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NOTE

Alcharisi and the Redundant Definite Article

By John Rignall

In critical and scholarly writing about *Daniel Deronda*, Daniel's mother, the Princess Leonora Halm-Eberstein, is all too often referred to as 'the Alcharisi'. In fact the definite article is only used on one occasion in conjunction with her former stage name, when she tells Daniel that 'I was the Alcharisi you have heard of' (ch. 51). The definite article simply specifies the particular Alcharisi she was. This is like, for instance, Maria Callas saying to someone on a first meeting 'I am the Callas you have heard of'. Just as this would not license anyone to refer to her thereafter as 'the Callas', so the Princess's words provide no grounds for referring to her as 'the Alcharisi'. When she later in the same scene tells Daniel how she took that name for her career as a singer, she uses it without the article: 'My father's family had kept the name of Charisi: my husband was a Charisi. When I came out as a singer, we made it Alcharisi'. And 'Alcharisi' it should remain, particularly since the prefix 'Al' is the definite article in Arabic (retained in English words derived from the Arabic such as 'alcohol'), so that to refer to 'the Alcharisi' looks like a pointless pleonasm.