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**Gender Conflicts and the Metaphor of Race
in the Novels of
George Eliot**

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You are not a woman. You may try --- but you can never imagine
what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer
the slavery of being a girl.

- The Princess Halm-Eberstein
Daniel Deronda (631)

Introduction

The novels of George Eliot exist within a world defined by British Imperialist ideology, and her work must be seen as a reaction to the project of empire. This empire is based on what Patrick Brantlinger defines as a "belief in both the racial superiority of white Europeans and the civilizing mission of Britain." George Eliot's novels offer an understanding of the affects of empire on the domestic sphere of British life centered around the figure of the white woman. The British belief in empire, a civilization centered around the acquisition of political power and economic power, may have influenced women's understanding of their own role within the empire. As women began to expand their sphere of power to encompass more than just the domestic, they began to define their position within the British empire as related to the treatment of other races. "The gender positioning of British women writers required them to negotiate an association with 'inferior races,' their feminist impulses to question gender hierarchies often provoked an interrogation of race hierarchies." (Meyer 11) Thus, it is not surprising that women writers of the Victorian period often used the metaphor of race to illustrate the limitations placed upon the role of women within society.

George Eliot often used the language of race to discuss a woman's relationship to the British power structure. Her female characters display unique intelligence and a friction with the traditional domestic roles of women within imperialist Britain. Elements seen within these strong women characters can also be found within the life of George Eliot. Born in 1819, Mary Ann Evans was a freethinker and a questioner of convention. After her mother's death, her relationship with her father was stressed by her refusal to attend church with him. Their relationship mended and she was greatly affected by the loss of her father in 1849. During her term as editor of the Westminster Review,

she met George Henry Lewes. Her relationship with Lewes, a married father of six, inspired a great deal of her work although it caused quite a scandal. They moved to Germany in 1853. Upon hearing of his sister's flagrant defiance of convention, her brother Isaac cut off communication with her entirely. The relationship between Tom and Maggie Tulliver in her novel, *The Mill on the Floss*, is often described as a tribute to her loving although estranged relationship to her brother.

In 1856, Mary Ann began writing fiction under the name of George Eliot, a tribute both to the love of her life and to George Sands. She became extremely successful over the next twenty years, during which she traveled with Lewes and wrote. In 1860, she wrote *Mill on the Floss*, a novel centering on the life of Maggie Tulliver and her troubled relationship with her brother. Maggie must reconcile her intellectual ambition with her duty to her family and her community. Eliot returns to the topic of duty and ambition in her last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, published in 1876. This novel chronicles the lives of Gwendolyn Harleth and Daniel Deronda as they attempt to distinguish themselves within Victorian society. Despite Eliot's extremely unconventional lifestyle and her professional success, she rarely discussed women's issues or afford her characters the success which she experienced. Most of her female characters are torn between the conflicting demands of the individual and society, but none approach the success with which Eliot herself managed these two demands placed upon the individual. In 1878, Eliot was devastated by the death of Lewes. Eliot's flare for unconventional relationships took over, and in 1880 she married Lewes' nephew, John Cross. Their relationship was cut short by Eliot's death in December of that year.

Her novels often center on incidents involving painful choices for her main characters. Most of her characters are young intelligent women frustrated

by their attempts to find an outlet for their intellectual ambition, suggesting that she was partial to the Woman Question and budding feminism. However, her relationship to women's issues was complex. While her novel often begin with a connection between a questioning of gender heirarchies linked to racial heirarchies, the novels move away from this connection as they progress toward a resolution. Her characters become less other or less feminine as they conform to the pressures of society. The solutions provided by her novels often favor loyalty to the past and duty over personal desires and aspirations. Thus, while her novels present characters questioning the British social structure and its treatment of women and minorities, she is unable to continue this questioning toward a possible solution for women's rights. Outside of her fiction and poetry, Eliot often refused to discuss the role of women or other contemporary issues. She defined her role in society as that of an historian, and not a teacher.

"My function," she once explained in excusing herself for not speaking on some public topic, "is that of the aesthetic, not the doctrinal teacher - the rousing of the nobler emotions which make mankind desire the social right, not the proscribing of specific measures..." George Eliot is neither a preacher nor a propagandist, but an artist. (Naman 163)

However, the novels of George Eliot exist beyond the level of aesthetic quality. She provides a glimpse of complex issues of self determination and social identity as reflected in the faces of her characters and the power of the life that she breathes into them.

I

As the women's movement was budding during the reign of Queen Victoria, a connection between women and the dark races under control of the British Empire was formed in an attempt to bring them under similar control and domination. "Given the intimate and inextricable connection between race and gender as constructed in nineteenth-century British thought, it would seem logical to look for an interest in race in the fiction of some of the women novelists of nineteenth-century England who manifest the most overt discontent with the constraints of gender." (24) As Susan Meyer points out in this quotation, race and gender are intricately connected in Victorian fiction. In George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, the metaphor of race is applied to gender issues invoking the idea of the "other". Maggie Tulliver is repeatedly defined by her "otherness" through implied connections to other races. This connection is often used as an explanation for her strong will and intellect that defy Victorian gender confines. In the sense that Maggie does not follow the traditional roles of women in British society, she is described as an outsider, wicked and savage. Maggie's "otherness" emerges within two main categories: physical and cultural characteristics. Both characteristics emphasize her identity as a woman, and her rebellion against that role.

Throughout her childhood, Maggie challenges her role as a girl through her extreme intellectual abilities. While others within the novel view Maggie's intelligence as a curse or defect, Maggie sees it as a tool with which she could gain power. She represents the traditional British desire for power, but at the same time she is threatening that same tradition. Maggie continues to be seen as 'other' throughout the novel, but as she matures, the cultural and intellectual aspects of her character fade away. As an adult, it is Maggie's sexuality that

distinguishes her from the society that views her as a threat. Maggie remains dark and wild, but the source of her otherness centers on her physical characteristics and her sexuality. The perpetuation of British colonial culture requires the domination of both the intellectual woman and the overtly sexual woman, linking both to the racial otherness of the colonies under British control.

In the opening of the novel, Maggie's dark body is associated with a knowledge that cannot be controlled and that society fears. Her thick black hair refuses to be managed, her black eyes flash with a mysterious power, and her dark skin contrasts with the pale skin of the surrounding community. The associations among the darkness of Maggie's body, her intellect, and her rejection of traditional feminine roles define Maggie's childhood, beginning in the first chapter. When her father comments on Maggie's intelligence, he compares her to an animal. "An over-'cute woman's no better nor a long-tailed sheep- she'll fetch none the bigger price for that." (12) Within this passage, her father identifies Maggie as an oddity existing outside of society. The allusion to marriage within this passage foreshadows Maggie's sexual identity which emerges later in the novel. He places Maggie on the auction block upon which her intelligence is not an asset.

Maggie's mother connects her intellect to mischief and her inability to fulfill the traditional roles of women. "But I'm sure the child's half an idiot i' some things; for if I send her up-stairs to fetch anything, she forgets what she's gone for, an' perhaps 'ull sit down on the floor i' the sunshine an' plait her hair an' sing to herself like a Bedlam creatur'." (12) Mrs. Tulliver describes her daughter as a 'wild thing' and a creature in an lunatic asylum, both in connection to her denial of household duties. Before Maggie is even introduced to reader, she has been described as an outsider based on her intellect, failure to conform to traditional gender guidelines, and the darkness of her skin. Maggie's existence

as an outsider living beyond the traditional roles of society based on her intelligence precedes the reader's first glimpse of Maggie and presents itself through the language of racial differences, "A brown skin as makes her look like a mulatter" (12).

Maggie has the potential to become an intellectually powerful woman, from whom society must protect itself through exclusion and renunciation. In childhood, Maggie's association with racial difference represents society's attempt to confine or control her through the language of colonial domination. These racial differences are often associated with her physical appearance, specifically the darkness of her skin, hair, and eyes. As a child, the darkness of Maggie's body represents a break from the norm of society and an excuse for her strong will. Maggie continues to act against the traditional roles set up for her by society as expressed through her aunts. "She didn't want her hair to look pretty- that was out of the question- she only wanted people to think her a clever little girl." (55) When Maggie defiantly cuts her long locks off, she attempts to eradicate any characteristic that marks her as belonging to the world presented by her mother and her aunts.

Following Maggie's drastic actions, her darkness begins to be associated with future pain. Her aunt connects this action to racial difference and the darkness of her skin. " 'She's more like a gypsy nor ever' said aunt Pullet, in a pitying tone; 'it's very bad luck, sister, as the gell should be so brown-the boy's fair enough. I doubt it'll stand in her way i' life to be so brown'." (58) This action further defines Maggie as an outsider who does not share the ideas or values of her society. Maggie's dark skin and hair are continually linked to a vague sense of trouble in the future. Mr. Tulliver connects this fear with her unusual intelligence, "a woman's no business wi' being so clever; it'll turn to trouble". (16)

The wildness of Maggie's body image represents a destructive and problematic force within the structure of the community. The novel describes Maggie as clumsy and unmanageable. The size of Maggie's body enforces her destructive otherness and her inability to conform to society. This destructive characteristic refers back to Maggie's denial of traditional, domestic, female roles, and reflects society's fear of intelligent women. The contrast between Maggie and traditional diminutive women emerges through her relationship with her cousin, Lucy. Maggie is described as a farm animal, but Lucy is described as a cat. Lucy represents the traditional roles of women as domestic 'pets' existing for beauty and entertainment. The contrast between Maggie and Lucy represents the contrast between the pale domestic woman who is accepted by society and the wild dark woman of nature who threatens the home and hearth central to British stability. "Certainly the contrast between the cousins was conspicuous, and to the superficial eyes, was very much to the disadvantage of Maggie... It was like the contrast between a rough, dark, overgrown puppy and a white kitten" (52) The awkward and brutish body of the puppy is contrasted with the graceful and pure kitten. The relationship is described as friendly, but the dog is a natural predator of the cat. While Maggie and Lucy seem harmless, Maggie has the possibility of overcoming Lucy's power and destroying her graceful and pristine world.

While others view her otherness as a disadvantage, Maggie attempts to use this comparison to her advantage. "She was fond of fancying a world where the people never got any larger than children of their own age, and she made the queen of it just like Lucy, with a little crown on her head, and a little scepter in her hand... only the queen was Maggie herself in Lucy's form." (52) While Maggie is described as the dark brute in this passage "taller by the head, though scarcely a year older", she immediately tries to use her strength to usurp Lucy's

throne. Maggie wants to transform herself into a figure like that of Lucy, but it is her massive form and brute force that would enable such an overthrow of Lucy and an acquisition of power. She sees herself as a dominating force able to rule others, as long as they remain children over whom she towers.

The struggle for power and acceptance between Maggie and Lucy moves to the forefront as Maggie pushes Lucy into the mud. Maggie attempts to erase Lucy's only clear advantage, her whiteness. The dark figure rebels against the pristine and pale figure that dominates it. Without the perceived superiority of whiteness, the sheer size of the dark races would ensure defeat. The British stereotype of female frailty has been conquered and transformed by the native creature through rage and violence. This relationship can be defined in terms of British colonialism, and the fears that accompanied the newfound relationships with the dark races. While they could not deny their desire to conquer, society feared that the dark races of the world would infiltrate and taint the pristine British society the way that Maggie spoils Lucy. "The utmost Maggie could do, with a fierce thrust of her small brown arm, was to push poor pink-and-white Lucy into the cowtrodden mud." (85) Through the corruption of the white woman created by the British patriarchy, the dark races of the colonies have the potential to reduce British citizens to the societal level within which they place the colonies, cattle. Through her intelligence, Maggie threatens the Victorian home, just as the dark races threaten the purity and sanctity British empire.

Maggie's description as a predator from the colonies threatening the British empire continues through a comparison to the animal kingdom. Maggie leaps out at her aunts and uncles and glares at them like a "young lioness". This association returns to the connection made early between Maggie and the African continent. It also suggests that Maggie is dangerous and is preying upon her aunts and uncles, pillars of traditional British society. This passage also

refers back to the scene when Maggie denies Tom his masculine persona by asking him to apply the masculine attitudes that he displayed on the school playground to the African jungle, "if you hadn't got a gun.. and then a great lion might run towards us roaring, and we couldn't get away from him. What should you do, Tom?"(30-31) As the novel progresses, Maggie becomes associated with that lion preying on her own family, threatening the life and masculinity of the British male. The lion symbolized the British Empire, thus, this transformation represents the fear that the greatest threat exists within the empire. The greatest threat to colonial culture within this novel is not the colonies, but the colonies reflected within a British white female.

Maggie's connection to the British colonies does not stop with the African continent or the animal kingdom. Later, Maggie's imagination is connected to another threat to the sanctity of the British Empire posed by the colonies, opium. "Maggie's was a troublous life, and this was the form in which she took her opium" (41) The novel describes the life that Maggie envisioned for herself as a drug corrupting the brain and values of white society. Once again, Maggie's mental abilities represent a threat to British values and domestic spheres. To the Victorian reader, the opium den and a house of prostitution represent the ultimate perversion of the home. Maggie's intelligence is defined as a drug that could become an addictive and corruptive force spreading through the culture. Susan Meyer illustrates this connection in the introduction to her book, *Imperialism at Home*. In reference to Dickens unfinished novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Meyer draws a connection between the corruption of the British home by opium and imagination:

In a parodic, degraded image of Victorian women writers, Princess Puffer makes the opium pipes...from 'old penny ink-bottles'. With her strangely Chinese face, this racially transmuted woman also

suggests a destructive female trespassing into the realm of literature and the imagination.(Meyers 2)

Maggie's imagination has been linked to the destructive powers of drugs through the image of the "racially transmuted woman" addicted to opium. The white woman has once again become a blank canvas upon which the forces of other races may leave their mark corrupting society as a whole.

The desires and attitudes that govern Maggie's actions represent a connection to the cultures of the "dark races". The connection made in the beginning between Maggie and the witch, black magic, and cultural influences from the British colonies. Maggie's intelligence has given her a specific knowledge of the identity of the witch. She has a unique understanding of the role of the witch in society, and is able to see through the trap set for women by society through the facade of the witch-hunt. Maggie explains the dilemma of the witch with surprising irony and understanding. "And if she is drowned- and killed, you know- she's innocent, and not a witch, but only a poor silly old woman. But what good would it do her then, you know, when she is drowned?" (16) Maggie's intelligence and identification with the witch in her picture book cause her to question the judgment of the patriarchy.

The final scene of the novel, in which Maggie drowns in the flood, reflects back to this reference to the drowning of the witch. Maggie has been associated with witchcraft throughout the novel, and now she finds herself placed within the same moral test. Just like a witch, she attempted to gain power through the very characteristics that society used to cast her out, but in the end she embraces the patriarchy as she puts her arms around her brother and passes the test.

Maggie's connection to African culture or black magic continues through the image of the "Fetish". A fetish is a material object believed to have magical powers associated with animistic or shaminaistic religious rituals. Maggie keeps

a doll in the attic upon which she vents her frustration and transfers her pain, which the narrator calls a "fetish." The childish relationship of a little girl with her doll has been tainted by Maggie's association with black magic. Maggie's connection to Africa has progressed from the mere color of her skin to include her actions as linked to the culture of the African races. "Eliot associates Maggie with the Africans of the Guinea Coast, who, the British believed, used fetish objects as a means of enchantment, punishing them for unfulfilled wishes" (Meyer, 132) While the physical connection established between Maggie and Africa represents an attempt to confine and control her, Maggie's connection with the culture of the "dark races" is an attempt to gain power and exact revenge. Maggie rejects the traditional role of a woman as nurturer and center of domestic order. She attacks and destroys her baby doll, the object used by society to instill its values and inverse its limited understanding of the roles of women. Dolls teach girls to care for infants and to respond to the role of a nurturing woman and the domestic confines that accompany that identity. Just as she did with her hair, Maggie turns to forms of mutilation in order to exact revenge on her family members and to express her anger and hostility. However, she no longer practices self mutilation, but is acting upon an external object. As Maggie retreats to the dark confines of the attic to perform her ritual punishment of her Fetish, she transforms herself into a witch or voodoo sorceress. Both of these images represent feminine power that has been viewed by society with fear and disgust. If Maggie is able to achieve any level of power within the childhood described in the novel, it must be within the confines and loneliness of the attic through the incorporation of foreign and racial characteristics separate from British society.

Maggie has been taught that the power that she wishes to achieve is connected to her likeness to other races, such as the gypsies. When Maggie runs

away to join the gypsies, it is not merely based on a desire to be with a group of people who resemble her physically, Maggie desires a culture in which she can obtain a place of prominence within the social hierarchy. When she dreams of becoming queen of the gypsies, Maggie embraces her "otherness" as a potential source of power, "If I was a queen, I'd be a very good queen, and kind to everybody" (93). Maggie desires to instruct the gypsies and share the knowledge of which she is extremely proud. She is convinced that the gypsies will be able to appreciate her wisdom. The culture in which she is raised has denied her appreciation or acknowledgment based on her intellect. She believes that the gypsies, when she shares her knowledge with them, will certainly want her to be their leader. She expects that if she really does belong to this society, as she has been told her entire life, it must be a society that recognizes her intelligence and admits the potential for greatness that she understands herself to possess. The society to which Maggie truly belongs must appreciate intelligent women. Maggie's desire to join another culture, one that she believes offers power to intelligent women, reflects her inability to conform to British society. Maggie's embrace of racial distinctions of otherness, inherent in the act of running away, represents her embrace of her intelligence and her desire for power.

Maggie's desire to become queen of the gypsies reflects back to the illusion of Lucy as a queen of a race of people that do not age beyond childhood. Maggie pictures herself as the usurper of Lucy's throne. She desires power, and as a child this power is defined by her intellect. She foresees her mind as being superior and justification for the dominate role that she envisions for herself. The image of the queen represents a "unique individual who transcends class" (Homans, 30) and arguably gendered power restrictions. During the reign of Queen Victoria, the image of the queen represents the transcendence of many restrictions on women. Later in the novel, Maggie is once again referred to as a

queen. Her power is no longer associated with her intellect and ability to be a "good queen". Her power is sexual, and she is compared to the "queen of coquettes" (306), setting herself apart from all other women.

As Maggie ages, the "otherness" associated with her character becomes exclusively a characteristic of her body, which is sexualized. Just as an extremely intellectual woman is threatening to the patriarchy of society so is an overtly sexual woman. As Maggie matures, the darkness of her body becomes associated with sexuality and mystery that has the power to attract. "She's so much broader across the shoulders than I am- it's very ill-convenient...her arms are beyond everything... She'd never get my sleeves on... they're like mine used to be - only mine was never brown" (310) This same dark arm that resists the confines of Victorian fashion in this passage represents a physical desire over which Stephen has no control. "Maggie's arm was such an arm as that- and it had the warm tints of life. A mad impulse seized on Stephen; he darted towards the arm, and showered kisses on it, clasping the wrist" (358). Just as he has been seized by his desire for Maggie, he attempts to seize Maggie as he grabs her wrist. She denies her intellect and seems to attempt to conform to the roles established by society, marked by her study of Thomas a Kempis. However, her "otherness" does not disappear with her books. It is transferred onto her existence as a sexual being from which she acquires power over the men in the novel. Her power both attracts men and frightens them. She is a creature for them to tame, but she can be dangerous also.

Maggie's large body and dark skin suggest an Amazonian fierceness and primitive nature that disrupt society. Just as her dark tangled hair could not be managed or controlled as a child, her arms refuse to be confined by social or cultural restraints. Lucy suggests black lace trimmings instead of sleeves for the "tall dark-eyed nymph with her jet-black coronet of hair" (304). Maggie

continues to resist social constraints, but her "otherness" is clearly centered on her body. As a child, darkness of Maggie's body centered around issues of race and culture in terms of her intellect and imagination. Maggie's potency as an adult focuses on her sexuality and fiery primitive desires. After Maggie flashes a defiant look at Stephen, his first thought was "an alarming amount of devil there. I wish she would look at me again" (304). Maggie has been transformed from a young lioness to a powerful seductive woman. Each of these images reflects Maggie's connection to the dark continent.

Maggie's sexuality is connected to the wildness and threat of Africa. Meyer illuminates Maggie's inability to restrain her emotions in her comparison between a highly civilized woman's composure and a Hottentot woman: "The dark-skinned Maggie and the 'Hottentot' woman seem to occupy approximately the same rank on this scale, as evinced by their mutual capacity for unrestrained sorrow." (138) The Hottentot woman represents the extreme sexuality that Victorian culture associated with the body of the African woman. "The lascivious, apelike sexual appetite of the black" defined the distinction between white and black for the Victorians, as "scientific" expeditions increased to Africa. (Gilman, 231)

The antithesis of European sexual mores and beauty is embodied in the black, and the essential black, the lowest rung on the great chain of being, is the Hottentot. The physical appearance of the Hottentot is, indeed, the central nineteenth-century icon for sexual difference between the European and the black- a perceived difference in sexual physiology. (Gilman, 231)

The "Hottentot apron" was a common term in the Victorian period to refer to the enlarged labia and nymphae caused by the manipulation of the genitalia. This physical characteristic was considered a sign of beauty among certain tribes

in Africa. This physical difference was described by Victorian scientists as primitive and a physical manifestation of the animalistic nature of the black female's devourous sexual appetite. Thus, as Maggie is compared to the Hottentot through her lack of control over her physical display of her emotions. The crying that Maggie cannot control and the connection made to the Hottentot work together to create an image of Maggie in which sexual desire and appetite are no longer under control.

Just as her arms cannot be confined by Victorian fashion and her inability to restrain her emotions cannot conform to Victorian propriety, her sexuality cannot be controlled by Victorian values. While the strength of the Hottentot's sexual desire is displayed in her enlarged genitalia and buttocks, Maggie's desire is connected to her large arms. Her arms "serve as genteel metonymies for her breasts" (Homans, 34), and reflect the lasciviousness of her sexuality. Her arms are also described in terms of power, through their connection to rowing. Just prior to the scene in which her Aunt Pullet comments upon the inconvenient size of Maggie's arms, Maggie has fulfilled her desire to learn to row. Maggie's arms represent her sexual energy and her independence and power. As a child, Maggie assumed that the source of her power would be her intellect, but as she matures she finds that it is her sexuality that will provide her with the power and attention that she has always longed to obtain.

The sexual power of her arm is contrasted to the power to act present in her ability to row. For Stephen, her arms represent sexual objects to be admired and kissed, but they have no ability to act. The passivity of Maggie's body during the boat scene with Stephen illustrates the fact that Maggie's sexuality gives her the power to attract men as they observe and study her form. As she sails away with Stephen in defiance of his family's wishes and the rules of propriety, she has the ability to change the relationships of others within society without force or

action. However, the gaze of the lover is objectifying and not completely within Maggie's control. During the scene in the conservatory, Maggie's body is objectified as Stephen consumes her with his gaze. "Note here that the object of Stephen's desire is not Maggie, or Maggie's arm, but 'the arm' and that this arm is further objectified by comparison with statuary, headless at that" (Homans, 35). Maggie remains as powerless as a long tailed sheep on the auction block, as Stephen takes on the role of the consumer gazing at merchandise.

Just like the Hottentot woman, Maggie's sexuality has been put on display and her power weakened. "Maggie wears the hand-me-down that had to be altered to expose her too-large arms, sometimes strong, now deferentially weak, and Stephen passionately kisses one of them in a passage that defines his desire too as that of the leisured consumer" (Homans 34). Maggie's sexuality and thus, body, are put on display for the consumer in the scene of the bazaar. Now considered a part of most cultures, this term to the Victorians represented the cultures of the East, most distinctly the colonies. Maggie has brought her products to the market in order to be sold. However, it is Maggie who is on sale. "It is the women themselves who are on sale..as beautiful bodies" (Homans 33). Maggie is at the bazaar in order to make money, a confession that increases Stephen's attraction to Maggie. She is being put on display in order to be consumed by the men who rotate around her:

At the bazaar the men don't take seriously their purchases of bead-mats and wrist-warmers. What they are consumers of is women's sexuality...she is on display for Philip, Stephen, Philip's father, and indeed for all of fashionable St. Ogg's who will later recall the 'coarse' style of her beauty that day. (Homans 34)

As this scene recalls the display of the Hottentot Venus throughout Europe to the amusement and inspection of fashionable society, it also recalls issues of

slavery and prostitution. As Maggie sits in the market for the inspection of society, she is connected to the image of the auction bloc and the sale of women's sexuality.

These references represent forces perceived as corrupting British society and spreading disease. "Medical tradition has a long history of perceiving this skin color (black) as the result of some pathology. The favorite theory... is that the skin color and attendant physiognomy of the black are the result of congenital leprosy" or syphilis. (Gilman 250) Black females represent the sexualized female, but also are associated with issues of corruption and disease. Prostitutes, another form of the sexualized female, are also associated with the corruption of society and the spread of disease. It was also believed that prostitutes could be distinguished by their physical characteristics and features. It was believed that the genitalia of a prostitute was altered by disease, once again returning to the image of the Hottentot and her connection to plague. The face also contained markers that could be used to identify a prostitute. "These signs deal with the abnormalities of the face: asymmetry of feature, misshapen nose, over-development of the parietal region of the skull, and the appearance of the so-called Darwin's ear" (Gilman 243). These distinctions represent attempts to attribute racial distinctions associated with the body to sexual corruption and "otherness".

The figure of the sexualized woman who threatens society with disease also threatens the patriarchy with her overt sexuality and aggressive appetite. The sexualized woman is characterized by a primitive force lurking beneath the surface. The smile of the sexual woman represents "the smile of a man-eater" (Gilman 253). The security of the patriarchy and British culture as a whole requires the domination and control of the sexual woman, with her large and threatening genitalia and powerful arms.

Maggie only achieves the power to act or perform when she rejects her sexuality and desire for Stephen and returns to her brother. The boat scene with Stephen can be sharply contrasted to the final scene with Maggie alone in the boat trying desperately to return home to the place of her childhood. Maggie's arms are transformed from passive objects of desire into tools of salvation and inspiration. Maggie is no longer described as a sexual creature or in terms of race or colonialism. Order is restored as her familial relationship is reestablished. Maggie's attempt to gain power through otherness and sexuality are replaced by her acceptance of God and fate. The witch that has haunted Maggie's identity since the opening of the novel disappears. Maggie passes society's moral test as she sinks to the bottom clasping her brother to her chest.

II

A great deal of the criticism focusing on *Daniel Deronda* deals with attitudes toward Jews and British colonialism. Her work was embraced by the Jewish community and heralded by the founders of the Zionist Movement. "Written some twenty years before Theodore Herzl's *Der Judenstaat*, while Herzl was still a student in Vienna, *Daniel Deronda* is 'reported to have played a considerable part in predisposing certain elements of European Jewry in favor of a Zionist Movement.'" (Heller 77) *Daniel Deronda* represents a unique understanding of the Jewish community uncommon in George Eliot's time. Her dedication to research Jewish history, language, and customs enabled her to provide an accurate portrayal of the Jewish characters widely accepted by the Jewish community. This appreciation of her work can still be seen today. "In 1948 George Eliot had a street named after her in Tel-Aviv, and there are now streets named after her in all of Israel's major cities." (Heller 77) Discussions on the work of George Eliot are more critical today than they were during her lifetime. Many writers consider her portrayal of the Jewish community as stereotypical and drenched in "prejudiced sympathy" (Naman 161). While these arguments are historically significant, they fail to identify the deeper theme central to all of Eliot's novels, for which race and colonialism are only metaphors. Emerging concerns focusing on women, their rights, and their participation within the community had no available language through which they could be expressed. Thus, Eliot turned to the socially accepted language of race and empire common in the literature and discourse of her day to discuss the conflict between women and the traditions of Victorian society.

The tension between a woman's need for self fulfillment and her duty defined by society, a central theme in the novels of George Eliot, is presented

through the language of racial distinctions and conflict. Eliot's last novel, Daniel Deronda, transfers this female dissatisfaction with society previously connected to a racial 'otherness' onto the male title character. In her attempt to solve the "problem of race linked with the problem of female impulses at odds with a constraining society" (Meyer, 157) Eliot creates the character of Daniel and his Proto Zionist solution of racial separateness. Daniel exists as an extension of the 'female other' seen in Eliot's previous novels. The femininity and racial otherness associated with Daniel's character identify him as the extension of or heir to the turmoil seen in Eliot's strong female characters, such as Maggie Tulliver and Dorothea Brooke. Even though Daniel represents an extension of these women, the unity of his social duty or duty to the Jewish community and his duty to himself depends upon his identity as a man. Therefore, he does not participate in Maggie's sacrifice. The solution posed by Daniel is a temporary non solution in which the pain or limits put on women are not overcome but ignored.

The female characters in the novel provide clear evidence of this displacement. As the true heir to the conflict demonstrated through Maggie, Gwendolyn's efforts to gain power are reprimanded and her struggles for individuality are ignored. The attempts by Gwendolyn and Daniel's mother, Princess Halm-Eberstein, to sell their beauty for economic stability connect them to the language of prostitution and slavery. While the Princess uses the stage, Gwendolyn sells herself through marriage. Mirah rejects performance, and accepts the confines of Victorian society by devaluing her own life and body. Mirah's constant need for the guidance of a male figure drives her to attempt suicide when she cannot find a mold to which she can conform. She subjugates herself to the authority of a patriarchy, but she denies the authority of her father. This distinction identifies Mirah as the ideal relationship between a

woman and society. She accepts and even desires direction and the molding forces of society, but she does not allow negative forces to control her. Victorian society feared that the passivity of women could be preyed upon by men of other races. Fathers are connected to the image of racial mingling through empire and the problems stemming from this association. Daniel is a symbol of the 'other' connected to the colonies. Fathers represent the ignorance and violence of the past from which the novel attempts to move, embracing a possible new beginning symbolized by Daniel and Mirah. However, this movement is actually a renewal of a simpler past through the teaching of Mordeci. The return to Palestine and a world defined by racial separateness attempts to deconstruct the complexity and chaos of contemporary society seen as destructive for both racial groups within the novel. As the 'others' who have plagued the empire are safely led back to Palestine, the women within the novel are forced into submission and their struggle for power is silenced.

Daniel occupies a place within the female realm of the novel through his connection to Gwendolyn and his inability to define his place within Victorian society. This indecision concerning his profession and his passivity represents a gap between Daniel and the male community led by Sir Hugo Mallinger. The uncertainty of Daniel's birth continues the division between Daniel and British society. As a woman waits to find her identity and name through marriage, Daniel is searching for a place within society through his investigation into his past. The confusion over Daniel's parents creates a connection between Daniel and those races labeled as inferior by British society. Daniel has been brought up to be a British gentleman, but his lack of origins sets him apart from that world. His identification with wanderers seeking their homeland foreshadows the Zionist solution posed by Daniel in the end. Daniel's ability to sympathize with Gwendolyn and Mirah, the central female characters within the novel,

assumes a certain connection or sympathy for the dark races. Daniel claims that he has always "felt a little with Caliban, who naturally had his own point of view and could sing a good song." (331) However, Daniel denies a life of performance, an option only open to those characters within the novel associated with racial otherness. Daniel ultimately embraces his racial identity, but denies the limited British views of 'other'. By doing so, Daniel rejects the treatment of the 'other' within the white community. Daniel's criticism of the white community begins long before he identifies himself as a Jew.

Mrs Torrington was sure she should never sleep in her bed if she lived among blacks; her husband corrected her by saying that the blacks would be manageable enough if it were not for the half breeds; and Deronda remarked that the whites had to thank themselves for the half-breeds. (331)

Daniel identifies the harm posed by the figure of the half-breed and the merging of the races, and blames the white community's desire for domination and expansion. Thus, Daniel is connected to the concerns of oppressed women and the dark races of the colonies. Through Daniel's passivity and his connection to the female realm of the novel, he is transformed into the symbol of the 'female other' seeking escape from the confines of the British patriarchy.

The connection between Daniel and the tortured heroines of Eliot's previous novels illustrates Daniel's role within a possible solution to the conflict defining the lives of these earlier characters. The solution in which Daniel participates centers on his ability to achieve the goals denied to Eliot's female characters by overcoming the obstacles that doomed them to failure. Maggie, a masculinized female, strives for power and acceptance through a leadership role within the gypsy community. Maggie believes that the community with which she has been metaphorically linked her entire life must be able to appreciate female

intelligence and knowledge. Her endeavor to find self fulfillment through teaching the dark races fails once she realizes that women are oppressed within that community as well. Daniel's masculinity allows him to succeed where Maggie has failed. The Jewish community accepts Daniel's power and knowledge as he promises to lead them to their homeland. At once, Daniel's longing to fulfill his individual desire for distinction and power is satisfied through his association with racial otherness and his duty to the Jewish community. While Maggie can only dream of becoming the queen of the gypsies, Daniel Deronda makes that dream a reality within his own life.

Daniel's ability to realize the dreams of Eliot's heroines continues through a connection to the character of Dorothea Brook from *Middlemarch*. Dorothea strives for a life of intellectual and religious dedication based upon her desire to serve her community. As a woman within the Victorian period, Dorothea can only fulfill this desire indirectly through marriage. Dorothea must be content with a "a hidden life" of "unhistoric acts" and having her contribution to the community described as "incalculably diffusive." (766) Her dreams of intellectual distinction and contribution are embodied in her marriages to Casaubon and to Will. Instead of being inspired by his genius, she is left cold and unfulfilled. Casaubon's study of mythology does not inspire Dorothea, and her lack of influence in his work and the frivolousness of his study leaves Dorothea without a feeling of achievement. Dorothea's inability to satisfy her need for accomplishment and distinction within her community grows into a disappointment with her husband and their marriage. Daniel experiences a similar calling or desire to accomplish great things within his community. Until he meets Mordeci, an elderly Jewish scholar, he is unable to fulfill this calling. Mordeci describes their relationship as "the marriage of our souls". (751) His relationship to Mordeci, described repeatedly as a marriage, inspires him

through religion and provides him with a community through which Daniel can fulfill his desire to accomplish his goals. Daniel's passivity and femininity are associated with his connection to the British culture. Once he finds his place within the Jewish community, he is both active, empowered, and masculinized.

Since I began to read and know, I have always longed for some ideal task, in which I might feel myself the heart and brain of a multitude - some social captainship, which would come to me as a duty, and not be striven for as a personal prize. You have raised the image of such a task for me - to bind our race together in spite of heresy. (750)

While Dorothea fails in her attempts to fulfill her individual desires for captainship through an obligation to her community, Daniel is able to fulfill his calling through his relationship to the teachings of an older scholar and his identification with the Jewish community.

Daniel's ability to accomplish those things set up in previous novels as goals of strong and independent women is not an accomplishment for the struggle of women in Victorian society. While Daniel is an extension or a representation of these characters, his victory is brought about by his participation in a patriarchal society and not his connection to women. The struggle of the female other within British society is picked up by Daniel, but his victory is not a victory for women. He represents a sympathy for the stifled voices of Victorian women, but he does not facilitate their independence or further their cause.

Daniel's identification as a substitute for women and not an extension of them can be illustrated through a comparison with the leading female characters within the novel. Gwendolyn Harleth is a more accurate heir to Maggie Tulliver's struggle. She represents the white female associated with racial

otherness who is contaminated through her desire for power and independence. Gwendolyn supports her family, and is treated as a father might be treated in the Victorian Period. Her demands are met, her instructions followed, and her happiness is put before any other concerns of the family. However, her desires for independence are controlled by her place within a patriarchal society that only allows a woman to change her life through marriage. Gwendolyn's beauty exists as a commodity and her life is something to be bought and sold.

Gwendolyn's association with slavery and prostitution are most obvious in her romantic relationship with Grandcourt leading up to their marriage, but it emerges more subtly quite early in the novel. Gwendolyn's family was made wealthy through slavery and colonialism. While she has never really considered the source of her family's money, the novel states that her family's fortune came from the British West Indian colonies. Once this wealth is gone, Gwendolyn must rely on her own skills to support herself and her family. In order to regain enough money to return home from an European excursion, Gwendolyn attempts to pawn some of her jewelry, symbols of her femininity and physical beauty. This act of symbolic prostitution exists as an extension of the slavery exploited by her male ancestors. Deronda saves her from such embarrassment, and places her within his debt by buying the pieces back for her. In order for Gwendolyn to maintain her freedom made possible by travel, she must turn to symbols of prostitution and slavery. These mean of economic security are the only ones associated with women in this novel, and the only ones to which she may turn.

From the beginning of the novel, Daniel's relationship to Gwendolyn focuses on his acceptance of her burden. Thus, he is perceived as an extension of the female struggle for power, but his acceptance of this struggle maintains the victory within the hands of the male community. Daniel Deronda is set up as

a substitution for Gwendolyn's freedom and independence. Upon Gwendolyn's expression of her desire to see the Matterhorn, Madame von Langen responds "Perhaps this Mr Deronda's acquaintance will do instead of the Matterhorn" (14). The sarcasm intended by this comment is chilling when compared to the ending of the novel. Gwendolyn's desire to travel and experience the world is supposed to be fulfilled by her relationship with Daniel. Daniel is a substitution for her freedom. At the end of the novel, Daniel describes his journey to Palestine and his self fulfillment as extensions of Gwendolyn's own experiences. Daniel states that they have become connected and that she will be a part of his life forever. "Now we can perhaps never see each other again. But our minds may get nearer" (?) As Daniel leaves Gwendolyn in order to fulfill his destiny, he attempts to extend that fulfillment to include the hopes and goals of Gwendolyn. He invites her to consider his accomplishments and experiences her own. This vision of divine unity is rejected by Gwendolyn. While he claims that his victory is a victory for her, she knows that she remains within the same struggle within which she began the story. Even though Daniel is a symbol of the female other, his ability to overcome the societal constraints experienced by women depends upon his denial of his femininity and his rejection of Gwendolyn. His victory does not represent the victory of women, but implies that such a victory is impossible.

Gwendolyn's connection to slavery and prostitution is made more obvious through her relationship to Grandcourt and her marriage. While her connection to prostitution hinges on her desire to gain power and economic stability through her physical beauty, slavery suggests that women within British society were property to be bought and sold. The connection to slavery starts with Grandcourt's selection of Gwendolyn at the archery contest, and works to make Gwendolyn a more sympathetic character. This change from prostitution,

defined by the sale of her necklace, to slavery shifts the blame from Gwendolyn to the male community. While Daniel was there to save Gwendolyn from herself, he cannot save her from Grandcourt. The young women within the community are put on display at an archery contest enabling Grandcourt to view all of the prospects for a future wife. All of the observers judged the contestants and ranked them according to color of hair and cheek. Gwendolyn has been selected by the men as the most attractive girl, but the women are said to prefer a girl with lighter hair and a rosier cheek.

Probably the form these rural souls would most have striven for as a tabernacle was some other than Gwendolen's - one of more pink in her cheeks and hair of the most fashionable yellow; but among the male judges in the ranks immediately surrounding her there was unusual unanimity in pronouncing her the finest girl present.(100)

While Gwendolyn is not associated with physical darkness throughout the novel, she is considered dark compared to the other contestants. Her sexuality connects her to darkness intriguing to the men in the audience. Her connection to a slave being judged and bought is made explicit as the narrator states that "perhaps it is not quite mythical that a slave has been proud to be bought first." (100) The pride attributed to the slave suggests that Gwendolyn understands the relationship between herself and the male observers, and attempts to promote this relationship to her advantage.

Once Gwendolyn realizes that she must marry to gain economic position and security, she attempts to further her attractiveness by increasing her connection to the other. Throughout the novel Gwendolyn's appearance is described as snake-like. "She has got herself up as a sort of serpent now, all green and silver, and winds her neck about a little more than usual." (12) This

connection is always described as an element of her beauty that she has created and not part of her nature. In her attempt to make herself more appealing or attractive, she fashions herself after a snake. As Grandcourt approaches upon his beautiful black horse, Gwendolyn prepares for his visit and impending proposal seated in front of the mirror. She asks her mother, "gathering up her lengthy mass of light-brown hair", to "gather it up easily and make a coil". (296) This comment identifies Gwendolyn's desire to fashion herself as a seductive figure, but her natural mane-like mass of hair connects her to the image of the horse. This transformation of imagery illustrates the difference between the seductive power that she attempts to mold her image around and the subordinate relationship to men.

As their courtship progresses, the relationship of slave to master is further applied to Gwendolyn's association to Grandcourt. As he arrives at Offendene to propose to Gwendolyn, he is seated upon his "beautiful black Yarico" (296). The story "recounts the exploits of Inkle, an Englishman saved from cannibals in Barbados by the beautiful native woman Yarico, whom he subsequently abandons and attempts to sell into slavery" (Meyer 164). Gwendolyn's economic connection to Barbados symbolizes her vulnerability to Grandcourt. The money her family made has disappeared leaving Gwendolyn a choice between the servitude of working as a governess or the servitude of marriage. Since "Gwendolyn has earlier used metaphors involving horses to imagine the arrangement of power in marriage" (Meyer 164), Gwendolyn's absolute subordination within this relationship is illustrated through her connection to Grandcourt's horse.

While Gwendolyn's subtle connection to slavery emerges through metaphors of otherness, the Princess Halm-Eberstein voices a resistance to the subordinate position of women within her community and openly describes her

life as that of a slave or of an animal. "I hated living under the shadow of my father's strictness.... 'This you must be,' 'That you must not be' - pressed on me like a frame that got tighter and tighter as I grew." (630) She embraces the description of Caliban offered earlier by Daniel as naturally having his own point of view and could sing a good song. Holding on to her own opinions, she enters a life of performance as an escape from the chains of her patriarchal community. "I had a right to do it; I was not, like a brute, obliged to go with my own herd" (634) Gwendolyn attempts to take on the role of performer, but she is only metaphorically other and not suited for this life. She is rejected, and sent back to the confines of her former life. The Princess succeeds for a time as a performer, but she must turn her back on her religion and her son. The novel condemns her choices presenting her as corrupted by disease. She has been replaced by Mordeci and his nurturing instruction. Mordeci looks toward Daniel from his death bed with "something of the slowly dying mother's look when her one loved son visits her bedside". (495) Mordeci, and not the Princess, ensures the transmission and perpetuation of the Jewish culture through Daniel.

Mirah participates in this transmission, but her role is that of a silent vessel through which the heritage will be conducted. As Daniel accepts his grandfather's legacy, Mirah accepts the passive role of a Jewish woman rejected by the Princess. "He cared more about a grandson to come than he did about me; I counted as nothing." (630) Mirah represents the foil to the Princess' destructive desire for independence. While the Princess complains that her father wanted her to have a heart "pressed small, like Chinese feet" (630), Mirah's feet are naturally small. "Mirah, embodying an ideal of dutiful, unassertive - almost Dickensian - female virtue, is characterized not only by her small voice, but also by feet so small that even in the compact, doll's house-like abode of the diminutive Meyrick women, 'there were no shoes in the house small

enough for Mirah." (Heller 91) Mirah, a woman who thrives on the confines of duty in any form, is the only woman who can participate in the solution of the novel and the transmission of the Jewish tradition.

The masculinization of Daniel and the submission of Mirah deny their victory as the solution to the conflict between women and society. The solution represented by the union of Daniel and Mirah centers around the acceptance of the traditions of the past and the relocation of the problems facing British society onto the colonies. Daniel Deronda, itself an old form of his family's name, accepts the solution of "separation with communication" suggested by his grandfather. Daniel is able to overcome all of the social constraints associated with the 'female other' as he embraces the Jewish patriarchy of his grandfather. This patriarchy rejects the individuality and power of female creativity through the character of the Princess and creates women fashioned after paper dolls without the power to manipulate their own identity or destiny. While the Princess creates herself as the great Alcharisi, a powerful woman of the stage, Mirah is content to lisp the mumbled syllables she heard as a child. "I don't sing real words - only here and there a syllable like hers - the rest is lisping ... If I were ever to know the real words, I should still go on in my old way with them." (373-374) Women attempting to use their own voices to decide their own fate are rejected by the conclusion of the novel, and only women content to lisp nonsense on the living room stage are able to find solace in its resolution of isolation for dark races and strong women.

Conclusion

While the conclusion of the novel favors a nationalistic solution suppressing the criticism of racial and gender hierarchies addressed throughout Eliot's novels, the energies at work throughout the novel, especially through the female characters of Gwendolyn and the Princess, work to undercut the simplicity of this solution. While the transformation and subsequent achievements of Daniel suggest that a victory for the struggle of the feminine other is impossible within Victorian society, the stories of the women within the novel suggest that the struggle is worthwhile. While the imperialist and nationalist resolution in *Daniel Deronda* denies victory against the norms of gender and racial conflict, the existence of contradictory impulses undercuts the resolution of the novel. "And at times, as *The Mill on the Floss*, other energies in a novel prove stronger than its impulses toward resolution and closure." (Meyer 201) Maggie's skeleton clutching that of her brother is left as a symbol of her sacrifice and the inevitable rejection of the painful choice Maggie had to make in order to reconcile with her family. The women of George Eliot's novels remain as symbols for generations of women to come, calling for freedom and individuality.

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