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1987

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Handley, Graham, "The Manuscript of Daniel Deronda: A Change in Sequence?" (1987). *The George Eliot Review*. 70.

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## THE MANUSCRIPT OF DANIEL DERONDA: A CHANGE IN SEQUENCE ?

by Graham Handley

The examination of a great writer's manuscript carries its own fascinations and frustrations, for eyes and mind are intent on discovery, with might-have-been replacing is at the blink of an eyelid. Deletions hide something of significance, single-word alterations are evidence of a change of mind (or of heart), and common-places are elevated by a single deft stroke or slant into transcendent maxims or inscrutable morality. Re-shaped sentences take on a greater profundity of thought, while paragraphs collated with the first printing or a later corrected one, show either the wisdom of reflection or the author's obstinacy, depending on the reader's own critical and scholarly bias. The watermark of the paper, the colour of the author's ink, whether bright or faded, interpolations or extensions verso, marginalia, teasing spaces or spacing, even to the thumbprints which might be hers, all these are at once the lure and the license of the manuscript reader. He notes the half-pages added in at the beginning of a chapter, others numbered with an 'a' or 'b' to indicate that they are expansions of an idea or sequence; these light deletions - were they done at speed and meant to lie there as alternatives for later consideration? Heavy deletions - must they obliterate beyond detection the blemishes of mind or style or both, first thoughts consigned to the easiest oblivion? Is this kind of close scrutiny a waste of time?

A look at the manuscript of Daniel Deronda, George Eliot's final novel, supplies some of the answers, but it must of necessity be a very long look; there are four bound volumes having 1,219 leaves, inscribed 'To My Dear Husband George Henry Lewes' followed by nine lines from Shakespeare's Sonnet XXIX beginning 'When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes'. Spaces are left at the head of chapters for mottoes, many later inserted in brighter ink; names are altered (Mirah was originally Miriam, and thus she remains in unconcerned mutability on some pages), while leaves are scarred and ink-strewn with the re-shaping of ideas or the insistent urging in minute

script of superior second-thoughts.

But manuscripts are trying things, and the eye strays from the confines of the text to the names of composers regularly appearing in pencil in the left-hand margin or at the top of the page; commonplace names, fittingly Scots as one might expect John Blackwood's employees to be, like Watson, Robertson, McDonald, Blake or Ballantine (variously spelled), or unusual names like Dippie Peffers and Gebbie down to the mere English rusticity of Hodge. The eye strays to the right-hand top corner of the page, recording the British Library numbering in pencil, George Eliot's own numbering behind in the violet-coloured ink with the deleting line always there. But back to the text; exhaustive use of the magnifying glass fails to show what was originally beneath 'Sir Hugo', the thickened letters and spread capitals being an impenetrable screen. Exhaustive use of the magnifying glass reveals that beneath 'lily' in much fainter ink is the outline of the word 'larum'. The two numbers in the top right-hand corner have now become three, not from fatigue or a post-lunch blur. Two of these are in violet ink. Both have been deleted.

Readers familiar with Daniel Deronda will recall that Book III (Maidens Choosing) opens with a short chapter in which Daniel reviews his finding of Mirah and ponders on the possibilities which may arise from that rescue. This is XIX in the printed versions, and is followed by XX, in which Mirah tells her story to Mrs. Meyrick, Daniel paying them a brief visit at the end of the chapter. XXI has Gwendolen arriving back from Leubronn in depressed and depressing conditions, being told of the imminent move to Sawyer's Cottage and of the alternatives open to her – a situation in a school, or Governess to the Bishop's children. She determines to ask Klesmer to see her, in the mistaken hope that he will confirm her musical and dramatic talents. Thus by the end of XXI we have Mirah and Gwendolen counterpoised in the structure of the immediate narrative; Mirah's retrospect balances Gwendolen's present reality, a nicety of unifying adhesive being applied which will later be more firmly pressed through contrasts at once musical, social,

racial and psychological. The next chapter in the printed texts provides us with more retrospect, this time on Klesmer and the happenings at Quetcham Hall, thus bringing to the fore another maiden who 'chooses', Catherine Arrowpoint, and enhancing too those contrasts we have already noted and underlining the manifold unity which is the major part of George Eliot's awareness here.

But the order of the chapters, it is here suggested, was at one time different. In the manuscript the chapter referred to immediately above appears to have been numbered XXII, but this is deleted, and above it is written XXXI which, as Klesmer might say, makes nothing; ironically, the real Chapter XXXI belongs to Book IV, where Gwendolen marries Grandcourt, who finds that the Furies are in attendance. The opening of 'XXXI' is significant, for it contains a deletion at the very beginning, namely that Klesmer saw 'his prospective marriage as a reason why it would be easy for him to aid her' (Gwendolen).<sup>1</sup> In the top right-hand corner of this page two numbers have been deleted by George Eliot, 15 and 38. Now either George Eliot had a change of mind about the structure of the chapter or, more likely, she decided that Klesmer's story needed telling first. This would mean that originally Gwendolen's interview with Klesmer followed straight after his getting her note. The page numbering in the manuscript would seem to provide the evidence for this - 'XXXI' is numbered from 15 38 to 33 55, though even within this there are triple numbers (16 39 16, for example), the only constant here being that two of the three are always the same. Perhaps they indicate a double indecision on the author's part. The next chapter (numbered XXI in the manuscript) has the motto of 110 words squeezed into the top three lines of the page, and the text follows after a blank line, the page being numbered 34 15, though at the very top of the page is a small 1, almost as if this was at one time the beginning of Book III, and therefore of Volume II.

<sup>1</sup> For this and other possible changes in sequence, see my Clarendon Press Edition of Daniel Deronda (1984), p. xxi.

The numbering of this chapter now goes from 35 16 <sup>2</sup> right through to 56 37, with the small number occasionally visible (as in 42 23 <sup>9</sup>) but often not, its place at the very top edge making it susceptible to cutting, the latter being undoubtedly done in order to give some uniformity when it came to binding the pages up. This chapter then is numbered in one set from 15 - 37, the earlier in the manuscript from 38 - 55. Obviously the order was changed, the re-numbering being shown in the lower of the two numbers (in 'XXXI' 15 - 33, and in XXI, 34 - 56.) The numbers thus accurately reflect the original sequence and the revised one, and it seems clear that George Eliot changed her mind after they had been written and, before they were sent to the printers, changed the order. The gain in dramatic impact, in artistic and structural coherence, is indeed great. The fascinating movement by which Catherine and Klesmer come towards one another counterpoints (the term is deliberate) the movement of Gwendolen towards delusion and Mirah towards security. The ironic linking is through music, but in this chapter it is only ironic in the sense that it places society, status, inheritance and political expediency (witness Mr. Bult) beside the true marriage which is based on compatibility of interests and feeling. Catherine is accomplished but unpretentious, Gwendolen is amateur and egoistic; Catherine is prepared to turn her back on what Gwendolen so desperately craves and what she is later forced to acquire - her furlong of corridors - at lacerating expense to the spirit. Gwendolen's interview with Klesmer, coming as it does after Klesmer's interview with the Arrowpoints, is a master-stroke on the part of the author - she enhances both characters by a deliberate sharpness of focus on each separately, an unsparing revelation of individual morality. Klesmer gains in stature through simple dignity in the face of Mrs. Arrowpoint's verbal barbarity (and singular lack of what she would call 'breeding'); and 'by putting aside his affairs' in order to give some attention to Gwendolen's needs, the eccentric, the outsider, becomes the altruist; whereas Gwendolen, the egoist, is further reduced (though not beyond compassion) by his judgment. She is made temporarily resentful by his kindness, which to her is humiliating. To place this interview after the previous experience at

Quetcham is to demonstrate Klesmer's resilience, to underline the essential goodness in human nature which responds to the immediate adversity of others. Here self is in abeyance, and this is what Gwendolen must learn - to strive to become 'one of the best of women, who make others glad that they were born'. This interview, more than her straitened means and her later remorse, marks the beginning of her moral education, and it is Daniel of course who is to promote it. The musical connectives from hereon act as a moral index, with Gwendolen, ironically like Lush, an amateur, to Mirah, who finds the fitting level for her talent, to Catherine, who modestly subserves the musical Magus who is so soon to become her husband, to Daniel's mother, who has put art before life and has become a real princess in exile. We have now touched one of those points which Barbara Hardy, in what is still the most positive and imaginative criticism of George Eliot's narrative awareness, has said is 'a stage in the imagining, or even in the writing, of the novels, in which her imagination played with possibility'. Perhaps we should add that George Eliot's intellect and imagination blended, as here, in moments of ultimate choice.

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