European Zionist movement's "dream of a national home" and the "race prophecy" from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* and also by making Daniel fulfill Mordecai's prophecy (thus showing that nation-building can indeed be accomplished when it is based on religious "feeling").

29 In her novel about "race," Eliot elaborates on the investigation of cultural and racial identity that Stowe introduces in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred*. Nancy Henry optimistically suggests that in Stowe's as well as Eliot's novels individual identity is constituted through the study of "preserved cultural" memory. As I have already pointed out, I think that this is the case in Eliot's novel rather than in Stowe's works. Unlike Eliot, Stowe does not look for a long-engrained cultural memory (which in the nineteenth-century was often labeled a "race habit") in the African American population, but instead, having postulated that Africans are naturally religious, she invests them with a cultural identity based on Christian religion because that is where she locates absolute truth for all people. Thus, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* George Harris, referring to blacks as "they," expresses his hopes for a Christianization of Africa: "I trust that the development of Africa is to be essentially a Christian one. If not a dominant and commanding race, they are, at least, an affectionate, magnanimous and

forgiving one" (611). Similarly, in *Dred* Stowe's narrator introduces the African American prophet Dred with a statement about the "naturalness" of his Christian prophecy: "It is remarkable that, in all ages, communities and individuals who have suffered under oppression have always fled for refuge to the Old Testament, and to the book of Revelation in the New" (214-15). Because of the dangerous and revolutionary potential emanating from such a character as Dred, whose well-chosen name already is "a portent of dread," Stowe disposes of him by having him killed by a racist mob. Nancy Henry argues that the aborted revolution of *Dred* suggests that Stowe favors historic gradualism (see 106-07), yet her decision to forgo a revolution and to dispose of another truly "masculine" black male in favor of the "feminized" avuncular Tiff could also be read as a continuation of the politics of "repatriating dangerous blacks" that she pursued in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

30 In her Jewish adaptation of Stowe's African American race plot, Eliot avoided some of the "racial pitfalls" that Stowe could not avoid. By focusing on highly cultured Jews rather than "uncultivated" black swamp dwellers, Eliot sidestepped not only the problem of dealing with protagonists who are "other" because of skin color (and the attendant problem of the "racial markers" of potential offspring), but also evaded the class issue that exacerbates the race issue of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred*. And by presenting Jews as representatives of an already combined racial and religious alterity, Eliot, unlike Stowe, did not have to invent a rationale for a racial propensity for religiousness. Her careful study of Jewish life enabled her to investigate the meaning of racial/cultural identity and to draw a historically correct, but still rather "researched," picture of the Jewish faith and Jewish customs.

31 In her edition of George Eliot's Daniel Deronda Notebooks, Jane Irwin calls attention to Eliot's enormous research of Jewish history[10] which investigated an abundance of information about historical and contemporary aspects of Jewish life and law ranging from food regulations over discriminatory gender laws to questions of heresy. She points out that Jews were amazed at Eliot's knowledge of their faith: "As Sigmund Freud was to remark, George Eliot knew of things 'we [Jews] speak of only among ourselves'" (xxx). Irwin also stresses that it is this research "which extended far beyond what might have been useful for color in her novel and gave her an entry into the inner life of Judaism" (xxxiii) that makes her protagonists believable, otherwise "these characters might have been only vessels of pathos, comparable to Riah in *Our Mutual Friend*" (xxi). This observation can also be used to explain what makes Eliot's presentation of the race plot so much more sophisticated than Stowe's-in spite of the fact that her depiction of Judaism and Jewish characters sometimes seems "over-

[10] According to Irwin, Eliot started taking notes for *Daniel Deronda* in the summer of 1872 (see xxvii) and presumably continued to do so until she started to write the novel in June 1874.

researched" and sterile. Eliot conceived her figures and their backgrounds very carefully before authoring Daniel Deronda, whereas Stowe wrote her Key to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1854) after the publication of the novel in order to provide a rationale for her racial politics and her characterization of African Americans. Thus, Eliot's visionary Mordecai, for example, puts forth very well researched kabbalistic prophecy whereas Stowe's African American prophet, Dred, spouts spiritual gibberish reflecting his ignorance and cultural deprivation. An example of this can be seen in the following conversation between Dred and his white friend Clayton about Dred's gift of vision:

> "And the Lord showed unto me that even as a ship which is forsaken of the waters, wherein all flesh have died, so shall it be with the nation of the oppressor." "How did the Lord show you this" said Clayton, bent upon pursuing his inquiry. "Mine ear received it in the night season," said Dred, "and I heard how the whole creation groaneth and travaileth, waiting for the adoption; and because of this he hath appointed the tide." "I don't see the connection," said Clayton. "Why because of this?" "Because," said Dred, "every day is full of labor, but the labor goes back again into the seas. So that travail of all generations has gone back, till the desire of all nations shall come, and He shall come with burning and with judgment, and with great shakings; but in the end thereof shall be peace. . . ." (293)

Initially, Mordecai's explanation-to Daniel-of where his own gift of prophecy comes from might sound similarly strange:

> "A spiritual destiny embraced willingly-in youth?" Mordecai repeated in a corrective tone. "It was the soul fully born within me, and it came in my boyhood. It brought its own world-a medieval world, where there where men who made the ancient language live again in the new psalms of exile. They had absorbed the philosophy of the Gentile into the faith of the Jew, and they still yearned toward a centre for our race. One of their souls was born again within me, and awaked amid the memories of their world. " (498)

Yet while Stowe's home-spun spirituality has no philosophical basis, Mordecai's elucidation of his spiritual gift contains information about the kabbalistic transmigration of souls (his own body holds the soul of a medieval Sephardic Jew) as well as the Neoplatonic sources of the Kabbalah.[11] Eliot herself, as if she were indeed writing back to Stowe, stresses the fact that Mordecai is not an "ignorant dreamer":

> "I speak not as an ignorant dreamer - as one bred up in the inland valleys, thinking ancient thoughts anew, and not knowing them ancient, never having stood by the great waters where the world's knowledge passes to and fro. . . . English is my mother-

[11] George Eliot excerpted and translated Heinrich Graetz's explanation of metempsychosis in her *Pforzheimer Notebook 711*:"Starting from the doctrine that all souls have been pre-existent from the beginning of the Spiritual world, the Kabbala taught that they are all destined to an earthly career in corporeal form. . . . But if the soul becomes stained it must once & again, but at most only thrice, return into corporeal life, till by repeated trials it can ascend in purity. On this transmigration of souls was founded the theory of retribution. The sufferings of the righteous serve simply to purify them. Seth's soul passed into Moses. . . . Marriage in general was a mystical institution, being the means of bringing souls into corporeality." (qtd. in Irwin 174)

> tongue . . . . But my true life was nourished in Holland, at the feet of my mother's brother, a Rabbi skilled in special learning; and when he died I went to Hamburg to study and afterwards to Göttingen . . . " (497)

As Irwin points out, in *Daniel Deronda*, "George Eliot has set herself the daunting task of bringing the revelations of Old Testament visionary prophecy into conjunction with the mundane world of contemporary London-in a context where the prophetic mode of William Blake's *Jerusalem* would be inappropriate" (163).

32 Eliot validates the race/religion plot and heightens its romantic effect by allowing Mordecai - who, like Stowe's Dred, knows that he will not be able to carry out his vision himself - to choose his own successor through charming him with his gift of prophecy. Daniel, who does not know that he is Jewish when he first meets Mordecai, heeds his call without really knowing why and without being able to identify the homoerotic component in his relationship to Mordecai, who soon becomes his closest friend. The "Jewish part" of the novel focuses on Daniel's decision to follow this "call of the blood"-or love-and seems to forsake the "objective" realms of realism and science in favor of the "personal" ones of romance and religion. The story of Daniel's response to Mordecai's plea to join him in his crusade for Jewish nationalism is one of the most fascinating episodes of *Daniel Deronda* as it examines the meaning of "race" and explores the constitution of individual as well as collective identity.

33 Daniel's encounters with his racial origin are mystifying from the beginning. After having met Mirah, but before he even knows that he is Jewish, just at the point at which he is fed up with the idle existence of an English gentleman and greatly desires "either some eternal event, or some inward light, that would urge him into a definite line of action, and compress his wandering energy" (365), Daniel is mysteriously drawn to Judaism. He attends a service at a synagogue in Frankfurt and suddenly feels personally addressed:

> The Hebrew liturgy . . . the chant of the Chazan's or Reader's grand wide-ranging voice with its passage from monotony to sudden cries . . . the devotional swaying of men's bodies backwards and forwards, 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. He wondered at the strength of his own feeling; it seemed beyond the occasion-what one might imagine to be a divine influx in the darkness, before there was any vision to interpret. (367-68)

David Carroll correctly identifies this moment as identity-constituting for Daniel:

> This is the pre-hermeneutic moment to which Deronda's state of suspension, his negative capability, his habitual self-emptying or kenosis, enables him to respond. This is the primal religious experience, the divine influx, the spirit breathing upon the

> waters, not only before interpretation gets to work but even before there is a vision to interpret. . . . Deronda is able to respond because he has the correct form of pre-understanding, that of a man whose life is the open hypothesis which hasn't yet crystallized into a theory or a character. (289)

After the service Daniel is approached by a Jew who asks him about his mother's maiden-name. Realizing that the man might think him a fellow-Jew, "Deronda . . . said coldly, 'I am an Englishman'" (368). This is the first of two occasions on which he is identified as a fellow Jew by Jewish men. The second occasion occurs when Daniel first meets Mordecai in Mr. Ram's bookstore and Mordecai grasps his arm and excitedly asks him "You are perhaps of our race?" (387). Deronda-still not knowing his racial origin-again denies being Jewish: "Deronda coloured deeply, not liking the grasp, and then answered with a slight shake of the head, 'No.'" (387). Even though Daniel initially tries to resist being hailed, this identification of Daniel as Jewish strangely anticipates Louis Althusser's theory about interpellation into ideology which contemporary cultural theory views as an important model for the construction of the social subject.

34 It seems that Judaism both as racial ideology and as a system of religious belief or religious ideology (according to Althusser's Marxist definition, "ideology" is "the system of the ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group" [32]) sends forth the "call" that Daniel does not just yet heed. Daniel's interpellation into Judaism unfolds in accordance with the processes outlined by Althusser roughly a hundred years later. Judaism works not only as a biological, racial determinant but also as a religious ideology because it fulfills Althusser's postulate that there be a proper Subject ("a Unique, Absolute, Other Subject, i. e. God" [52]) "in whose Name the religious ideology interpellates all individuals as subjects" (52-53). Daniel is hailed by this Subject and like the "suspect" from Althusser's example, who is hailed by the policeman's "Hey, you there" (48), he turns around.[12] From then on everything proceeds in accordance with Althusser's plan:

> [T]he hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was "really" addressed to him, and that it was *really him* who was hailed (and not someone else). Experience shows that the practical telecommunication of hailings is such that they hardly ever miss their man: verbal call or whistle, the one hailed always recognizes that it is really him who is being hailed. And yet it is a strange

[12] Stuart Hall calls attention to a seeming inconsistency in Althusser's theory of interpellation: Althusser models the doubly speculary aspect of interpellation on Lacan's mirror stage, yet he apparently does not take into consideration "Lacan's somewhat sensationalist proposition that *everything* constitutive of the subject not only happens through this mechanism but happens in the same moment [at the resolution of the Oedipal crisis]" (8). Hall criticizes Lacanian "hot-gospellers" who adopt this notion because "the more complex notion of a subject-in-process is lost in these polemical condensations" (8). Althusser seems to present the interpellation of an adult in his "policeman" example. Eliot's Daniel Deronda is also interpellated as an adult of approximately twenty-five years.

> phenomenon, and one which cannot be explained solely by "guilt feelings," despite the large numbers who "have something on their consciences." (48)

Initially, Deronda, like a person who "has something on his conscience," who could be "found out," wants to shake Mordecai's grasp and not be of the Jewish race. Why is this so? The question is whether Daniel colors because he, as a presumable Englishman, suddenly confronted with Judaism "had lately been thinking of vulgar Jews with a sort of personal alarm" (366) since they have "that look of ma[king their] toilet with little water" (387) or because he interprets Mordecai's grasp as an unwanted advance.

35 It looks as if-just like the Alcharisi cannot for all time deny her race-Daniel cannot escape his interpellation, his "call of the blood." On the second occasion of meeting Daniel, Mordecai, "a frail incorporation of the national consciousness" (517), tells him that he is his successor: "But I have found you. You have come in time. . . . You will take the sacred inheritance of the Jew" (500). Daniel remains skeptical because he does not know what to make of Mordecai's visionary conviction that he is the perfect carrier of the torch: "A . . . plausible reason for putting discipleship out of the question was the strain of visionary excitement in Mordecai, which turned his wishes into overmastering impressions and made him read outward fact as fulfilment" (513). At the same time Daniel, whose musings about his relationship with Mordecai employ "nationalist" vocabulary, speculates that Mordecai might be his chance to overcome his sense of unbelonging and to find his "citizenship":

> Nay, it was conceivable that as Mordecai needed and believed that he had found an active replenishment of himself, so Deronda might receive from Mordecai's mind the complete ideal shape of that personal duty and citizenship which lay in his own thought like sculptured fragments certifying some beauty yearned after but not traceable by divination. (512)

Daniel finally suspends his pronounced skepticism by meditating upon the speculative nature of all knowledge:

> And since the unemotional intellect may carry us into a mathematical dreamland where nothing is but what is not, perhaps an emotional intellect may have absorbed into its passionate vision of possibilities some truth of what will be - the more comprehensive massive life feeding theory with new material, as the sensibility of the artist seizes combinations which science explains and justifies. At any rate, presumptions to the contrary are not to be trusted. (414)

Gillian Beer establishes a connection with Darwinian thought and argues that Darwin's theory of biological descent is often speculative rather than deterministic and that *Daniel Deronda* "moves into that central problem focused by Darwinian theory: is there a foreknown or an ultimate plan? Is teleology itself a fiction?-do we self-protectively interpret as providence that

which is chance?" [191]). She poses a string of rhetorical questions in order to reveal the speculative nature of Eliot's ruminations about biological descent:

> Are beginnings to be identified with origins? Is it possible to search out the primal repose of the original? Is there a necessary connection between the idea of the source and the idea of development-or is this habitual connection itself ideological and polemical? (188)

Interestingly enough, late twentieth-century cultural theory asks very similar questions about the origins of individual as well as collective and even national identity.

36 Carroll, Beer and other commentators - with the exception of Nancy Henry, who remains on the surface of the identification problem by deciding that cultural identity in Stowe's and Eliot's novels is "simply" passed on through preserved textual memory, - hint at the complex mechanisms of identification in *Daniel Deronda*, but do not thoroughly investigate them. Eliot's text poses the question of whether or not a Jew who has not been socialized as a Jew can assume his Jewish heritage and identification solely on the strength of his racial affiliation.[13] As we have seen, Mordecai is convinced of this; Daniel himself also seems to believe in the power of "Race." He tells his mother, "I consider it my duty-it is the impulse of my feeling-to identify myself, as far as possible, with my hereditary people" (661). He further elaborates that he has indeed been called by "the stronger Something" ("Race," Judaism, or love) to carry on his grandfather's legacy: "But that stronger Something has determined that I shall be all the more the grandson whom also you willed to annihilate" (663).

37 Since discourse on racial identity in *Daniel Deronda* is highly indeterminate, Daniel's discovery of his racial origin and the subsequent constitution of his Jewish identity is presented as a very complicated issue. On the one hand it seems as if Eliot proceeds from a Cartesian concept of selfhood which supposes that every human being has a core self which s/he needs to discover, yet on the other hand she appears to anticipate modern theories proposing a discursive constitution of cultural identity through interpellation into ideology. The way in which race and religion are conflated in Eliot's depiction of Judaism allows for a reading that-strangely mixing proto-Althusserian analysis with a Cartesian conception of selfhood-suggests that "Race" functions as "the stronger Something" that interpellates Daniel

[13] Here, Eliot again anticipates concerns of recent cultural theory. According to David Hollinger, identification with one's less "obvious" roots is possible only in a postethnic society:"And postethnicity would enable [Alex] Haley and [Ishmael] Reed to be both African American and Irish American without having to choose one to the exclusion of the other. Postethnicity reacts against the nation's invidiously ethnic history, builds upon the current generation's unprecedented appreciation of previously ignored cultures, and supports on the basis of revocable consent those affiliations by shared descent that were previously taken to be primordial. (21)" Thus, in a postethnic society Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* could as easily identify with both his English and his Jewish roots as Stowe's George Harris could with both his African American and his white heritage.

and helps him "dig out" his authentic Jewish self that had previously been buried beneath his false Englishness.[14]

38 Thus, Eliot's conception of identity and its constitution works according to two definitions of identification described by Stuart Hall. According to the older, commonsensical definition, "identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation" (2). Hall explains that the newer "discursive approach" sees identification as "a construction, a process never completed-always 'in process'" (2) because identities are "points of temporary attachments to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (5-6). Collective identities, according to Anthony Appiah, supply the dialogues that shape personal identities (which are not to be confused with the older notion of "authentic" core selves): "[They] . . . provide what we might call scripts: narratives that people can use in shaping their life plans and telling their life stories" ("Race" 97).

39 Eliot's Daniel Deronda, whose initial cultural identity is that of a young English gentleman, explores Sephardic Judaism for an alternative collective identity offering him "a traditional society," with "shared beliefs, values, signs and symbols as the common culture" (Appiah, "Race" 86). Since until adulthood he does not find out that he is Jewish and therefore knows almost nothing about the "common origin" he supposedly shares with his race, he wills himself into the Jewish community by joining their dialogues, as for example in his study of Hebrew.

40 The question remains whether or not Daniel-in whom fears of an illegitimate birth have instilled a feeling of sympathy towards those who are "othered" by society (minorities, women)-can actually become the Jew that he already is by trying to perform the ascriptions of his racial identity. Contemporary commentators, as for example Jacob Press, do not seem to think so. Thus, Press contends that "Deronda willingly divests himself of the identity category of 'Christian,' declares his 'identification' with the Jews-and that is where his transformation stops. Jewish nationalism becomes a way of reframing an otherwise intact ideology of self" (324). Daniel's lack of "authentic Jewishness" at the end of the narrative allows for two explanations: 1) Eliot did not know how to turn an Englishman into a Jew, even if he has got

[14] Anthony Appiah describes a "post-Romantic" shift in attitudes about the self:"Authenticity speaks of the real self buried in there, the self one has to dig out and express. It is only later, *after romanticism* that the idea develops that one's self is something that one creates, makes up, so that every life should be an artwork, whose creator is, in some sense, his or her greatest creation (96)." The tension between different models for the construction of identity in *Daniel Deronda* suggests that the novel was written at the time when the paradigm for "selfhood" started to shift.

the "right blood,"[15] or 2) she did after all believe in social constructivism rather than "racial essentialism" in spite of invoking the interpellative powers of "Race" as possible "call of the blood."

41 Appiah discusses W. E. B. DuBois's difficulties in finding common ground for pan-African solidarity in *In My Father's House* and suggests that, ultimately, DuBois had to concede that race-based rationales for solidarity ("common history," "long memory," "the social heritage of slavery" [41]) simply do not work:

> The logic of his argument leads naturally to the final repudiation of race as a term of difference to "speaking of civilizations where we now speak of races." The logic is the same logic that has led us to speak of gender-the social construction out of the biological facts-where we once spoke of sex. (45)

Eliot appears to have made a similar discovery about the arbitrariness of essentialist attitudes towards race and sex which she does not seem to be able to formulate clearly in *Daniel Deronda*. Nevertheless, in the exchange between Daniel and his mother, the Alcharisi hints at a "nature," which here seems to be some notion of self beyond race and sex, when she insists: "I had a right to be an artist, though my father's will was against it: My nature gave me a charter" (664). *Daniel Deronda* thus builds up an unresolved tension between essentialist and constructivist conceptions of identity, stressing that in some way identity is always a fiction of the self.

42 Jacob Press who discusses *Daniel Deronda* and Jacob Herzl's *Altneuland* as Zionist novels concerned with nation-building, seems to be bothered by the fact that both George Eliot and the Jewish nationalist Herzl apparently do not know how to render Jewish difference in an adequate manner and therefore "articulate a vision of separateness that replicates that from which it has separated" (325). Yet at the same time, Press also rejects Jewish essentialism:

> [T]he . . . mapping of Zionist pride functions only as damning exposure of Zionist incoherence if one accepts the facile foundational premise that there are such things as Jewish subjects with unproblematically original "selves" existing prior to and in a realm separate from particular historical contingencies and ideological orientiations . . . . (325)

He reluctantly concludes that there might be no alternative to assimilation simply because there is no "racial core":

> For what is "assimilation" but an organization of the self so as to foreground those personal characteristics that will enable one to become a member of the group with

[15] In the *Hand and Banner*-scene Eliot's narrator seems rather skeptical about the notion of "pure blood" when s/he comments: "In fact, pure English blood (if leech or lancet can furnish us with the precise product) did not declare itself predominantly in the party at present assembled" (523).

> which one wishes to be associated? In this sense, both Herzl and Deronda are Jewish assimilationists in two senses: they assimilate themselves into Jewishness, and they assimilate Jewishness into themselves. There is no simple sense in which their projects can be discredited on this account. (325)

Here, Press identifies what seems to be the dilemma in theorizing about racial identity once the notion that there is no such thing as an individual or collective core self has been accepted. The above discussion has shown that George Eliot, unlike Harriet Beecher Stowe, to some degree seems to have been aware of the fact that racial identity ultimately cannot be established. Her characterization of her Jewish figures shows that this partial awareness had consequences for her depiction of her "racially other" characters. While Stowe assigns her own essentialist notions about blacks to her African American characters, Eliot, by meticulously researching Jewish cultural history and then inventing a Jewish character who remains an Englishman (which reflects an inability to render convincing descriptions of cultural alterity), finds a less discriminatory but still rather evasive solution to the problem of locating racial identity.

43 Perhaps because of these difficulties in defining racial identity, Eliot's novel also allows for a reading that views Daniel's identification with Judaism as a result of his gendered identity, his emotional relationship with Mordecai and Mirah, rather than as a result of a "call of the blood" and thus his racial identity. Daniel's mother hints at this when she suspects that what motivates Daniel might be "love" rather than "Race":

> "You are in love with a Jewess." Deronda coloured and said, "My reasons would be independent of any such fact." "I know better. I have seen what men are," said the Princess; peremptorily. "Tell me the truth. She is a Jewess who will not accept anyone but a Jew. There are a few such," she added with a touch of scorn. (661)

Daniel himself later on acknowledges the fact that his love for Mordecai and Mirah is instrumental in boosting his enthusiasm about his newly discovered Jewishness: "If this revelation had been made to me before I knew you both, I think my mind would have rebelled against it. Perhaps I should have felt then-'If I could have chosen, I would not have been a Jew'" (750). But while the Alcharisi has correctly identified Daniel's motivation, she is not altogether right about the gender of Daniel's object of love, for, although he eventually marries Mirah, the emotional bond that motivates his decision to acknowledge his Judaism is chiefly between him and Mordecai.

44 The language used to describe the relationship of Mordecai and Daniel is erotically charged from the beginning of their acquaintance: "In ten minutes the two men, with as intense a consciousness as if they had been two undeclared lovers . . . turned face to face, each

baring his head from an instinctive feeling that they wished to see each other fully" (495). Their friendship is so dominant that Daniel continues to emphasize the impact of his relationship with Mordecai even after he has told himself and others that he is in love with Mirah. Thus, he explains to Gwendolen about his discovery of his Jewishness: "I had been prepared for it by becoming intimate with a very remarkable Jew" (802). The scene in which Mordecai tells Daniel that Daniel will inevitably help him fulfill his Jewish destiny-even against his will-is saturated with sexualized vocabulary:

> "You would remind me that I may be under an illusion-that the history of our people's trust has been full of illusion. I face it all." Here Mordecai paused for a moment. Then bending his head a little forward, he said, in a hoarse whisper, "*So it might be with my trust, if you would make it an illusion. But you will not.*" [emphasis in original] The very sharpness with which these words penetrated Deronda, made him feel the more that there was a crisis in which he must be firm. (502)

Eliot here uses language that is typical for seduction scenes in nineteenth-century literature. In her introduction to the 1984 Penguin edition of Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*, Annette Kolodny, for example, draws attention to the fact that "crisis" was "a common nineteenth-century euphemism for sexual excitation" (xix).

45 And Elinor Shaffer elucidates Eliot's possible theological inspiration for the sexualization of spirituality:

> The work of both Feuerbach and Renan underlies her analysis of the sexual basis of religion, Feuerbach in his theoretical formulation of the I-thou relation and his systematic equation of theology and pathology, Renan in his psychological and literary studies of the sources of religious experience. (234)

Shaffer thus locates the source for Eliot's depiction of the emotional (and sexual) dependence of "man on man" (or woman) in Feuerbach's realization that God is no longer at the center of religion because in the nineteenth century "the concrete empirical dependence of a man [is] on nature and other men" (245) and that the I-thou relationship has evolved from a relationship between a human being and his or her creator to a relationship between humans.[16] She furthermore takes into account Renan's description of the erotic underpinnings of Jesus's messianic love for his female followers in his *Life of Jesus* and applies her findings to Daniel's relationship with Gwendolen: "We know fully what sends Gwendolen down on her knees to

[16] Shaffer furthermore points out that in *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot puts much emphasis on the I-thou relationship, the social component of religious feeling. According to the kabbalistic philosophy underlying the social philosophy of *Daniel Deronda*, "The mystical basis of the I-Thou unity is the gnostic-cabbalistic notion of Adam as the soul that contained all souls" (255). While the Neoplatonic origins of the kabbalistic notion of the "soul that contains all souls" will be discussed later at greater length, it might be worthwhile to point out here that Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*, which also focuses on idealized relationships between humans within a religious community, provides a similar philosophic background for the social and religious experiment by couching it in the transcendental philosophy that views human beings as parts of the all-encompassing oversoul.

Daniel Deronda. Underlying her adoption of the role of acolyte to his 'secular priesthood' is a frank analysis of the hysterical desire occasioned by sexual deprivation" (262). Somewhat surprisingly, Shaffer, who prefers the conservative interpretation of Mordecai as Daniel's spiritual father, does not draw a parallel conclusion about Mordecai and his acolyte in spite of the much more eroticized language in which their relationship is presented.

46 Even though the homoerotic content of the novel is too obvious to be ignored, only few critics have paid attention to it. Press focuses on *Daniel Deronda's* Jewish aspect in his article "Same-Sex Unions in Modern Europe: *Daniel Deronda, Altneuland* and the Homoerotics of Jewish Nationalism," yet he does not position the relationship of Daniel and Mordecai within the kabbalistic Jewish tradition. He points out that the sexually charged metaphors betray a desire "to penetrate" on Mordecai's part and a desire "to submit" on Daniel's part and projects late twentieth-century attitudes toward homosexuality onto the two characters, as for example, when he writes that "Mordecai has a thing for high-class types" (307). Laura Callanan, however, in "The Seduction of Daniel Deronda," puts the homoerotic content of *Daniel Deronda* in historical perspective. She speculates that Eliot-at a time when homosexuality was barely known as a sexual orientation-was aware of homosexuality because she personally knew Dr. Carl Friedrich Otto Westphal, who became famous for his research on "contrary sexual feelings" (180). To suggest that the homoerotic attraction between Mordecai and Daniel need not necessarily result in sexual activity, Callanan refers to the (by now standard) theoretical model of locating male-male desire on a continuum between homosocial and homosexual desire (which was introduced by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Between Men* [1990] for explaining homosexual desire before homosexuality became a subject of medical inquiry). Callanan thus argues that:

> Therefore, to acknowledge the erotic nature of Eliot's language is not to suggest that Mordecai and Daniel are involved in a sexual relationship, but to see that desire for homosocial bonds and for homosexual bonds are on the same "continuum," and can display the same level of desire and attraction. (180)

47 Both Press and Callanan, however, ignore the important fact that Eliot has added another spiritual level to the homoerotic relationship of Daniel and Mordecai which, following Christian David Ginsburg's account of the Kabbalah, presents them as exiled androgynous souls waiting for the great Jubilee when all souls will come back to "the bosom of the Infinite Source-in the Palace of love, where the heavenly King is united with all souls by a kiss" (452). As Mordecai explains to Daniel about their upcoming kabbalistic "marriage of souls":

> "In the doctrine of the Cabbala, souls are born again and again in new bodies till they are perfected and purified, and a soul liberated from a worn-out body may join the fellow-soul that needs it, that they may be perfected together, and their earthly work accomplished. Then they will depart from the mortal region, and leave place for new souls to be born out of the store in the eternal bosom. It is the lingering imperfection of the souls already born into the mortal region that hinders the birth of new souls and the preparation of the Messianic time . . . . When my long-wandering soul is liberated from this weary body, it will join yours, and its work will be perfected." (540)

Jane Irwin remarks that according to Ginsburg these souls are androgynous and that the "latent paradoxes" inherent in this situation make for a rather strange gender triangle in Daniel's marriage situation (452).[17] Thus, in chapter sixty-three when Daniel goes to see Mordecai and Mirah after he has found out that he is Jewish and when he has just made up his mind to propose to Mirah, personal pronouns, which would immediately reveal the sex of the beloved he is thinking about, are carefully avoided. In the emotional scene in which Daniel reveals his Jewishness to the siblings, his relationship with Mordecai is prevalent: "The two men clasped hands with a movement that seemed part of the flash from Mordecai's eyes, and passed through Mirah like an electric shock" (748). In accordance with the predominance of Daniel's relationship with Mordecai, Daniel's marriage (of souls) with Mordecai begins in this chapter, whereas his "legal" marriage to Mirah takes place later. His marriage with Mordecai is "consummated" in the novel's final scene when Mordecai dies:

> It was not till late in the afternoon, when the light was falling, that he took a hand of each in his and said, looking at Deronda, "Death is coming to me as the divine kiss which is both parting and reunion-which takes me from your bodily eyes and gives me full presence in your soul. Where thou goest Daniel, I shall go. Is it not begun? Have I not breathed my soul into you? We shall live together." He paused, and Deronda waited, thinking that there might be another word for him. . . . He sank back gently into his chair, and did not speak again. But it was some hours before he had ceased to breathe, with Mirah's and Deronda's arms around him. (811)

Daniel's marriage to Mordecai results in eternal unity, whereas his marriage to Mirah seems to have produced a corpse whom both of them hold as if it were a newborn baby. In light of this scene one might conclude that rather than "Race" love for a person who happens to be Jewish (and who also happens to be of the same sex) is the chief force behind Daniel Deronda's identification with Jewishness. Whereas Daniel's love for Mordecai focuses-at least in the beginning-on Mordecai as an individual, Mordecai's love for Daniel cannot be viewed separately from his social and religious vision which places his relationship with Mordecai within a general design to end Jewish exile on both a spiritual and a geographical level.

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[17] Since Eliot still wrote at a time when "male-male desire [was] widely intelligible primarily by being routed through triangular relations involving a woman" (Sedgwick 15), the marriage of Daniel and Mirah can be viewed as an instance of a homoerotic exchange of a woman between Mordecai and Daniel.

48 The foregoing discussion thus seems to indicate that Eliot has deliberately and creatively "misread" Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* at several points, perhaps indeed with the intention of devising a more liberal race politics in *Daniel Deronda*, her novel about racial alterity. Unlike Stowe, Eliot debunks stereotypes, advocates racial amalgamation, and even suggests that homoeroticism is a powerful determinant for Daniel Deronda's constitution of his (racial) identity. Yet due to her substitution of Stowe's African Americans with an inconspicuous racial minority-which she might not even have regarded as a *racial* [my emphasis] minority-Eliot's stance on the subject of "race" nevertheless remains open to discussion.

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