George Eliot and the Sequel Question*

John M. Picker

One of the shop-windows he paused before was that of a second-hand book-shop, where, on a narrow table outside, the literature of the ages was represented in judicious mixture, from the immortal verse of Homer to the mortal prose of the railway novel. That the mixture was judicious was apparent from Deronda’s finding in it something that he wanted—namely, that wonderful bit of autobiography, the life of the Polish Jew, Salomon Maimon; which, as he could easily slip it into his pocket, he took from its place, and entered the shop to pay for, expecting to see behind the counter a grimy personage showing that nonchalance about sales which seems to belong universally to the second-hand book-business.

George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*

As for the bad part of *Daniel Deronda*, there is nothing to do but cut it away—": F. R. Leavis’s often-cited dismissal of the “bad part”—the “weakness” of which, he writes, “is represented by Deronda himself, and by what may be called in general the Zionist inspiration”—of George Eliot’s final novel at first seems to typify the kind of authoritative critical voice on display throughout his 1948 classic *The Great Tradition*. So does his accompanying desire to excise the “bad part” and rechristen the remainder *Gwendolen Harleth*. Yet, as other scholars have noted, Leavis’s is only the most severe expression of a response that dates back to the time of the first appearance of the novel. In October 1876, just a month after the eighth and final number of *Daniel Deronda* was put on the market, Eliot wrote to a friend that praise of the novel sent her from Christian as well as Jewish readers, including Chaim Guedalla, a leader of Anglo-Jewry who had extracted scenes from it for publication in the London *Jewish Chronicle*, “is better than the laudation of readers who cut the book into scraps and talk of nothing in it but Gwendolen. I meant everything in the book to be related to everything else there.”

* This essay is dedicated to the memory of my father, Martin Picker (1929–2005).

*New Literary History, 2006, 37: 361–388*
In my epigraph, the contents of the bookshop table characterize the breadth of Eliot’s own book. On the table, the “immortal verse” of the Homeric epic sits in “judicious mixture” beside the “mortal prose” of railway reading, and Daniel finds the book that will lead him not to a “grimy personage” but to Mordecai, the prophetic figure who in turn will lead Daniel to embrace a Jewish identity. In her novel, Eliot constructs a bourgeois epic of national origins begun in medias res, but in the process, as readers long have recognized, borrows essential elements from the sensation novels that late Victorians increasingly read in cheap yellowback editions on the train. *Daniel Deronda* is where the “immortal” and “mortal” are meant to coexist in “judicious mixture,” even as Daniel, as if to anticipate the reaction to the novel by those such as Guedalilla, finds in the “judicious mixture” of the used books that “something that he wanted,” the story of an eminent Jew. Eliot’s echo of “Judaism” in the repeated “judicious” furthers the analogy of the novel itself to a kind of bookshop, with covers housing an inventory in which “everything” is “to be related to everything else there,” and where, for Daniel and Gwendolen as well as revelation-hungry readers, unexpected finds—the discovery of Daniel’s origins and the consequences of Gwendolen’s marital choice, to name two—await.

The ignoble tradition of reader rejection of the “bad part” is conveyed by both Eliot and Leavis in terms of the destructive material act of cutting. While it may be reasonable to assume that Eliot’s reference to the “readers who cut the book into scraps” is hyperbolic, Leavis, as Claudia Johnson has shown, went to odd, even embarrassing lengths to realize his own editorial fantasy, in a version of the novel abridged by thirty-four chapters that he intended to publish in the 1970s under his preferred title of *Gwendolen Harleth*, now “liberated from” *Daniel Deronda*, with an introduction subtitled “Why the Surgery Was Necessary.” Johnson suggests that Leavis was motivated to cut the book by a desire to recast Eliot’s novel as one that respects rather than rejects “Englishness” and that affirms rather than “unsettles” what Leavis saw as “the specifically English foundations of the novel as a genre” (215, 214). Leavis described his procedure as “freeing by simple surgery the living part of the immense Victorian novel from the deadweight of utterly different matter that George Eliot thought fit to make it carry,” and Johnson calls it an “amputation,” but his attempt to extract along gender lines might as readily be called a castration, or, in the religious discourse of the novel, a circumcision, a term that takes on greater significance if we accept Johnson’s point that Leavis sought to make Gwendolen out to be the “real Jew in the first place, the godly, goodly Hebrew languishing in bondage to the Pharaoh, Daniel Deronda.” Leavis’s as well as the earliest readers’ “surgeries” represent attempts to circumcise a novel that notoriously evades, as contemporary
critical debate has not, the entire question of whether or not its protagonist underwent circumcision. Whatever metaphor one chooses, the process of cutting enacts on the pages of the novel perhaps the most literal kind of applied criticism, reducing the “judicious mixture,” at one extreme, to a loose selection of bits and scraps. Put another way, this is a novel that to an unusual degree not only has elicited, but also would appear to anticipate, the material dismemberment it has undergone in the hands of readers and critics.

While, from the first, many Jewish and Christian readers alike have endorsed performing some kind of reductive surgery on *Daniel Deronda*, there is another related, though largely forgotten, line of response to Eliot’s novel that cuts in somewhat different ways. By this I mean the appearance, in the immediate wake of the publication of *Deronda*, of two sequels by other hands, a shorter satire and a full-blown novel. Gillian Beer has argued that *Deronda* is a novel “haunted by the future,” one (or more than one) ultimately and deliberately left unwritten by Eliot. The sequels manifest that future. They attempt to impose closure on a novel that goes out of its way to resist it—and in so doing, one might add, gives the sequel its raison d’être by begging the question, what happened next? The ethos of the sequel as a genre typically is one of cooperation and integration with the earlier work. The sequel usually represents a means to honor the power of the original and an attempt to recapture and further extend that power. But with Eliot, and especially with *Deronda*, the sequel is a reproach. In aesthetic and ideological ways, the sequels and related “variations” on *Deronda* offer critical attacks on Eliot’s plot, structure, and characters, but especially her treatment of the Jewish Question. I will say more about this below, but for now, I suggest that these continuations are significant not only for their content, offering as they do reactionary responses to Eliot’s controversial book, but also for their printed forms. In these sequels, content and form are, if not inseparable, then at least equally vital to the workings of the critique of *Deronda*. The book historian D. F. McKenzie, in seeking to expand the definition of “bibliography,” speaks to this point: “If we are accurately to reconstruct our literary past, we cannot be indifferent to the details of book form, in the contribution design makes to meaning, in mediating authorial intention and directing the responses of readers.” Following McKenzie’s lead, in this essay I place value on the material status of texts “to show that forms effect meaning” and that the book is indeed “an expressive form.” I argue that Eliot’s realist vision, her Jewish sympathies, as well as her resistance to conventional closure prompt unauthorized sequels, secondhand books of a different sort, into a relationship with their predecessor that is more critical than celebratory. Emerging alongside an analytical tradition of desires for “simple surgery” upon the object
of scrutiny, these secondhand books cut their literary forebear a glance that mocks Eliot’s tolerance and underscores the status and identity of her novel and corpus as material objects. These sequels in turn provide a new opportunity to understand the unique position and implicit legacy of *Deronda* within modernity.

The attention that the sequel phenomenon has received in literary criticism has tended to focus on the idea or ideology of the sequel rather than its material embodiment. Gérard Genette, in distinguishing between the “autographic” and the “allographic” continuation, the former referring to the work prolonged by the author and the latter the work written by another due to the author’s death or “some other cause of final abandonment,” provides a convenient way to categorize sequels. Similarly useful is Terry Castle’s definition of “charismatic texts,” by which she means “those with an unusually powerful effect on a large reading public” that lead readers to want “more of the same.” Discussing eighteenth-century sequels such as those to Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela*, Castle ascribes psychological significance to the sequel, whose readers “are motivated by a deep unconscious nostalgia for a past reading pleasure, the original story of dream and fulfillment” and a “subliminal desire for repetition” (134). Readers, Castle writes, want “the sequel [to] be different, but also exactly the same” (134). Like Castle, Marjorie Garber sees in readers’ longing for sequels the expression of a desire for wish fulfillment. She compares the sequel to Freud’s “secondary revision”: in a way not unlike the narrative construction of dream-thoughts that Freud identified, “the sequel ‘corrects’ and amplifies, gratifying a desire not only for continuation but also for happy endings.” One of Garber’s prominent examples of the sequel is the New Testament, which portrays the “embodiment of God’s covenant with man” set out in the Old Testament, and serves as a corrective to the latter’s apparent shortcomings (78). The juxtaposition between Hebrew and Christian scriptures offers an analogy that clarifies the relationship between *Daniel Deronda* and the two allographic sequels that are my subject, since *Deronda’s* sequels are both explicit attempts to eradicate the hero’s Judaism and “correct” him by leading him (back) toward Christianity.

That some of the most popular Victorian authors wrote sequels and sequence novels for their own works is, of course, characteristic of the period. One only need think of Anthony Trollope’s Barset and Palliser series, Margaret Oliphant’s Chronicles of Carlingford, H. Rider Haggard’s Allan Quatermain novels, and, to a lesser extent, Thomas Hardy’s Wessex tales, to supply ready examples. And many now-forgotten Victorians, in the tradition of Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda, author of the spurious second part of Miguel de Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, wrote satirical or
serious sequels to, or sequel-like adaptations of, others’ works to parody or pay homage to the originals and capitalize on their success. Charles Dickens’s early novels became ready sources of inspiration for plagiarists, parodists, and sequel-writers, in part because these writers could attach their own plots onto Dickens’s episodic ones without too much strain on the reader’s credulity. Dickens himself so thoroughly assimilated other styles and voices and employed them in satire and parody that it is easy to see how his distinctive heteroglossic style, while difficult to mimic well, nevertheless lent itself to, even tempted, imitation. Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers* generated a host of contemporary sequels by the likes of T. P. Prest (*The Post-Humorous Notes of the Pickwickian Club*) and G. W. M. Reynolds (*Pickwick Abroad*). With *The Penny Pickwick*, *Oliver Twiss*, and *Nickelas Nickelbery*, plagiarists freely adapted Dickens’s early works and priced them for a working-class audience, often while those works still were in the process of being serialized themselves. Dickens responded in his own fiction with the ineffective attempt to reintroduce Pickwick and the Wellers into *Master Humphrey’s Clock*, a work that itself yielded two sequels (including the memorably titled *Master Humphrey’s Turnip*) by Renton Nicholson serialized in his weekly *The Town*. Dickens’s *Dombey and Son* in turn led to Nicholson’s *Dombey and Daughter* and another’s “Inquest on the late Master Paul Dombey,” and *Hard Times* prompted a “Hard Times (Refinished)” and a *Hard Times by Charles Diggins*.  

Eliot, though persistently haunted by “over-authoritative fans” who translated her work in ways that dissatisfied her, who claimed her work as theirs, or who claimed to know or be the people upon whom she based her characters, wrote novels that did not provoke such a range of imitations or questionable continuations among her contemporaries. And unlike Trollope and others who wrote sequels to or series of their own works, Eliot as a rule recoiled at such a prospect. In a letter to her publisher, John Blackwood, she described as “really curious” the request from one reader—“an educated person,” she dryly added—for a sequel to *Adam Bede* that would resolve, among other things, the “‘minor instances of the incompleteness which induces an unsatisfactory feeling’” from the novel (*Letters* 3:184). It could be argued that an exception of sorts should be made for her “Address to Working Men,” written in the persona of Felix Holt as “a personal favour” to Blackwood and published in *Blackwood’s* in January 1868, a year and a half after *Felix Holt: The Radical* had appeared (*Letters* 4:411). However, while it is true she resurrects the voice of the protagonist in this piece, she does not construct it as a sequel per se, but a political speech. As if acceding to Eliot’s disapproval of authoritative and spurious sequels, publishers and parodists do not appear to have rushed out many *Madam Bedes* or *Shomolas* to meet popular demand. William Baker and John C. Ross note just two bonafide
sequels in their bibliographical history of Eliot, the second of which, *Gwendolen*, I consider below, while the first, the anonymous *Adam Bede, Junior: A Sequel*, was advertised in the *Examiner* as forthcoming from the disreputable publisher Thomas Newby in 1859, but, in fact, may never have seen the light of day: there do not appear to be any copies in major libraries, and, as Baker and Ross note, “no extant copy is recorded in the *Nineteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue.*”

Yet the reaction from Eliot, her companion, George Henry Lewes, and Dickens merely to the threat of *Adam Bede, Junior* appearing offers insight into her circle’s attitudes toward the sequel phenomenon and the world of Victorian publishing, attitudes complicated by the fact that “George Eliot” had only gone public as Marian Evans several months earlier. The episode reveals morally righteous authors doing battle with an infelicitous publisher, and readers caught in the middle, likely left scratching their heads wondering what all the fuss was about. Upon seeing the *Examiner* and *Times* advertisements announcing the imminent publication of *Adam Bede, Junior* (with no author attributed), Lewes, “in haste, and hot indignation,” as he put it, wrote to John Blackwood: “Of course you have seen that Blackguard Newby’s advertisement? What can be done? . . . As the title of Adam Bede is copyright, and as no one can have a right to publish a *sequel* to a living author’s work surely Newby might be stopped by a letter threatening legal proceedings?” (*Letters* 3:188–89). Eliot expressed her own concern that “People in the provinces . . . know no difference between ‘Newby’ and ‘Blackwoods’ and can’t see the moral impossibility of the sequel being mine” (*Letters* 3:191). (I will return to the fact that the very idea of a sequel to her works would strike Eliot as a “moral impossibility.”) Dickens, scarred by his own experience with unauthorized adaptations and sequels, and at a delicate point in his ultimately fruitless negotiations to convince Eliot to contribute to his new journal *All The Year Round*, wrote a letter to Lewes, in which he recounted with outrage the story he had heard about *Adam Bede, Junior*:

Here is a story about it, that I have at first hand, and know to be true. A scavenging wretch in the employment of Mr. Newby, goes to a certain Librarian to subscribe the book. Librarian says he considers it a dishonest proceeding and will have nothing to do with it. “Dishonest!” says the Scavenger; “how do you know by whom it’s written? How do you know it is not by Miss Evans?” Librarian replies: “All I know, is, I will have nothing to do with the book, or you either.” But behold! The Librarian’s subscribers, attracted by the advertisement, demand the book! And because he is under contract to them to supply them with *all* new books, he is obliged to order it, and has ordered it!

Dickens’s response, driven by the desire to curry favor from the author he would have liked to have had as a contributor, suggests another dimen-
sion to Eliot’s claim for the “moral impossibility” that the sequel could be by her. In Dickens’s tale, the fact of the sequel’s elided authorship makes it a “dishonest proceeding.” The shock for Dickens lies not in its publication—which, if it were to happen, would still be, after all, some time off—but in the fact that the Victorian lending library has been “obliged” by the instigation of the publisher’s operative to order it, to fulfill their social contract without being able to make exception for a text so “shameful and abominable” in conception as to seem to him the embodiment of illegitimacy (Dickens, Letters, 168).

In response to Dickens’s alarm and what Eliot and Lewes claimed was “the silence of the Blackwoods,” Lewes convinced Frederick Evans, of Bradbury and Evans, publishers of Punch, to run a piece about, in Eliot’s words, “this scoundrelly business of ‘Adam Bede, Junior.’” Taking her cue from Dickens, Eliot wrote that she viewed such continuations and derivatives as “speculations of dishonest publishers, who are always ready to fasten themselves, like leeches, on a popular fame” (Letters 3:226). Punch entered the fray with an article titled “A Venerable and a Non–Venerable Bede,” published in the wake of the newspaper advertisements for the sequel but before it was to appear on the market. The author of the article praises the work of “MISS EVANS” in terms that hint at a certain condescension toward her book as a commodity to accessorize with or dangle from, though not necessarily reside among, the pantheon of Literary Classics: Adam Bede is, the author writes, “one of the Things of the year . . . a first class novel, and an ornament to English literature.” But the real object of the piece is in one step to deny Eliot’s authorship of Adam Bede, Junior and discredit Newby, whose novels, it is claimed, “are not those to which the epithet ‘first class’ rigidly appertains, but are, generally, if harmless in their way, not likely to cause a reader any intense desire to read them twice, even if he succeed in reading them once” (224). With the kind of moralistic indignation Victorians perfected to an art, the author condemns spurious sequelizers and their publishers as base profiteers: “Punch would express in the blandest, but at the same time the most distinct manner, his infinite contempt for the order of mind that can stoop to seize the conceptions of another mind, and make (in all probability clumsy) spoil of them, for the sake of certain miserable shillings” (224).

The irony of this position is, of course, that Punch earned its fame through its distinctive verbal and visual satire, which in its comic way “seize[d] the conceptions of another mind, and ma[d]e . . . spoil of them,” in weekly installments, “for the sake of certain miserable shillings.” And an additional irony is that, while Blackwood would go on “to let the rubbish [of Adam Bede, Junior] die a natural death,” Bradbury and Evans’s periodical ultimately would turn on Eliot’s final novel with
a sequel born, not of the crass opportunist of Newby, but the crass conservatism of the later Victorian Punch (Letters 3:223). Punch’s turn against Eliot was neither sudden nor unique, however. A number of early supporters felt alienated by her subsequent novels. Despite the essentially positive word about Adam Bede in their 1859 article, the Punch circle, for instance, privately called Eliot’s next book The Mill on the Floss “dreary and immoral” and “thought Bradbury and Evans were lucky not to have secured it.”21 By the time Deronda appeared, Eliot had evolved from the diminutive “MISS” to revered sage, and her work similarly had evolved from “ornamental” to formidable (in size, if not, for the Punch staff, in content) to rival, or even, with Middlemarch, to surpass the “loose baggy monsters” of William Makepeace Thackeray and Dickens.

Although Punch had featured literary parody from its beginnings in the 1840s with Thackeray’s “Punch’s Prize Novelists,” which mocked the works of Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Benjamin Disraeli, Charles Lever, James Fenimore Cooper, and Thackeray himself (Dickens originally had been on his list, but was dropped), the Daniel Deronda parody, written in the form of a sequel, reveals the more reactionary attitudes perpetuated by the later, ostensibly mellower humor magazine.22 In this sense, it not only is of a piece with the affronted response that the novel received from much of the English critical establishment, but also indicates Punch’s festering and longstanding anti-Semitism. In its inaugural year, Punch already was satirizing then-MP and novelist Disraeli as an old clothes dealer and “Mosaic,” despite his Christian baptism at 13 (263).

In 1876, the year Deronda was published, and against the backdrop of the “Eastern Question,” Disraeli, now Prime Minister, saw his support for Turkey’s countering of Russian influence in India undercut by revelations of Turkish atrocities against Bulgarians, and the Anglo-Jewish community’s support for Turkish rule, which “had been comparatively tolerant to Jews,” in turn led to anti-Semitic outbursts directed at Disraeli, the “Jew Premier.” By this time as well, Punch’s premier illustrator, John Tenniel, had iconicized Disraeli as “a kind of trickster or illusionist” as well as a Sphinx, whose “secret” Jewishness had inclined him to support the Turks.23 Michael Ragussis suggests that in Deronda Eliot is concerned with sympathetically debunking the popular negative characterizations of Disraeli’s crypto-Judaism through Daniel’s positive discovery of his own.24 The Punch sequel to Deronda turns this concern on its head by conflating the journal’s mockery of Disraeli with political and personal contempt for Eliot’s Jewish characters and the “bad part” of her novel.

The Punch sequel appeared at the end of 1876, just after publication of the final part of Deronda, and has been called the “most important literary contribution that is worth preserving” of its author, Alfred Thompson, but that is, of course, relative praise.25 Thompson (1831–95),
whose primary career was that of stage designer of burlesques and pantomimes, was a regular contributor to *Punch* and several other Victorian humor magazines and editor and illustrator of the short-lived journal *The Mask* in its incarnations as a monthly (1868) and weekly (1879)—the former containing, it should be noted, satires of *The Moonstone* and *No Thoroughfare.*

In Thompson’s writing, as one theater historian puts it, “occasionally there are signs of . . . a taste for nonsense and absurdity that recalls Gilbert,” and the *Deronda* sequel exemplifies this point, but in doing so it invokes typical *Punch*-style Jewish stereotyping and attacks the perceived exoticism and tediousness of the Deronda plot.

The sequel consists of two chapters of a mock “Book IX” of *Deronda* (titled “Tire and Side-on”), and Thompson sets the tone with his send-up of Eliot’s epigraphic tendencies:

> Who, looking on the studded vault of Time,  
> To watch the throbbing cloudlets as they scud,  
> Can tell whence cometh, which, or whither what  
> In the unconscious when to unknown where?

Set in Constantinople—the Turkish reference, with the Bulgarian atrocities still fresh in readers’ minds, is hard to miss—the sequel picks up after “the days of mourning for Ezra were over” (188). Thompson’s characterization of Daniel anticipates Robert Louis Stevenson’s description of him as “the Prince of Prigs”: he is “the perfect specimen of a prig” as he recites “one of the fine psalms in the Sanscrit Pharmacopeia, ‘Rachel may weep to lose her sheep, and can’t tell where to find them; issue a loan and they’ll come home, and bring the Tribes behind them,’” to a group of rabbis who “gave out in musical tones the Jewish greeting, the o’clo’ of the Israelites, which Deronda unconsciously returned like an echo from Jerusalem” (189).

This facile stereotyping is accompanied by Daniel’s bodily transformation, or degeneration, into the Jewish stereotype: his “finely cut nose sensibly develop[ed] into the nobler prominence of the Judaico-Roman, his naturally undulating hair curl[ed] in sympathetic ringlets round his marble brow” (189). Mirah, meanwhile, has abandoned Daniel in her pursuit of Hans Meyrick. While “lunching with Hans on pork chops and sausages,” she writes to tell Deronda that Hans has “saved me from the ditch-water of your prose,” and that he “has a Greek nose, and no trace of Greece in his hair” (191). Deronda’s response (accompanied by the obligatory “Shelp me Motheth!”) is to decide to pursue Gwendolen, and his features revert back to those of “his old self” (191–92).

In the second chapter, Daniel is reunited with Gwendolen, whose “small coal-field” left her by Grandcourt “had become a Croesus-mine
of gold” (192). Rex Gascoigne has become an inspector of mines, and Lush (in an inspired pairing on Thompson’s part) has married Lydia Glasher. Gwendolen reads in the newspaper of Hans’s and Mirah’s drowning after the collision of their boat with a British ironclad on the Bosphorus, upon which she presciently says, “He will come now” (193). Daniel arrives, and, after a monologue in which he is made to mimic the traumatized speech pattern Gwendolen displays after Grandcourt’s drowning, the narrator declares that her “triumph was ordained” (193). Reduced to tears, they sit down before the fire and, in yet another nasal reference, “blew each other’s noses in silence” (194). After a final request from Gwendolen—“you won’t bring those greasy Cohens into the drawing-room”—Daniel vows to stand for Buckinghamshire (also, not coincidentally, the county represented by Disraeli) in the MP election. The narrator concludes, “Thank heaven, he did not get in!” (194).

If this sequel has received little if any attention from scholars of the novel, that likely is because it appeared not in Punch proper but in one of its side- and now hard-to-find publications, Punch’s Pocket Book. The Pocket Book (not to be confused with Punch’s Almanack, which more closely resembled the format of the magazine) was a miniature annual containing two parts, the first consisting of “Ruled Pages for Cash Accounts and Memoranda for Every Day of the Year, an Almanack, and a Variety of Useful and Valuable Business Information” (not unlike a contemporary pocket planner), and the second, a selection of specially commissioned Punch verse and prose. Priced between 2s.6d. and 3s.6d., the 39 tiny volumes released between 1843 and 1880 (dated 1844–81 on their title pages) had gilt edges, leather bindings, and colored fold-out frontispieces and other woodcuts by Punch’s major artists. The Pocket Books were, as one historian puts it, “a shop window for Punch talent,” and “no expense was spared in the production,” which suggests that to have one’s novel parodied within them was, although potentially offensive to the author in question, from Punch’s point of view, quite an honor.30 There is a subtler element of parody, or precious deflation, in the very form in which the sequel appeared: the eight books of Eliot’s final tome, massive in length and weighty in ideas and ideals, are answered with a diminutive Book IX included in the Punch publication intended for a more businesslike, commercial audience. The kinds of readers consulting the Pocket Book, that is, were more closely identified with the English Philistinism Eliot was satirizing and ultimately turning her back on with, and within, Deronda itself.

As part of this satire on the level of publication form, it is significant that Thompson’s piece was illustrated with a full-page woodcut by Tenniel (figure 1). The humor of this intimate view of Daniel and Gwendolen cuddling at the hearth lies to some extent in the absurdity of the scene
and the pairing of two jarringly different profiles: the English beauty, and behind her, the English Jew. Victorian readers of the *Pocket Book* would have recognized in the Jewish caricature Tenniel gives Deronda a variation on his dozens of Disraelis, familiar to them from years of appearances in the magazine. The parody here goes deeper than the exaggerated nature of Tenniel’s rendition, however, to the status of the illustration itself. Eliot, as is well known, was not especially fond of illustrations in novels. When Blackwood prompted her to consider allowing reprints of her earlier works to contain them, she responded, “In the abstract I object to illustrated literature” (*Letters* 4:313). *Romola*, with woodcuts by Frederic Leighton, was the only one of her novels initially published with illustrations, yet in their collaboration Eliot, who at first was enthusiastic, grew uncomfortable with the principle of what she saw as competing forms of representation, writing to Leighton, “But I am quite convinced that illustrations can only form a sort of overture to the text. The artist who uses the pencil must otherwise be tormented to misery by the deficiencies or requirements of the one who uses the pen, and the writer, on the other hand, must die of impossible expectations” (*Letters* 4:55–56). For Eliot, “illustrated literature” only was, as she put it, “endurable to a mind well accustomed to resignation,” resignation, that is, to the whims of a marketplace that demanded books have pictures, a demand Eliot understood but resisted in the first editions, at least, of most of her works.
Eliot believed that, as one critic has put it, “pictures are but an imperfect means to a higher end—the truthful representation of life in its dynamic complexity.”

Eliot sought to use language to create a “representation of life,” rather than readily acquiescing to the Dickensian or Thackerayan tendency to pepper one’s fiction with pictures that distracted from a realist vision grounded in words.

In supplying the illustration to the *Punch* sequel to *Daniel Deronda*, Tenniel, who not only was *Punch*’s prominent artist but also a renowned literary illustrator (his *Alice in Wonderland* contributions are, of course, among the most famous of Victorian book-illustrations), got in his own jab at Eliot’s spare approach to the visual embellishment of her fiction. The essence of the joke, as Tenniel and *Punch* would have it, is not just that a pseudo-*Daniel Deronda* would be represented by this illustration, but that the novel itself would be represented by any illustration at all. Contrast Tenniel’s with the image engraved by Charles Jeens that Eliot ultimately allowed to grace the novel when it was reprinted in a one-volume cheap edition in October 1877, about a year after Thompson’s parody had appeared (figure 2). Editors now are restoring long-absent illustrations in other Victorian works, but contemporary *Deronda* editions have not included this “overture to the text,” as if to preserve the idealized notion of a “pure” verbal aesthetic conveyed by an absence of pictorial representation in most of Eliot’s books and especially in this one. Part of the value in reconsidering the illustration is that it can be read as a kind of reply, albeit not a sequel, to the insouciance of Tenniel’s woodcut in the way it reinstates the solemnity and transcendent romance of *Deronda* that the *Punch* circle and other critics of the novel rejected. In place of an interior moment between the newly paired Daniel and Gwendolen in Thompson’s sequel, the vignette redirects attention to the meeting in chapter 17 of the legitimate future couple of the novel, Daniel and Mirah, on the Thames. Instead of Tenniel’s fleshy caricatures, the faces in the vignette are left, if one looks closely enough, blank, dwarfed by the pastoral scene surrounding them, in what could be understood as a concession to Eliot’s desire to fill in, so to speak, her characters’ features with the power of her words and in doing so, craft art that was, as she famously put it, “the nearest thing to life.”

This is not the place to rehash the ways in which *Deronda* combines Eliot’s earlier realism with elements of romance, but suffice it to say that even in its satirical sequel *Punch* felt the need to consummate the novel’s unrealized and, as Eliot develops it, ultimately unrealistic romantic relationship between Daniel and Gwendolen. Despite knowing better, despite, as it were, Eliot’s different plans for them, Daniel and Gwendolen for much of the novel cannot stop thinking about each other—and Eliot’s determination finally not to unite them is, of course, one of her
boldest touches. Denied a conventional romantic resolution in which the hero marries the presumed heroine, many readers felt affronted (as many still do). Four years after Deronda was published, an editorial columnist in the New York Times wrote that the novel had “so irritated most of [Eliot’s] admirers that they have not yet recovered from their irritation. . . . The average reader demanded that Deronda should marry Gwendolen, instead of Mirah, and they have never forgiven either him or his creator for marrying the wrong woman, as they conceive her to be.”34 Such “average readers” in large part would have been the readers of the
sequel in *Punch* (even if their problem with the novel went well beyond romantic frustration), and they apparently were the intended audience for Anna Clay Beecher’s novel *Gwendolen; or, Reclaimed: A Sequel to Daniel Deronda* by George Eliot when it was published in Boston in 1878.

*Gwendolen* is an astonishing book, on the one hand, because it shows how presumptuous Eliot’s readers could be in seeking to impose their demands on her fiction, and, on the other, because it strikingly anticipates, in title and spirit, Leavis’s century-later abridgement of *Deronda*, his amputated or circumcised reclamation of it for the great tradition of the English novel. Though there is no evidence that Leavis knew of it, *Gwendolen*, like Leavis’s *Gwendolen Harleth* and the *Punch* sequel, provides a critique of Eliot’s work on the level of form as well as content. In this case, the sequel not only deconstructs the design of her narrative with an anti-Jewish attack but also attempts to pass itself off as authorized in appearance if not in fact. The prose of *Gwendolen* is turgid, the epigraphs by canonical authors superfluous, and the unintentional parody of Eliot’s style painful, but the plot is predictable enough, with a few new elements added to further Beecher’s blunt determination to get her favored couple together at the end. After eight months in Cairo, Daniel has experienced “the gradual obliteration of his Jewish orthodox views—consequent upon his observing Jewish life in reality,” and his time in the East “was growing irksome to him”: “disparaging thoughts of Hebrewish ways and manners came prominently into consideration, and so disgustingly real, and unwholesome in detail, that he inwardly resolved to thenceforth abjure the faith, which was permeated with the rankest vices, that countenanced the vilest means, and whose co-adjuvants still gloried in their conviction of the Son of Man.” This is more of the anti-Jewish bile of the *Punch* parody with none of the satire, and the plot, as it turns out, is remarkably similar as well, with a mood of gothic foreboding replacing *Punch’s* absurdity. Mirah dies from complications after giving birth to a son, who also dies, and Daniel, disillusioned, vows to return to England. Gwendolen sits brooding at home with her mother, who in a convoluted twist turns out to be her aunt as well as her father’s second wife, whom he married after his first, Gwendolen’s birth mother, died. In Genoa to bury Mirah next to her brother Mordecai, Daniel concludes that Jews exhibit “degeneracy” and “debased characteristics,” and that “as a nation they would only unite gross traits, and that even as individuals they were totally unqualified and undesirable rulers over themselves, much less over others” (63). Daniel observes rabbis at the graveyard as they denounce his dead mother, whose plot is separated from the others for her choice to live outside the faith, and over her grave he vows “that from henceforward her persecutors were his enemies” (72–74). He reburies his mother, along with Mirah, in “Christian sod,” with “a fitting monument” (a cross?) “erected over them” (74). With this
gesture of posthumous semi-conversion, Daniel effectively renounces for others and himself the Judaism to which Eliot had him become attached. The transfer of the mother’s plot of earth is analogous to the return of his own narrative plot to the faith he abandoned.

In the space of four chapters, the stage has been set for Daniel to be reclaimed for England, Christendom, and, of course, Gwendolen. Sir Hugo informs her that Daniel is back in Europe: “He has got a surfeit of Jews,” he tells her, to which she responds, “Deronda returned—Mirah dead—Deronda a Christian!” (95). Daniel meets up with Hans and the two travel to Mansbach, where they visit the gothic ruins of a church, and Daniel is described as “the re-reformed Jew, looking upon the symbol of Christian salvation represented by the Jewish ordeal of torture” (153). This scene prompts a bit of extemporaneous Jew-bashing that comprises Daniel’s “meditations” and is typical of the bigoted attitude of the novel: “Christ was indeed the King of Jews, but not being a Jew by nature or by traits of humanity, he was crucified so that their corrupt existence might not be criticised by comparison; and by pretending to wait for another Saviour, they do not heed Christ’s precepts of morality and honor” (153). Through mysterious channels, Daniel receives a package “marked in Greek characters—RECLAIMED,” which contains the bracelet that he had redeemed for Gwendolen after she pawned it in the casino at the beginning of *Deronda* (157). Much tramping across the Continent follows, which allows the narrator to indulge in an anti-Catholic rant as well, as when Daniel sees in Strasbourg the “hypocritical sanctimony of these cringing murmurers of Paternosters” (215–16). The narrative pauses to make topical allusions to new technologies: Klesmer reappears at a dance in Germany, where his “attention had been claimed by some ladies of rank, to whom he was explaining the mysteries of the Telephone, with any amount of gesticulation” (265–66). Beecher ultimately transfers Daniel’s object of fascination from Judaism to Aryanism, and from Mordecai to his new mentor, the mysterious Roland, “at heart a thorough German, and very deeply studied in their lore and classics,” who apparently had an affair long ago with Mrs. Davilow (290). Thanks to Roland’s machinations, Daniel reunites with Gwendolen in Ansbach, where he discovers her on the floor “pale like a corpse”: “no! you shall not die, you will live—live for me,” he says, to which she replies, “You have reclaimed me from the other world” (307, 310). Reclaimed to a conventional gothic-heroic role in his own New Testament, Daniel in turn reclaims Gwendolen for himself.

So much for the plot. Critical attention to *Gwendolen* has been scattered and brief: through the lens of gender and narrative theory, *Gwendolen* has been considered a book that provides, in Kate Flint’s apt phrase, “a wishful reading” of *Deronda* (“rather touchingly,” in the words of another critic), yet at the same time it has been called “perhaps the
most virulent anti-Semitic novel of the American nineteenth century.”

These two characterizations are not incompatible. The trajectory of *Gwendolen* is a variation on those of nineteenth-century English conversionist novels such as Charlotte Elizabeth’s *Judah’s Lion*, in which Jews become Christians—novels that Eliot, according to Ragussis, consciously subverts in *Deronda*. Beecher subverts the subverter: she undoes Eliot’s revised conversionist story, in which a Christian man becomes, or, really, already is (and a Jewish woman remains) Jewish, to construct what more precisely is a de- or reconversionist sequel. At the same time, *Gwendolen* is an American sequel, and a distinctly American response to Eliot’s fiction. It was written in the period when “the United States witnessed the emergence of a full-fledged antisemitic society,” against the backdrop of a surge in Jewish immigration in the 1870s; the post-Civil War revivalist crusade led by the Reverend Dwight L. Moody, who “toured the country reminding his listeners that the Jews killed their Savior and enjoining audiences to convert the Jews to Christianity”; and the scandal that resulted from “the Seligman Affair,” when in 1877 Judge Henry Hilton barred the German-Jewish banker Joseph Seligman and other “Israelites” from registering at his Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga Springs. The anti-Semitism of *Gwendolen* is of a piece with the kind that pervaded the American literary scene, from children’s McGuffey readers, which blamed the Jews for the crucifixion and promoted the United States as a Christian country, to religious fiction such as the Reverend Joseph Holt Ingraham’s *The Prince of the House of David*, which was published in 1859 and by 1930 had outsold *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, to Jew-baiting comments in the writings of James Russell Lowell and Henry Adams.

Given Beecher’s preoccupation with it, it is hard not to believe that a principal motive for her sequel was to spout such bigotry, although Beecher herself claims otherwise. How she does so is one of the more curious aspects of the book. *Gwendolen* begins not with the story proper but, as justification for the existence of the sequel, with a heavily abridged reprinting of Edwin P. Whipple’s lengthy review of *Deronda* from the January 1877 *North American Review*. Ironically, Whipple’s evaluation was considered by Lewes to be the best of the novel he had read. As he wrote to J. R. Osgood: “When you see Mr Whipple I should be glad if you would express to him my keen admiration for the critical insight displayed in his paper on Deronda in the North American Rev—by far the best criticism that has yet appeared—at least that I have seen. Although Mrs Lewes [sic] abstains on principle from reading anything whatever that is written about her works, she was also very grateful to Mr Whipple when I described the scope & spirit of his paper.” Lewes was right: Whipple’s lengthy review, although it has tended to escape notice in anthologies and discussions of contemporary reactions to Eliot’s
Whipple praises *Deronda* for refusing to indulge in what he sees as “the grand French fallacies of passion” and melodrama prominent in the works of Honoré de Balzac and Alexandre Dumas, and he singles out, among other things, Mordecai as one of Eliot’s highest achievements. His closing paragraph folds back on itself, at first critical of Eliot’s conclusion and then impressed with it:

George Eliot has anticipated and answered in the book itself most of the criticisms which have been made upon it since its publication. The chief defect in the story is that it suddenly stops rather than artistically ends. The conclusion is meagre and bears the marks of having been hurried up. There is a remote possibility that the author intends to follow the precedents of Thackeray and Anthony Trollope, and introduce in her next novel some of the leading characters whose fortunes are left undetermined in the present. In that case we shall be informed whether or not Rex Gascoigne eventually marries Gwendolen, and how it fares with Deronda and Mirah in their mission to the East. Still, the conclusion of “Felix Holt” or “Middlemarch” is as unsatisfactory as that of “Daniel Deronda”; in respect to each, the words “To be Continued” would seem proper substitutes for “Finis”; but it appears to be the fate of this remarkable novelist to raise expectation to the height only more or less to disappoint it, and to give an absorbing interest to characters, whom she abruptly leaves without condescending to gratify that natural curiosity in readers which she has labored so successfully to excite. (52)

Whipple works his way around to recognizing the paradox of the conclusion, that what at first seems sparse and rushed turns out to be valuable. This view hinges on the phrase “without condescending”: the disappointment readers may feel upon finishing is at the same time the consequence of the respect the author pays them and her characters, and ultimately, the evidence of her achievement. Put another way, Whipple understands and, I believe, appreciates Eliot’s kind of resigned, because more “honest” (granted, a loaded term here), realism: when the opening of a novel only can be “the make-believe of a beginning,” and not the “all-presupposing fact,” as she had put it in the epigraph to the first chapter of *Deronda*, so too there can only be the “make-believe” of an (abrupt) ending, and especially, one might add, no condescension to the temptation for the greater artifice of a sequel, the “moral impossibility” to which Eliot earlier had referred (3; *Letters* 3:392). Whipple’s subtlety is lost on Beecher, who in republishing this reading of Eliot’s challenging conclusion willfully botches his own. Beecher manages to misread not only the novelist but also the critic. She reprints the first half of the paragraph (through “their mission in the East”) and inserts an
ellipsis, to end with “The words ‘To be Continued’ would seem proper substitutes for ‘Finis,’” such that the review appears to be closing with an explicit call for a sequel.45 This is how Beecher wants it interpreted, at least; she follows the review with a statement of her goal: “MOTIVE. To remedy this ‘chief defect’ and to utilize the [‘]remote possibility’ for the present generation” (23). She selectively uses Whipple’s words to justify a sequel that both he and Eliot (for those paying attention) already had discounted as missing the point.

If a sequel to an Eliot novel, in its very status as a sequel, misrepresents Eliot’s aesthetic of realism, this sequel also cannily misrepresents itself. Beecher (or her publisher) makes a material effort to have her novel pass as George Eliot’s handiwork. The design of the cover of *Gwendolen* is an imitation of that of the Harper Library Edition of Eliot’s works, from the identical size of the boards to the same texture and shade of green for the cloth. Eliot’s signature appears on the front in gilt as it does on the Harper’s volumes, except that on the sequel it is part of the front cover title (“Sequel to George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda”), while Beecher’s name is nowhere to be seen (figure 3). The spine follows the Harper design down to the emblem beneath the title, which on the Harper volumes contains an initial “G” overlaid with an “E” (for George Eliot). On the spine of the sequel, if one looks closely, the emblem loses the central arm of the “E” to become just a “G” (for *Gwendolen*) (figure 4). Beecher’s name also is absent from the title page of the editions published by Ira Bradley, which led some libraries to fall for Bradley’s ploy and catalog the book under “Eliot, George” (this still is the case at the Boston Public Library). Without the variant title page identifying her in a single surviving copy published by William F. Gill, the author’s name would be unknown to us.46

Bradley managed to do for *Deronda* what Newby only had threatened for *Adam Bede*. construct an anonymous sequel that passes, however briefly or poorly, for the real thing, even as its very existence offends Eliot’s realist self-awareness. An editorial writer for the 1880 *New York Times* considered the effect of Bradley’s ruse:

To meet the public want, a Boston firm has, with more enterprise than honesty, published a volume closely resembling HARPERS’s library edition of George Eliot’s works, and entitled it “Gwendolen: A Sequel to ‘Daniel Deronda,’” by George Eliot. It is plainly intended to deceive, and has no doubt deceived, many persons who do not keep advised of literary movements. A good many others have bought it and read it, although conscious of the imposition, because they were anxious to see Gwendolen wedded as she should have been, while knowing that in real life more women are not so wedded. There is an exalted audacity in this literary fraud. When will the Boston house add a sixth act to “Hamlet,” in which Ophelia shall appear as the Princess of Denmark? (4)
Fig. 3. Front covers of the Harper edition of *Daniel Deronda* and William F. Gill’s edition of *Gwendolen*. The copy of *Gwendolen* in Figs. 3–4 courtesy of Robert Cole.

Fig. 4. Spines of the Harper edition of *Daniel Deronda* and William F. Gill’s edition of *Gwendolen*. 
To be, or not to be, continued: for Eliot’s readers, that is the question. As one version of an answer, Beecher’s sequel makes central the act of passing and the idea of the “exalted fraud.” In the anti-Semitic world of Gwendolen, Daniel himself is revealed to be a fraud, as Eliot’s exalted Judaism becomes nothing more than a delusion. Gwendolen too becomes a “Princess Ophelia,” “wedded as she should have been,” despite the fact that such a marriage is a fraud, in that it has no place in “real life.” Delusory form—the sham cover and elided authorship—is the material analogue of delusory character. “George Eliot,” once Marian Evans’s subversive pseudonym, becomes part of the title, in another sign of the branding of the novelist in her later career. Looked at another way, it takes a false Eliot to reveal the “true” religion. In the end, it is not clear how many read Gwendolen under the belief it was by Eliot, or even how many read it at all, although there is no evidence Eliot did (nor is there any that she read the Punch sequel). The archive likewise remains silent on the identity of the author, Anna Clay Beecher, but just the possibility of a distant relationship to Eliot’s close correspondent and sympathetic reader of Deronda, Harriet Beecher Stowe, may be irony enough.

Eliot’s inconclusive conclusion of Deronda is the question mark at the end of the open question that is Deronda as a whole. “Was she beautiful or not beautiful?” the novel famously begins, with Daniel focused on Gwendolen, yet the history of the popular and critical reception of Deronda is a history of qualified answers to this question, reclaimed for the aesthetics of fiction. As Daniel reads Gwendolen, so readers assess the novel: is it beautiful or not beautiful, perfect or flawed, or both at once? On the one hand, while it has become commonplace, and not necessarily inaccurate, to label Eliot’s effort philo-Semitic, the critique offered by the sequels reminds us once again of the context in which she wrote and the risk she took against the social prejudices and generic conventions of her day. On the other hand, Leavis and the critics who follow him express an apparently aesthetic outrage over what they see in the novel as the best of Eliot dragged down by the worst. But then, the gap between sequel and review, between fiction and criticism, is narrower than it seems. After all, when he called for “surgery” upon Deronda, Leavis believed he was following not the opinion of the mass of contemporary readers “who cut the book into scraps and talk of nothing in it but Gwendolen,” as Eliot had put it, but that of Henry James. The Portrait of a Lady (1881) is the novel in which James, through his single-minded focus on Isabel Archer, “shows us . . . how he thinks George Eliot should have finished the work [concerning the analysis of egotism] he felt she had admirably started.” Portrait is, of course, neither a sequel proper nor a reclamation of Gwendolen in the manner of Thompson’s
and Beecher’s efforts. Rather, it is a reply to *Deronda* that Leavis calls “a variation on *Gwendolen Harleth*” (126). In *Portrait*, in other words, James already had done Leavis’s cutting away for him, since, as George Levine puts it, “there is no genuine second plot against which Isabel’s story can be viewed” (255). Considered in proper sequence, putting the novel before the critic, *Gwendolen Harleth* is Leavis’s Jamesian abridgement of *Deronda*, a literalization of James’s implicit critique in *Portrait* of what he took to be Eliot’s unfinished, unfocused work. (It perhaps is not a coincidence that *Portrait* was published the year after Eliot’s death.) Building on criticism voiced in “Daniel Deronda: A Conversation,” his 1876 *Nation* review, in which the fictional Theodora, Constantius, and Pulcheria argue over the merits of the novel, James in *Portrait* consolidates and gentrifies previous attempts, in the form of obscure sequels and snipping readers, to undo or cut away the “bad part.” A cynic might say that James, not known for his enlightened attitudes toward Jews, allows this absence and his silence to speak volumes. If there is an enlightened reply to Eliot in the wake of James, perhaps it is the book that takes the other tack, radically reclaiming and revising not only the “bad part,” but also the myth of the Wandering Jew, and much more, to place a Jewish hero in a “judicious mixture” of “Homeric epic” and “railway novel” in ways *Deronda* never could: James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922).

Then again, *The Great Tradition* originally was more of a “judicious mixture” of critical voices than later editions suggest. In the first edition, Leavis attached to his discourse on tradition and “surgery” an “Appendix,” James’s “Conversation” about *Deronda* from the 1876 *Nation*. The appendix was silently removed from the 1963 New York University edition, the one with which many current readers are familiar (as it still is available secondhand). Leavis’s own book gets a circumcision, or appendectomy, as if in diminutive correspondence with his act of cutting *Deronda*. And yet, this editorial or legal decision obscures the critical tradition in which Leavis was writing and wanted to be seen: alongside James, Eliot’s “most intelligently appreciative critic,” as he put it (123). Leavis believed himself to be completing and perfecting the task James had begun with his review. Consider that the full sentence with which this essay opens reads: “As for the bad part of *Daniel Deronda*, there is nothing to do but cut it away—in spite of what James, as Constantius, finds to say for it” (122). That “in spite of” encapsulates Leavis’s efforts: if, as Leavis claims, James makes “a variation on *Gwendolen Harleth*” with his *Portrait*, then Leavis makes a variation on “Daniel Deronda: A Conversation” with his chapter in *The Great Tradition* (126).
Although Leavis saw himself as building on James, the sequel authors already had offered kindred acts of, if not literary criticism exactly, then criticism-as-bibliography. Their focus on the material conditions of *Deronda* prefigured the material struggle it would come indirectly to influence halfway around the globe, when book history and reception history would echo in world history. In June 1895, the journalist, novelist, and soon-to-be “father of the Jewish state” Theodor Herzl wrote in his diary: “I must read *Daniel Deronda*. Perhaps it contains ideas similar to mine. They cannot be identical ones, because it took a concatenation of many specific circumstances to bring my plan into being.”\(^5\) Indeed it had, as it was after witnessing the Dreyfus Affair while serving as the Paris correspondent for the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna that Herzl became convinced (or so he later claimed) that the Jews of Europe could escape persecution through a mass exodus to a land of their own.\(^5\) Although he apparently never read *Deronda*, and while it is important to acknowledge that there is a marked difference between its proto-Zionism and twentieth-century Zionist ideology, references to the novel in Herzl’s diary form a steady undercurrent whose influence is hard wholly to discount.\(^5\) But whose *Deronda*? James had written a variation on what Leavis termed the “good half”; Herzl now found himself unwittingly contemplating a response to the “bad half” (80). In November 1895, Herzl met with Hermann Adler, Chief Rabbi of the British Empire: “I expounded my project,” Herzl wrote. “The Chief Rabbi said that this was the idea of *Daniel Deronda*” (278–79). Two days later, Herzl met with Colonel Albert Edward Williamson Goldsmid, the Jewish commander of the Welsh regiment of the British army in Cardiff. Herzl presented his plan: Goldsmid said, “That is the idea of my life... I am Daniel Deronda... I was born a Christian. My father and mother were baptized Jews. When I found out about this, as a young man in India, I decided to return to the ancestral fold” (281–82). As Herzl’s biographer puts it, “if he was not crazy, Goldsmid had veritable delusions of grandeur,” a quality that enabled him to become “Herzl’s ideal self”: “I have already taken him to my heart, like a brother,” Herzl wrote (283).\(^5\) Three months later, Herzl published his views in the formative statement of political Zionism titled *The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question*. Within a few years, Zionist organizations were adopting and adapting Eliot’s novel for their cause: the American Federation of Zionists, for example, published *George Eliot as a Zionist*, consisting of extracts from Book V, “Mordecai,” as a pamphlet in 1899.\(^5\)

By the time *The Great Tradition* was published in November 1948, it had been five months since Britain had withdrawn its forces from Palestine, and the state of Israel, the most ambitious and controversial sequel to *Deronda*, had declared independence. But did Herzl, whose
“own fantasies of the Jewish State had little to do with what Palestine, and later Israel, was really like,” get it right? Like Thompson, Beecher, and James before and Leavis after him, Herzl offered a one-sided reply, albeit a semiconscious one, to Deronda. As Leavis turned Deronda into a novel Eliot never wrote, so Herzl wrote a sequel to a novel he may well never have read. Who is to say if his “solution” might have been different had he done so? For those who champion the existence of a Jewish state as historically legitimate or necessary, Herzl’s views can be seen as a corrective to the tradition that includes the original readers “who cut the book into scraps and talk[ed] of nothing in it but Gwendolen,” the crude Jew-baiting of Thompson and Beecher, and the subtle bigotry of James. For those who equate Zionism with racism, however, the notion that a Zionist state would be an appropriate corrective to past anti-Semitism is odious. Despite the blinkered critical legacy of Deronda, it bears repeating that Eliot wrote that she “meant everything in the book to be related to everything else there.” This call for the interdependence of personal and national histories, as with so much of what she wrote, resonates on the world stage as well as the page. For if it is true that the partitions, divisions, and periodic reconciliations of Palestine and Israel reframe in uncanny ways the questions of partition that have preoccupied the readers and revisers of Deronda, it is not naïve also to believe that Herzl’s state, at once like and unlike the novel that came before it, remains unfinished.

Harvard University

NOTES

1 George Eliot, Daniel Deronda, ed. Graham Handley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), 356 (hereafter cited in text). For their detailed comments on drafts of this essay, I especially would like to thank Leah Price and Danny Siegel. I also thank William Baker, Patrick Leary, Hilary Schor, and Anthony Wohl, for their interest in this topic and helpful suggestions, the organizers of the 2005 NAVSA conference, for the opportunity to present a version of this, and the students of English 256 in spring 2005, for their willingness to read and respond to some of the materials discussed here.


6 Leavis, “‘Gwendolen Harleth,’” in The Critic as Anti-Philosopher: Essays and Papers by F. R. Leavis, ed. G. Singh (London: Chatto and Windus, 1982), 66; Johnson, “F. R. Leavis,” 216. In a strictly religious sense, circumcision is meant as a means of consecrating and marking, which is not necessarily at odds with the way I am using it here. Leavis is, after all, marking Deronda as his own and consecrating it (as the sequel-writers all will do to one extent or another) for the (secular? or sacred?) tradition of the English novel.

7 The history of critical debate over Daniel’s circumcision (was he or wasn’t he?) dates from at least as far back as the 1975 publication of Steven Marcus’s comment in a note that Daniel must have “never looked down. In order for the plot of Daniel Deronda to work, Daniel’s circumcised penis must be invisible, or non-existent—which is one more demonstration in detail of why the plot does not in fact work” (“Human Nature, Social Order, and 19th Century Systems of Explanation: Starting in with George Eliot,” Salmagundi 28 [1975]: 41). Several scholars have maintained that Daniel was circumcised: according to Cynthia Chase, for example, he “must have been circumcised, given what we are told of his history” (“The Decomposition of the Elephants: Double-Reading Daniel Deronda,” PMLA 93 [1978]: 222); Jacob Press claims that Daniel “has been circumcised” (“Same-Sex Unions in Modern Europe: Daniel Deronda, Atnueland, and the Homoerotics of Jewish Nationalism,” in Novel-Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction, ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997], 304). K. M. Newton and John Sutherland can be credited with finally giving the circumcision question the wide exposure and extended treatment it deserves (Newton, “Daniel Deronda and Circumcision,” Essays in Criticism 31 [1981]: 313–27; Sutherland, “Is Daniel Deronda Circumcised?” in Can Jane Eyre Be Happy? More Puzzles in Classic Fiction [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995], 169–76). Sutherland argues for the negative, though he appears to have had his position anticipated by Deirdre David, who made a similar argument against the likelihood of Daniel’s circumcision in a note published several years earlier (“Is Daniel Deronda Circumcised?” 169–76; Deirdre David, Fictions of Resolution in Three Victorian Novels: North and South, Our Mutual Friend, Daniel Deronda [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981], 174–75n16). Newton argues for the positive in “Sutherland’s Puzzles: The Case of Daniel Deronda,” Essays in Criticism 48 (1998): 1–12. For a reading of the novel that uses nineteenth-century Protestant writings on circumcision to explore the narrative desire to “circumcise” Gwendolen, see Mary Wilson Carpenter, “A Bit of Her Flesh’: Circumcision and ‘The Signification of the Phallus’ in Daniel Deronda,” Genders 1 (1988): 1–23.

8 Gillian Beer, Darwin’s Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction (London: Routledge, 1983), 181. Or, as Irene Tucker has put it in a different context: “Daniel Deronda’s injunction to its readers to imagine Mirah and Daniel’s life in Palestine asserts that the process of reading novels should be recognized as the process of making the novel one is reading disappear” (in A Probable State: The Novel, the Contract, and the Jews [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 120).


14 Considered in light of previous efforts to theorize sequels, this essay itself also can be seen as a corrective, to the extent that it argues for the importance of the history of
the book in assessments of the meaning and value of the sequel and the role it plays in revising or solidifying perceptions of its source text.


16 The quoted phrase is Leah Price’s, from The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 135.

17 William Baker and John C. Ross, George Eliot: A Bibliographical History (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2002), 603. I follow Baker’s and Ross’s lead in not considering the short volume Seth Bede, “The Methody:” His Life and Labours; Chiefly Written by Himself (1859) a sequel, as others occasionally have, or even a work of fiction, but an anonymous biography (possibly written by the publisher, James Briddon) of Eliot’s uncle, Samuel Evans, alleged to be the model for Adam’s brother Seth—though clearly the title was meant to capitalize on the success of the novel (605).


24 Ragussis, Figures, 236. Ragussis also suggests that in Daniel Deronda Eliot borrows the plot of “the journey to the Holy Land that functions essentially to Judaize the English Protestant hero” from Disraeli’s 1847 novel Tancred (198).

25 M. H. Spielmann makes this claim in The History of “Punch” (London: Cassell, 1895), 500.

26 Alfred Thompson’s popularity as a designer of late Victorian burlesques can be inferred from the reference Henry James makes to a “Thompson” (likely him) in In The Cage: “She always walked with him on Sundays, usually in the Regent’s Park, and quite often, once or twice a month, he took her, in the Strand or thereabouts, to see a piece that was having a run. The productions he always preferred were the really good ones—Shakespeare, Thompson, or some funny American thing; which, as it also happened that she hated vulgar plays, gave him ground for what was almost the fondest of his approaches, the theory that their tastes were, blissfully, just the same” (in Henry James, Selected Tales, ed. John Lyon [London: Penguin, 2001], 332).


29 Stevenson, who, one can infer, would have seen eye to eye with Punch on this, described Daniel as “the Prince of Prigs” as well as a “melancholy puppy and humbug . . . the literary abomination of desolation in the way of manhood; a type which is enough to make a man foreshow the love of women, if that is how it must be gained” (in a December 1877 letter,

30 R. G. G. Price, A History of Punch (London: Collins, 1957), 112. Spielmann claims that the Pocket Books were in direct imitation of George Cruikshank’s Comic Annuals, and that “the imitations killed the originals after a contest of a dozen years” (497). Still, as Price notes, “information about [the Pocket Books] is sparse even by Punch standards” (History of Punch, 113). Publication details can be found in the online Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals (www.victorianperiodicals.com), but very little appears to have been written about them.


32 Leonée Ormond identifies Charles Jeens as the engraver in her article on “Illustrations” in the Oxford Reader’s Companion to George Eliot, ed. John Rignall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 171. This vignette was the last of a series that also included (with Eliot’s approval) those in reprints of Romola and Middlemarch. For more on illustrations to reprints of her earlier novels, see Beryl Gray, “EMW: The Stereotyped Edition’s Title-Page Vignettes,” George Eliot Review 29 (1998): 52–56.


37 I have written about the way the acoustics of Deronda parallel the development of the telephone in a chapter in my Victorian Soundscapes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)—to which this essay in a sense serves as a sequel.

38 Kate Flint considers the novel as “a wishful reading . . . [that] must necessarily read across the grain of pointers within the text which caution one against reading according to the expectations of romantic fiction,” in “George Eliot and Gender,” The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot, ed. George Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 174. Terence Cave mentions that the reader’s desire for knowledge is left uncertain upon finishing Deronda, a point “made rather touchingly by the publication in 1878 of Gwendolen, an anonymous American sequel to Daniel Deronda, in which Deronda returns alone from Palestine [actually, Egypt], Mirah having died, and marries Gwendolen” (in his introduction to Deronda, xxxii). Louis Harap labels Gwendolen with the anti-Semitic charge I cite in his The Image of the Jew in American Literature: From Early Republic to Mass Immigration, 2nd ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 304. Daniel Hack briefly considers Gwendolen in his recent The Material Interests of the Victorian Novel (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), where he eloquently writes that even as the sequel “transgresses the spirit of Daniel Deronda, it accurately captures the novel’s surprising insistence on the letter” (172).

39 See Ragussis, Figures, 36–51, for more about conversionist novels, and 268–69 for the ways Deronda subverts their typical plot.

40 Leonard Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 35, 38, 39; Harap, 345. Harap points out that Judge Henry Hilton attempted to distinguish between acceptable (presumably middle-class assimilated) “Hebrews” and unacceptable
“Jews,” and that Oliver Wendell Holmes and Bret Harte, among others, challenged the ban (87–88, 345).


44 Whipple’s sympathetic reading is extended by the sentence inserted (by him? or another?) after the first sentence of this paragraph in the book version of the review: “The criticisms of it in the most prominent organs of literary opinion seem to be written by Sir Hugo Mallinger, or Grandcourt, or even by Thomas Cranmer Lush; but there is nothing said against the leading character which is not more felicitously said by those personages in the book itself” (Recollections, 379).

45 Needless to say, Beecher also excises Whipple’s extended praise for Eliot’s refusal to indulge in melodrama and for Mordecai, since her sequel does precisely the opposite, indulging in the former and desecrating the memory of the latter.

46 Ira Bradley and William F. Gill were both located on Washington Street in Boston in the latter half of the nineteenth century, although Gill’s was the older company, founded in about 1850. (Gill’s house also published a pirated edition of Dickens’s and Wilkie Collins’s Christmas Stories [sic] in 1876, constituting the first appearance in book form of The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices.) Both companies folded around the turn of the century (see the entries in American Literary Publishing Houses, 1638–1899, pt. 1, ed. Peter Drononoski [Detroit: Gale Research, 1986], 63, 175). Most catalog entries for Gwendolen list it either without author or, worse, under “Eliot,” suggesting a degree of success for Beecher’s counterfeit. It is not exactly clear why the University of Virginia copy has a different title page from the rest, although it is taped in, and it is possible the copy (or the title page) may have been one prepared specially for the author by Gill instead of Bradley, who published the rest of the copies I have seen.

47 See Price, The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel, for more on the later branding of Eliot through her Birthday Book (119–28).


49 James lays out his rationale for the single plot of Portrait in his Preface to the New York Edition (1908), in which he is explicit about his conscious deviation from Deronda (and other Eliot novels), but more interesting is his comment on the ambiguous ending of Portrait from a ca. 1880 entry in his notebooks, which not only reads like something that Eliot could have said of the ending of Deronda, but also describes the paradox of the realist ending as Eliot saw it and even raises (in tongue-in-cheek fashion) the possibility of a sequel: “The obvious criticism of course will be that it is not finished—that I have not seen the heroine to the end of her situation—that I have left her en l’air.—This is both true and false. The whole of anything is never told; you can only take what groups together. What I have done has that unity—it groups together, it is complete in itself—and the rest may be taken up later, or not” (The Notebooks of Henry James, ed. F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock [New York: Oxford University Press, 1947], 18).

Before Joyce, however, James’s friend Edith Wharton repeated James’s cut in her own echo of and answer to Eliot’s *Deronda* (and James’s *Portrait*, *The House of Mirth* (1905), when she had Lily Bart ultimately face death in a boarding house rather than accept the marriage proposal of up-and-comer Simon Rosedale, “a plump rosy man of the Jewish type, with smart London clothes fitting him like upholstery, and small sidelong eyes which gave him the air of appraising people as if they were bric-a-brac” (Wharton, *The House of Mirth*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons [New York: Norton, 1990], 13). As Elizabeth Ammons puts it, for Lily “it is better—more beautiful, purer—to die than to end up married to a Jew” (“Edith Wharton and Race,” *Cambridge Companion to Edith Wharton*, ed. Millicent Bell [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 81).


As Michael Stanislawski puts it in language that echoes Leavis’s about *Deronda*, “such a surgery would in turn serve to cure the ills of Europe as a whole: on the one hand, an indigestible element—whose very indigestibility was often used as an excuse for reactionary opposition—would be removed from its midst; on the other, Europe would benefit immeasurably from the establishment in Palestine of a modern European society” (*Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001], 15). Herzl’s transformation into a Zionist is shown to be far more gradual than traditionally thought in Jacques Kornberg’s *Theodor Herzl: From Assimilation to Zionism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

See in particular here Nancy Henry, *George Eliot and the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 109ff. I don’t have the space to do justice to Henry’s argument, but she effectively deflates the overblown accusations (by Edward W. Said and others) that *Deronda* is a Zionist vehicle endorsing imperialist oppression. As my essay suggests, it is important to distinguish between the novel Eliot wrote and the novel as it has been redacted, divided, and revisited by those who use it to further their own aesthetic, political, or commercial ends.


*George Eliot as a Zionist* (New York: Publications of the American Federation of Zionists, 1899). This kind of extraction was anticipated by Guedalla, whose inaccurate translation of portions of *Deronda* in the 1876 *Jewish Chronicle* provoked more controversy than anything else over Guedalla’s use of them to promote his dubious proposal to purchase land for Jewish resettlement from the Turkish government in exchange for debt relief. Werses discusses this incident, as well as many other early Jewish responses, notably the first Hebrew translation (1887–93), which reduces Eliot’s 70 chapters to 50 by, in an inversion of Leavis’s tactic in *Gwendolen Harleth* (or was it the other way round?), excising many of Gwendolen’s scenes. See Werses, 18–24, 30–34.

From a religious and historical but not political perspective, a Jewish homeland in Palestine could be considered more of a prequel than a sequel. Herzl put this dual status another way in the title to his 1902 Zionist utopian novel *Altneuland* (*Old New Land*), a work also owing (unconscious, one can only imagine) debts to *Deronda*.

Granted, this may strike some as putting too much stock in the potential for fiction to influence personal ideology. But see Amanda Anderson’s “George Eliot and the Jewish Question,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 10 (1997): 39–61, for the more nuanced kind of reading of Eliot’s nationalism as manifested in *Deronda*’s intentions, a reading to which one would like to think Herzl, consciously or not, could have been susceptible.