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**‘GRAND AND VAGUE’:
WHY IS *DANIEL DERONDA* ABOUT THE JEWS?**
by David Malcolm

‘I am sure you are right to leave everything grand and vague’, George Eliot’s publisher wrote bemusedly to her about Daniel Deronda’s Zionism (*Letters* VI: 272). In his ‘Conversation’ on *Daniel Deronda*, Henry James too, like many contemporary and later readers, expresses his doubt and unease about the novel’s Zionist subject matter.

Traditional interpretations of the Zionist subject matter in *Daniel Deronda* are not wholly satisfactory. It is often dismissed as vague and lacking in concreteness (Fisher 227; Bamber 421; Hochman 113-33; Liddell 182), or explained purely in biographical terms, which, while fascinating, do not reveal much about the function of the Jewish-Zionist material within the text itself (Haight 470-1; see also: Baker, al-Raheb, Levitt, Howe, Putzell-Korab).

One of the most powerful interpretations of the Zionist material in *Daniel Deronda* is that offered by Elinor Shaffer in her ‘*Kubla Khan*’ and ‘*The Fall of Jerusalem*’. She suggests that Deronda’s Zionism must be understood in religious-philosophical terms. In *Daniel Deronda*, she argues, Eliot is recreating in modern, secular, and Feuerbachian terms the story of Christ (Shaffer 269). The novel is both a ‘life of Jesus’ and a critical, modern examination of that life (Shaffer 291). Shaffer’s interpretation is very powerful, but there are misleading emphases in it. Contrary to her arguments, the secular aspects of Deronda’s activities (national liberation, attaining a new breadth of social sympathy, and undermining an individualist ethic) are at least as important as the spiritual ones.

Several critics see the function of the Zionist subject matter in *Daniel Deronda* to lie in a kind of unspecified radicalism which gestures vaguely beyond the contemporary British status quo. For example, Gillian Beer notes that ‘*Daniel Deronda* is a novel haunted by the future,’ and writes of the male protagonist that ‘He, like Gwendolen, is left on an uncertain edge of possibility’ at the novel’s close (*Darwin’s Plots* 181; *George Eliot* 227). (See also Shuttleworth [184].) Barbara Hardy expresses a complex judgement of Deronda’s Zionism, which sums up some of the critical comments noted above, but which also, in its suggestion that the text ‘implies a radical positive’, points to a possible significance of Zionism within the novel which this essay will explore in more detail (167).

A recent essay by Katherine Bailey Linehan provides a concise discussion of some of the complexities of the Zionist subject matter in *Daniel Deronda*. Linehan herself presents *Daniel Deronda* as an indictment of imperialism and male domination of women, and the novel’s Zionism as a direct answer to these (328-36). She goes on, however, to analyze what she sees as the racist and patriarchal sub-text of that Zionism, and connects it to a deep-seated racism and social conservatism in Eliot (336-40). While this is in part a very impressive essay, it ignores the radical associations which the text establishes to Zionism, a very specific and radical ‘positive’ which I will shortly explore. Indeed, much of my essay aims to question the conservative reading of Zionism in Linehan’s article.

Before I do so, however, I wish to consider another possible explanation and interpretation of the Jewish-Zionist material in *Daniel Deronda*. Was it a topic as such with strong contemporary associations, as for example electoral reform in *Felix Holt* and *Middlemarch*? Did a concern with Zionism in itself imply a specific position vis-a-vis the contemporary *status quo*? The answer is no. There is no substantial Jewish question in Britain in the 1860s and early 1870s, let alone any widespread discussion of Zionism. The topics per se are almost without any direct contexts within the contemporary British system of discourse.

A Jewish 'question' barely exists in contemporary British political and social discourse. It does not become a prominent issue until the huge influx of Eastern European immigrants in the wake of the Russian pogroms of 1881. Despite a number of (non-British) forerunners, it is not until the publication of Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* in 1896 and the convocation of the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897 that anything like a major, popular Zionist movement impinges substantially on British consciousness (Wolf 354-5; Fishman 27-31). In spite of the existence of certain social tensions centred on Jews – the *hazar mark* of Whitechapel already existed by the late 1870s, Lieberman's *Agudah Hasozialistim Haverim* began its short life in 1876, and Liebermann's and Eccarius's pictures of distressing conditions among London Jews date from the 1860s and 1870s – any Jewish question is an issue of the 1880s, not of an earlier decade (Russell and Lewis 81-2, 149-53; Lipman 41, 65; Fishman 31-2, 103-4; Gartner 7, 38-41, 64, 146; Roth, *Jews in England* 236). Prior to 1880 one can find no suggestion that the Jews of Britain provide a threat culturally or politically to the status quo. There is no alignment with socialism or political radicalism for instance. Edmund Silberner details the complete lack before 1881 of any socialist interest in Britain in Jewish 'problems'. 'Aus dem England vom Ende des Chartismus bis zur Mitte der achtziger Jahre sind uns keine sozialistischen Äusserungen zur Judenfrage bekannt.' (We are aware of no English socialist comments on the Jewish question from the end of Chartism to the 1880s.) (247).

A reading of contemporary journals reinforces this impression. *The Fortnightly Review* of the 1870s (up to 1876) and the *Times* Index for a similar period make no more than passing reference to Jews or Judaism. It is to the steady and successfully concluded progress towards full Jewish political emancipation that the solitary article in the *Westminster Review* between the mid-1850s and the mid-1870s (April 1863) points ('The Jews of Western Europe'). Zionism similarly is absent as a topic from contemporary political and social discourse. Cecil Roth starts his account of Zionism with the French *Alliance Israélite* of 1860 (*A Short History* 381), while Hyamson (294-6) and Bentwich (9-10) write of only sporadic and individual interest in the questions of Jewish communities in the Middle East and the possibility of settlements there. Moses Hess's *Rom und Jerusalem* (1862) is unusual in its time, and his exchange with Abraham Geiger illustrates the derision that Zionist schemes could incur in the 1860s (*Brief*). When George Eliot writes, even as late as 25 February 1879, of 'a great movement now among the Jews towards colonizing Palestine, and bringing out the resources of the soil', it is hard to know what she is referring to (*Letters* VII: 109). In 1876 Zionism and Jewish issues in Britain both lie in the future.

Eliot's own comments on her choice of Jewish and Zionist subject matter, given in letters of

29 October (to Harriet Beecher Stowe) and of 3 November 1876 (to John Blackwood), both illuminate and conceal (*Letters* VI: 301-2, 303-4). Christian ignorance, she declares, has made her feel 'urged to treat Jews with such sympathy and understanding as my nature and knowledge could attain to' (29 October). She wishes 'to widen the English vision a little in that direction [i.e. towards a better 'new understanding of the Jewish people'] and let in a little conscience and refinement' (3 November). These explanations seem rather understated, but when she begins to speak in more general terms, Eliot's language becomes more forceful.

Moreover, not only towards the Jews, but towards all oriental peoples with whom we English come into contact, a spirit of arrogance and contemptuous dictatorialness is observable which has become a national disgrace to us. There is nothing I should care more to do, if it were possible, than to rouse the imagination of men and women to a vision of human claims in those races of their fellow-men who most differ from them in customs and beliefs.... To my feeling, this deadness to the history which has prepared half our world for us, this inability to find interest in any form of life that is not clad in the same coat-tails and flounces as our own lies very close to the worst kind of irreligion. (29 October)

It is this tendency to see Jewish issues as pointing beyond themselves to other political and social concerns that marks Eliot's essay in the *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1878) entitled 'The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!'. Although it takes anti-Semitism as its nominal subject, what is striking about this essay is that it is about so many other things. The very dissonance of the violence implicit in the title (it echoes the mediaeval summons to a pogrom, the Jew-baiting 'Hierosolyma est perdita!') with the kind of anti-Semitic prejudice (ignorance, small jokes) detailed in the essay points to a concurrent concern with other matters. Ignoring for the moment the general nature of its discussion of social duty and egoism, we note that the essay is also about Italy and Italian freedom, and indeed about all nationalism, seen from a late nineteenth-century perspective, as political and social emancipation, as rightful liberation from unjust rule. A century later it is harder for us to see nationalism as a humanizing force, a source of man's best impulses, leading eventually to a greater appreciation of 'a common humanity', but Eliot's view is a typical one. The essay deals not only with Italy, but other great libertarian causes of the 1970s, with African-American slavery, with contemporary Ireland, and with the, one imagines, somewhat less pressing problem of anti-Scottish prejudice. Throughout the essay the author presents situations which are conceived of as analogous to the ostensible subject. Towards the close Such writes:

They are among us everywhere: it is useless to say we are not fond of them. Perhaps we are not fond of proletaires and their tendency to form Unions, but the world is not therefore to be rid of them. If we wish to free ourselves from the inconveniences that we have to complain of, whether in proletaires or Jews, our best course is to encourage all means of improving these neighbours who elbow us in a thickening crowd, and of sending their incommodious energies into beneficent channels.

Although concerned with Jewish topics, situations, questions, and problems analogous to those occupy the author equally, and indeed, as in the concluding sentence above, seem to take over entirely. Here Eliot is interested in Jewish issues because they suggest other topics.

One of Eliot's most celebrated comments on *Daniel Deronda* is 'I meant everything in the book to be related to everything else there' (*Letters* VI: 290), and generations of critics have failed to see how this is so on any but the most general level. Except for a minority, Zionism can scarcely be an answer to the moribund social order the novel depicts. A clear suggestion, however, of how Zionism in the novel can function as such is provided by a contemporary Jewish critic, Joseph Jacobs, writing an explicitly Jewish defence of *Daniel Deronda* in 1877. 'If Mordecai had been an English workman,' he writes, 'laying down his life for the foundation of some English International with Deronda for its Messiah Lassalle he would have received more attention from the critics' (quoted in Baker, *Critics* 40). Such a comment, coming from a Jewish critic who is concerned to defend the novel as an accurate exposition of Jewish life and aspirations, indicates the implications of the Zionist subject matter which *Daniel Deronda* establishes. It is these implications, the 'radical positive' that Barbara Hardy mentions, which I wish to examine.

Throughout the novel the Jewish-Zionist material is closely and constantly connected with other issues, other aspects of the times, which are more contentious within and relevant to the wider British society which it depicts. These can be grouped under five main headings: (1) contemporary nationalism and political emancipation; (2) radical working-class issues (mines, unions, strikes, the International, and the Paris Commune); (3) economic matters (financial crises and speculation scandals); (4) the Land Question of the 1870s; and (5) a contemporary debate over *laissez-faire* individualist ideology. I have space only to deal with the first two in this essay, but the others also form integral strands in the web of associations which Deronda's Zionism takes on in the course of the novel. With regard to economic matters, the novel's setting in the aftermath of the severe financial crisis of 1866 and the role which the financial dishonesty of Grapnell and Co. and Mr Lassman play in the text give it overtones of a critique of capitalism. These are heightened by the motifs of gambling which echo contemporary criticism of capitalist excesses. It strikes a further contemporary and radical note that Grandcourt, the villain of the novel (and one of the few unalloyed villains in Eliot's fiction), is a very substantial landowner. 'Grandcourt's importance as a subject of this realm was of the grandly passive kind which consists in the inheritance of land,' the narrator remarks in chapter 48. The power of a small number of major landowners was a substantial contemporary issue in the 1860s and 1870s. When Deronda opposes and rejects Grandcourt and his world, he is taking a stance in relation to quite specific contemporary topics. At a deep level too, the novel is touching upon and engaging in a contemporary debate about *laissez-faire* individualism. It does this through an explicit, if complex, critique of Sir Hugo Mallinger and his self-satisfied Whiggery, and in Deronda's search for commitment and duty ('Better than freedom...a duteous bond' (Ch. 63)), and in his final rejection of the person (Gwendolen) for the cause (Zionism). Here too, Deronda's Zionism and all it is made to entail echoes contemporary British political and social debates and adopts a radical stance within them.

This is also true of the connections the text establishes between its Jewish and Zionist concerns and contemporary national and political liberation. In a letter of 1 August 1865 concerning Mazzini and Italian politics, Eliot writes of political conspiracy as in some cases 'a sacred, necessary struggle against organized wrong' (*Letters* IV: 199-200). It is in this sense that the following contemporary concerns group themselves together. Political and national liberation are central issues between 1860 and the mid-1870s. A principal object of such concern was the cause of Italian nationalism and that country's liberation from what was widely seen as foreign and despotic sway. This was a cause which united all 'free' nations in the 1860s and which drew support from all classes throughout Europe. The wars against Austria of 1859-60 and of 1866 (during which Deronda is in Genoa), the occupation of Rome in 1870, and the establishment of a unitary Italian state in 1871 were events of absorbing interest for the rest of Europe (Smith 6, 15). It was above all a radical cause. In 1864 Garibaldi paid a triumphal visit to England. His host for part of the time was the Duke of Sutherland, and he was lionized by sections of the establishment, but by far the greatest enthusiasm for the Italian irregular general came from the British working class. So great was this enthusiasm and so disturbing its overtones that the *Annual Register* could write a year later:

An idea prevailed, chiefly among those who regarded themselves as organs of the working classes, that the Government of the country found the presence of the great Italian patriot an embarrassment to them, and were anxious for political reasons to accelerate his departure. (57)

The contemporary configuration of the Italian question is evident in an article published in 1867 in the *Westminster Review* by Joseph (sic) Mazzini entitled 'The Religious Side of the Italian Question'. Indeed, this article strikingly echoes *Daniel Deronda* in its attack on egoism, its stress on communal duty, its analysis of the faults of the present world, and its fusion of nationalism and international humanitarian impulses (Mazzini 228-29, 234, 243). Italy's role in the world, he argues, is to bring 'moral UNIFICATION', to utter the 'synthetic WORD of civilization' to a Europe 'weary of scepticism, and egotism, and moral anarchy' (228, 243). There is, in fact, much evidence of Eliot's interest in the developments of Italian politics. 'We are trying Mazzini to write on freedom v. Despotism,' she writes in 1852 (*Letters* II: 5). She was a longstanding friend of Mrs Peter Taylor, wife of the Secretary (in the 1850s) of the Society of Friends of Italy (*Letters* II: 11n). In 1860 in Rome and Florence she experienced the excitement of that year at first hand. 'I feel some stirrings of the insurrectionary spirit myself when I see the red pantaloons at every turn in the streets of Rome' (*Letters* III: 288). In 1861 in Florence she and Lewes witnessed (in the latter's words) 'a solemn and interesting ceremony in honour of the devoted youths who fell in 1848 fighting for Liberty' (*Letters* III: 421). Although they refuse to contribute towards a fund in honour of Mazzini in 1865 (for fear of misuse of funds to finance violence), the great man's death in 1872 is marked with high praise and a quotation from *The Spanish Gypsy*, as is Cavour's, for whom she also retained great respect, in 1861 (*Letters* III: 436; V: 258).

The novel's interest in Italy is quite marked. We first encounter Daniel as a boy reading 'Sismondi's History of the Italian Republics' (Ch. 16). It is 'Leopardi's grand Ode to Italy'

which Mirah sings to Klesmer (Ch. 39). Mordecai refers to Mazzini and Italian nationalism in the 'Hand and Banner' chapter (Ch. 42), emphasizing the radical overtones of his splendid, glittering flow of words and ideas, and explicitly relating his Zionism to Mazzini's radical nationalism. Indeed, Mazzini's own national and political programme would find numerous echoes in Mordecai's ideas for the regeneration of his own people. Many of the strands of the novel are gathered together in Genoa. The Italian city is the birthplace of Mazzini and Garibaldi, and the embarkation point for the Thousand. It is also where Deronda discovers those 'primary duties' he has sought so long, and where Gwendolen is freed from Grandcourt's slow power (Ch. 50). Daniel sends Hans a 'sketch of Italian movements' (Ch. 52), and so well established by the end of the novel is the Italian motif that the narrator can afford a joke about it (Ch. 61).

For nineteenth-century radicals Italian nationalism was in many ways the symbol of popular liberation. Moses Hess, for example, continually emphasizes the inspiration to like-minded Jews of the Italian example (*Rom und Jerusalem* vi, 24, 29). Similar causes for the contemporary imagination were the Polish question of the 1860s, the American Civil War of 1861-65, and (on a much smaller scale) the Morant Bay Disturbances of 1865 in Jamaica. These were contentious issues which deeply divided British public opinion. Elsewhere I have discussed the radical connotations of Polish motifs in *Middlemarch* (Malcolm 63-9). Eliot herself was clearly on the non-establishment side of the divide with regard to the American Civil War, while a number of her acquaintances were active in advancing a similar point of view with regard to the others (Reddaway 369-71, 379-82; *Letters* II: 55-6, III: 460, 473, IV: 72, 139).

The novel refers to these matters. References to individual sets of events are usually perfunctory, but there is a cumulative effect. Klesmer is Polish, as well as being Jewish. Mr Bult thinks of him as 'a Pole, or a Czech, or something of that fermenting sort' (Ch. 22), while his marriage to Miss Arrowpoint is described as 'an insurrection against the established order of things' (Ch. 22). On three occasions the action of the novel is placed in the context of the great concerns of the recently-ended American Civil War (Ch. 9, 11, 69). Grandcourt and Deronda snap obliquely at each other on the subject of West Indian negroes (Ch. 29). The half-crown that Miller of the 'philosophers' has just given is towards the cost of prosecuting the ex-Governor of Jamaica (Ch. 42). The narrator captures some of the political overtones of Grandcourt's character in the following way:

If this white-handed man with the perpendicular profile had been sent to govern a difficult colony, he might have won a reputation among his contemporaries. He had certainly ability, would have understood that it was safer to exterminate than to cajole superseded proprietors, and would not have flinched from making things safe in that way. (Ch. 48)

The novel continually interweaves a number of other similar political and social issues, all of a radical nature, with Zionism, and Deronda's and Mordecai's cause becomes a type of national popular liberation. The novel makes it analogous to those radical causes set out above, and thus gives it a distinctly radical and contemporary relevance. It is as if in a contemporary U.S.

novel, a protagonist were to choose a cause which was persistently related to that of pre-1973 Chile or that of the African National Congress in 1970s South Africa. The connotations for a contemporary would be quite clear. Zionism as such may lack contemporary relevance and force in the 1870s, but what it is interwoven with does not.

When Daniel sets off into the poorer parts of London to look for Mirah's relatives (and we should note that the aspect of social descent is emphasized here), the narrator relates the Jewish material of the novel to other issues and concerns in an almost crude fashion.

In this mood he rambled, without expectation of a more pregnant result than a little preparation of his own mind, perhaps for future theorising as well as practice – very much as if, Mirah being related to Welsh miners, he had gone to look more closely at the ways of those people, not without wishing at the same time to get a little light of detail on the history of Strikes. (Ch. 33)

This is not an isolated motif but one that is subtly insistent throughout the novel. Sir Hugo's income comes from 'the working of mines and the sale of leases' (Ch. 15). Mr Lassman of Grapnell and Co. speculated unwisely in 'mines and things of that sort' (Ch. 21). Mrs Glasher's place of exile and imprisonment is in mining country, and the description of it is given some weight in the text.

Outside the gate the country, once entirely rural and lovely, now black with coal-mines, was chiefly peopled by men and brethren with candles stuck in their hats, and with a diabolic complexion which laid them peculiarly open to suspicion in the eyes of the children at Gadsmere – Mrs Glasher's four beautiful children, who had dwelt there for about three years. Now, in November, when the flower-beds were empty, the trees leafless, and the pool blackly shivering, one might have said that the place was sombrely in keeping with the black roads and black mounds which seemed to put the district in mourning; – except when the children were playing on the gravel with the dogs for their companions. But Mrs Glasher under her present circumstances liked Gadsmere as well as she would have liked any other abode. The complete seclusion of the place which the unattractiveness of the country secured, was exactly to her taste... and the name of Grandcourt was of little interest in that district compared with the names of Fletcher and Gawcome, the lessees of the collieries. (Ch. 30)

When Mordecai first sets forth his Zionist creed (one marked above all by collectivist, egalitarian elements) to Daniel in the 'Hand and Banner', he does so in a setting and among characters and concerns which evoke a world of radical-artisan trade unionism and working-men's clubs.

In three minutes they had opened the glazed door with the red curtain, and were in the little parlour, hardly much more than fifteen feet square, where the

gaslight shone through a slight haze of smoke on what to Deronda was a new and striking scene. Half-a-dozen men of various ages from between twenty and thirty to fifty, all shabbily dressed, most of them with clay pipes in their mouths, were listening with a look of concentrated intelligence to a man in a pepper-and-salt dress, with blond hair, short nose, broad forehead and general breadth, who, holding his pipe slightly uplifted in the left hand, and beating his knee with the right, was just finishing a quotation from Shelley... (Ch. 42)

Mordecai's Zionism fits this milieu. 'There is a store of wisdom among us', he declares, 'to found a new Jewish polity, grand, simple, just, like the old – a republic where there is equality of protection, an equality which shone like a star on the forehead of our ancient community, and gave it more than the brightness of Western freedom amid the despotisms of the East.' Once again, Jewish and Zionist motifs are connected with radical social issues. Daniel's entry into a Jewish world is compared to a social descent into that of the contemporary working class; Grandcourt's and Sir Hugo's wealth derives from mining; Grandcourt banishes his victims to a place surrounded by mines; Daniel first meets Mordecai in a radical working-class milieu.

That such connections carry an enormous contemporary charge can scarcely be doubted. In the *Westminster Review* of July 1869, the anonymous author begins his article on 'Labour and Capital' thus:

The labouring classes, as those are called distinctively who earn their daily bread by manual labour, are in the majority in every community, and into their hands throughout the Western world is passing the substance of political power. It is not strange, therefore, that 'the labour question' as it is termed, should have pushed itself into the front rank of political controversies. (80)

Issues connected with mines and mining were particularly central to contemporary labour concerns. The activity of mining unions and the frightening incidence of colliery accidents prior to the passing of the Mines Regulation Act of 1872 made coal a central issue of the 1860s. Strikes in many industries were seen by contemporaries as a background to the decade (*Annual Register* [1871]; Crompton; Kynaston 47-58). In 1875 E. S. Beesly writes in the *Fortnightly Review* of 'the labour struggles which are every year becoming more numerous and assuming vaster proportions' (Beesly, 'Positivists and Workmen' 74). Indeed labour questions form a recurrent thread in the periodical journalism of the day. Working-class importance in the body politic became recognized in the late 1860s and early 1870s – for example, in the reform of the franchise in 1867. The first two working-class MP's, one of them Alexander MacDonald of the National Miners' Union, were elected to Parliament in 1874 (Fawcett 40-52; Frederic Harrison, 'Mr Brassey' 268-86; Briggs 199-204).

In the early 1870s there are signs of considerable radicalism in British public life – republican and pro-French, later pro-Commune demonstrations in London in 1871, and even a suggestion by Frederic Harrison that the times were ripe for the creation of a 'third party' in British poli-

tics (Beesly, 'The International'; Kynaston 39-40). Unionism and working-class power are major public themes of these years. Through the Royal Commission of 1867 into the Sheffield Outrages to the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871, from the regular Trades Union Congresses after 1868 to the Disraeli government's legislation of 1875, many sections of British society had to come to terms with the alien and partly hostile institutions of trade unionism.

The world of labour politics had a marked international dimension in the 1860s and 1870s. The International Working Men's Association, for example, was founded in London in 1864 with E. S. Beesly in the chair. The question of the International arose prominently during the Royal Commission's inquiries of 1867, and the Lausanne (1867) and Brussels (1868) conferences of the International were widely reported in the British press, including the *Times*. Beesly's article on the Association was published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1870. Connected with the International and all it stood for was, of course, the subject of the Paris Commune of 1871. The *Fortnightly Review* of 1871 carries numerous articles on the Commune, by and large sympathetic towards it. Two of these (May and August 1871) are by Frederic Harrison, and are strong pleas for the Commune and bitter attacks on the Versailles government. Harrison sees many Comtean theories exemplified in the Commune's actions. He stresses the internationalism of the Commune, and its recognition of the equality of all nations. The second article by Harrison shows many of the interlocking concerns of the day. Jews, the International, racial-colonial problems, miners and mine-owners, landed proprietors and speculators all appear prominently as analogies, illustrations or examples of the main theme – the justice of the Commune and the injustice of its suppression ('The Fall of the Commune' 130, 132, 152-3). In the earlier one, he writes:

Their dream of a universal republic means no absurd extension of national territory. It means the union of men in their true political aggregates, bound together as a nation in a federal bond, forming for many purposes but one people, without the barriers of jealous nationality or the oppression of centralized states. ('The Revolution of the Commune' 568-9)

However, later he notes that:

...in the meantime cries for extermination and vengeance are re-echoing from Versailles through the provinces of France, are caught up by our parasite press, and drop with atrocious coolness from the lips of our cultured and wealthy class. It has developed a hatred as horrible and as blind as the hatred of race – the hatred of a dominant race in a panic. (576)

One should note too that contemporaries like Moses Hess also tended to think of ethnicity and class in these same interlocking ways (*Rom und Jerusalem* 86).

Eliot's knowledge of all these matters can be assumed. The letters certainly contain references to the Commune (V: 152, 158), and both Beesly and Harrison were familiar acquaintances of

hers, to the extent that on one occasion she goes out of her way to distance herself from Beesly's opinions on the Franco-Prussian War (*Letters* V: 118). Like several other Positivists, Beesly and Harrison were very active in trade-union and working-class politics in the 1860s and 1870s (Royden Harrison 251). However the textual references themselves to labour issues in *Daniel Deronda* are powerful enough, as indeed is the international quality of the novel's action, the sense of an urgent need to go beyond British society and its *status quo*. These seem clear references to radical social and political developments widely discussed in contemporary contexts – the establishment of a new force on the British political stage and the growth of an international working-class movement with sympathies and responsibilities beyond national boundaries. Just like Daniel's Zionism, British radical politics have an international aspect in the 1860s. As Raymond Williams argues, *Daniel Deronda* is not just an invitation to go beyond contemporaries' national boundaries, but their social ones as well (72).

Since Sidney Colvin wrote his review in the *Fortnightly Review* critics have been concerned about the Jewish element in the novel. Colvin speaks for many when he writes that 'Society has asked itself, are Hebrew prophets really to be found to-day in back streets off Holburn, and is a gathering of the Israelites an event which may really happen to-morrow?' (601). Why is it there, we ask. Where does it connect with or answer the English parts of the novel? This essay suggests a possible solution to these questions. In the course of the novel, Daniel's Zionism is made to set up associations, meanings are added to it, connections made between it and other contemporary concerns. The novel says: See how bad all this is; what is to be done? It seems to come up with the answer: Zionism. But this is an answer only for Daniel and Mirah, not for Gwendolen or for many of the other characters in the novel. But because of the associations which have been made within the Zionist framework, Gwendolen's future is not bleak or hopelessly empty. The answers are there – political commitment in support of democratic, radical movements; activity against certain quite specific features of the contemporary socio-economic system; a rejection of prevailing establishment ideology in favour of one of greater social responsibility and collectivism. Taken individually and together, these are far from being simply 'grand and vague', as Blackwood puts it. Eliot's reluctance to give concrete answers in her novels to the questions of her age is well-documented (*Letters* V: 458-9; VI: 67-9, 289). She believed rather in directing her readers' minds and sensibilities in certain general directions. In *Daniel Deronda* the direction and tendency are unmistakably popular-democratic and radical.

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