

“WHO TAUGHT THIS FOREIGN WOMAN ABOUT THE WAYS AND LIVES OF THE JEWS?”: GEORGE ELIOT AND THE HEBREW RENAISSANCE

BY MIKHAL DEKEL

When a young man of English training and Eton and University education, and, up to manhood, of assumed English birth, so obliging also as to entertain Christian sympathies, finishes off with his wedding in a Jewish synagogue, on the discovery that his father was a Jew, the most confiding reader leaves off with a sense of bewilderment and affront.

—Review of *Daniel Deronda*, *The Saturday Review* (1876)

The Hebrew reader does not wish to spend his time reading a book about a boy who sought a girl, and neither one is Jewish nor did their ancestors stand on Mount Sinai; these would not appeal to him. If a Hebrew author would write us a story about a girl named Sarah Rebecca, then the reader would rejoice, but if a writer named Shakespeare writes a story about a girl named Ophelia, utter disgust! If Rachel Leah is her name, blessed may she be, but if her name is Gwendolen, and even if the author labored hard to reveal the mysteries of her soul and the secrets of her heart—what does the Hebrew reader have to do with all these?

—David Frishman, introduction to his Hebrew translation of *Daniel Deronda* (1893)¹

In 1973, James Michie, editor at the Bodley Head Press, commissioned F. R. Leavis to execute what the latter had argued forcefully for three decades earlier: to edit *Daniel Deronda* out of *Daniel Deronda* in order “to produce an extricated Gwendolen Harleth.”² Such amputation was necessary, Leavis had maintained, “to establish . . . that there is a major classic, which may be suitably called ‘Gwendolen Harleth,’ hidden from the general recognition it deserves in the voluminous mixed work that George Eliot published—a classic that it is incumbent on us to reclaim for English literature.”³ Leavis then proceeded to edit the novel’s “bad half”—“represented by Deronda himself, and by what may

be called in general the Zionist inspiration”—eliminating chapters 36 through 43 and portions of other chapters.⁴ His proposed title for the project: “Gwendolen HARLETH: George Eliot’s Superb Last Novel Liberated from DANIEL DERONDA.”⁵

Much has been written about Leavis’s efforts to define and homogenize the field of English studies in English departments around the globe.⁶ In undertaking what he defined as nothing less than the “liberat[ion]” of Gwendolen Harleth from *Daniel Deronda* and in enlisting an imagined reader for this project (“it is incumbent on us”), what was at stake for Leavis was not only the purity of the “Great Tradition” of English literature but also the designation of a narrowly conceived collective “us” in the face of foreign or hybrid intrusions. This was not to be, however; by the early 1970s, the critical climate had changed, and Michie, anticipating disapproval, aborted the project. Gwendolen Harleth was not to be liberated from *Daniel Deronda* after all. It was instead Daniel who was liberated from Gwendolen, and, in a sense, from Eliot herself, in the Hebrew translation of *Daniel Deronda*.

To write about *Deronda*’s translation from English to Hebrew in the nineteenth century is to write about many things. It is a translation from a *lingua franca* spoken and read by millions to an esoteric language read by hundreds of thousands but spoken by few. It is a translation from a Western European to a mostly Eastern European audience. It is a translation across classes. As far as Jewish readership is concerned, it is a translation from a generally assimilated Jewry to a generally less assimilated one. And it is a translation from an audience of men and women to an audience consisting almost exclusively of men. As a rule, women were not traditionally educated and could not read Hebrew texts.⁷

Though *Deronda* was translated into several languages, including Russian and German almost immediately after its complete publication in English, its translation into Hebrew, which would seem imminent, took almost twenty years to appear. This was, in part, because Eliot’s nationalistic vision preceded the Zionist movement by two entire decades: in 1876 the so-called founder of the Zionist movement, Theodor Herzl, was still quite unconcerned with Jewish issues. The first Zionist Congress would not convene until 1897, and Hebrew would not become a spoken national language until several decades later. But this is only a partial explanation, for readers of Hebrew and translations into Hebrew have always existed. In every century, it seems, someone, somewhere, was translating something into Hebrew, whether it was *Les mystères de Paris*, medical tracts, medieval Arabic

poetry, or Mark Twain. Beginning in the late eighteenth century with the *Haskalah*—the Jewish Enlightenment, which sought to modernize Jews and Jewish culture—there was an even greater translation boom. And in the 1890s, with the Hebrew Renaissance and the emergence of the Jewish nationalistic cultural movement *Hibat Zion* (Love of Zion: the Hebrew Renaissance Movement) in Eastern Europe, a small yet influential sphere of publishing houses and literary journals catering to a readership of thousands made Hebrew translations even more viable. Translation, as the nationalist editor and essayist Asher Ginzburg (Ahad Ha'am) wrote, was incorporation without assimilation of foreign cultures into one's own.⁸

Deronda's reception by Hebrew readers was problematic from the start. The book was the subject of both admiration and debate even among those who had not read it. The title character became a cultural icon to the incipient national community, yet Eliot did not. When the Hebrew translation was published in 1893, it was missing portions of its so-called English half. In what follows, I trace the history of the translation, its reception by readers and writers of Hebrew, and its role in shaping early national consciousness. Not altogether different from the story of Leavis's intervention, the story of *Deronda*'s absorption into the Hebrew canon is ultimately a story of national identity: what may be included? what must be expelled? who controls it? and how does it control our reading of texts?

Many British and Western European Jews, like many other British and Western Europeans, read *Deronda* as it was published, or very soon after. Many Eastern European Jews also read *Deronda* early on, in Russian and German translations. Their response was famously positive and sentimental: "[In] these days, when Israel is unwanted, days of hatred, envy and competition, like lightning [the novel] brightens our night," wrote one reader in a Warsaw-based Hebrew journal.⁹ Across Europe, Jewish publications praised Eliot for her unflinchingly sympathetic depiction of the Jews at a time of rising anti-Semitism, though numerous Western European Jews refrained and even criticized the novel's support for a narrow, separatist definition of Jewish identity.¹⁰

Several chapters of *Deronda* were published early on in Hebrew by a prominent British Jewish figure, Hayyim Guedella, in conjunction with a plan to purchase parts of Palestine from the Turkish government in return for the dismissal of large Turkish debts to Britain.¹¹ The excerpts, mostly from the "Hand and Banner" chapter, appeared first in *The Jewish Chronicle* in London and later in various European-Jewish publications. As might be expected, Guedella's plan, and the excerpts

from *Deronda*, did not receive a warm reception in Britain. But even among traditionalists and proto-nationalists in Eastern Europe, the direct intervention in the “Jewish question” by a Western European female author evoked ambivalence and anxiety. Guedella’s and Eliot’s motives were questioned; one reader suggested that the author, who had “received a large payment” for *Daniel Deronda*, “should donate a tenth of her earnings to strengthen the settlements in Eretz Yisrael.”¹² Another anonymous reader, identified as “a faithful son,” wrote, likewise sarcastically, that

even if Guedella will not be able to carry out his plans, still Miss Lewes wrote an essay about it. Did not the clever young woman receive a large sum for this [book]? And where there is no-one to save Israel, the young English woman will rise to its support. This girl will live to be a hundred and the novels she will write will be enough to pay for the redemption of the land.¹³

The aging Eliot, as we can see, is referred to as a “clever young woman” and as “Miss Lewes.” While it is not clear where the “Miss Lewes” originated, its result is her identification not as George Henry Lewes’s partner but as his daughter. Or, perhaps, Guedella’s daughter. Guedella rose to Eliot’s defense by pointing to the wide distribution of her novel and its far-reaching effect on readers. Yet it is exactly this association of writing with the market—the use of writing to support the financial transaction of nation-buying—that Guedella’s opponents attack.

In their attacks, the metaphor of prostitution is central. One example is the contemptuous response of Yehiel Bril, editor of the Hebrew periodical *ha-Levanon*, who accused Guedella of using only selective parts of *Deronda* and editing them to suit his needs. Bril called for a full and accurate publication,

in order to show the world how [Guedella] ruined this pleasant novel; how he twisted and destroyed it in order to attach it to his plan and capture the hearts of the sons of Israel; in order to show everyone that he did not copy the novel as it was written but selected from it only the phrases needed for his prostitution business.¹⁴

In a perfect symmetry, the assault on Guedella’s plan to purchase Palestine from the Turkish government in cash, that is, to prostitute the Land of Israel, is transformed into an attack on Guedella’s prostitution of Eliot’s work. Bril’s language is particularly strong: the word

היה, meaning “ruined,” sounds identical to שחט, or “slaughtered.” By prostituting Eliot’s text for his own commercial purposes, Guedella has slaughtered the “pleasant novel.” And this slaughter serves as a symbol for the destruction and slaughter of the Holy Land.

And yet by the mid-1880s, with the rise of anti-Semitism across Europe, the pogroms in Russia, and the consequent emergence of the Hebrew Renaissance movement, Guedella’s nationalistic ideas and Eliot’s version of Jewish nationalism were growing increasingly popular. It was with the proponents of the Hebrew Renaissance that *Deronda* would resonate most strongly.

Who were they? Almost exclusively, they were men. Men writing and men reading. Young Jewish men, traditionally educated, searching beyond their religious calling as they matured. Men between two worlds—tradition and modernity, the Jewish shtetl and the European city. Men who had read the *Gemara* and the *Mishnah* and were now reading Nietzsche. Men who had studied Hebrew in order to become proficient in the holy scriptures and now were dabbling in its vernacular, literary uses. Men in search of a new, workable identity. Hebrew literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is full of their autobiographies and short fiction. They read *Deronda* as a novel of identity, as a passing novel whose modern hero had discovered his ancient roots. Unlike the British readership, Hebrew readers saw no logical problem with *Deronda*’s plot, or with its claim to realism. They read it naturally as a passing novel not simply because, as we will see, the Hebrew translation made the work more palatable for them but also because Jewish narratives of passing, from the biblical story of Moses to the works of Sholem Aleichem and Heinrich Heine, were part of their cultural heritage. From a minority point of view, the story of *Daniel Deronda* was one of assimilation and its discontents, and that was a story well rehearsed.

For these men, *Deronda* became a kind of romantic hero, a figure of identification, a role model. One enthusiast was Eliezer Ben Yehudah, a major force in the revival of Hebrew as a spoken language, who found in the novel support for his linguistic ideas years before they became commonplace. An 1889 biography tells of how he came across portions of *Deronda* in a Russian journal: “He read [them] with great love; their effect on him was strong and endowed him with hope and courage.”¹⁵ For such readers, still a small minority even among Eastern European Jewry, Eliot’s novel was both a source of encouragement and a speech act, giving voice to hitherto half-formed ideas and incipient national feelings. And yet it is the character *Deronda*, not his

female creator, who is repeatedly credited with pointing young male readers toward an imagined national and masculine identity. In a late-nineteenth-century text, the autobiography of the son of a prominent Hasidic rabbi, the writer slips directly from book to character when he tells of “discovering German and Russian literature alongside Daniel Deronda, who turned our hearts to Eretz Yisrael.”¹⁶

“Cultural politics,” write David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, “which is profoundly pedagogical in its aims, turns upon an exemplary person (Coleridge’s ‘parson’ or *persona exemplaris* and Wordsworth’s poet) who comes to represent ‘man in general.’”¹⁷ Such was Deronda’s role for proto-nationalists. More than half a century before the creation of the State of Israel, and even before the creation of the political Zionist movement, a new national consciousness was informing the works of Hebrew Renaissance writers, who were themselves creating and shaping it. This was, in many ways, a shift from minority to majority consciousness. Writers of the Hebrew Renaissance were laboring to transform “Jewish man” into “universal man.” A type of Hebrew romanticism, which placed the individual male subject at its center, was being born. As for John Locke, their definition of “nation” was the embodiment of universal enlightenment ideals within a confined space. The classical Zionist tenet to be a nation like all nations meant that difference was created for the purpose of erasing difference. Deronda, who fused a Western gentleman’s education with traditional Jewish identity and texts, came to embody universalism within national culture and thus became a model of both citizenship and masculinity, the universal-particular male subject at the core of the liberal nation-state.

Masculinity was very much the issue here. And not only because Jewish nationalism was in part a response to the feminization of Jewish men in European culture, as it was, or because anti-Semitism was directed to a much greater extent at Jewish men than Jewish women, as it also was. These were, I want to stress, traditionally educated men writing for other traditionally educated men. They had emerged from and were now challenging a patriarchal, male-centered Jewish tradition with very clearly defined gender roles. As in the classical tradition, Jewish thought has a long history of associating spirituality with men and materiality with women: men engage in the study of holy texts, women care for material needs. Zionism’s critique of traditional Jewish life, of its lack of practical aims, its lack of grounding in the material nation and the land, in a materiality hitherto associated with a degraded, female sphere, was in fact a critique of Jewish men. It was precisely

this ideology of the nation that was disrupting and devaluing traditional Jewish gender categories and putting men on the defensive.

The crisis of masculine identity was connected especially to male anxiety in the producers of the emergent national/secular Hebrew culture—the writers, translators, and editors who were fueling the Hebrew Renaissance. They were shifting from the study of Hebrew texts as a superior, noncommercial male activity to the (however small) market-driven, devalued world of secular Hebrew writing. Their self-representation, as evidenced in the works of turn-of-the-century Hebrew writers Yosef Hayyim Brenner and Uri Nissan Gnessin, for example, is full of doubt and loathing. The Hebrew writer and teacher, or the lone Jewish nationalist, is often portrayed as somewhat of a prostitute, a kept man supported by some wealthy patron, an unattractive weakling in comparison with an assimilated, higher-class man.¹⁸ In an exact reversal of Eliot's plot, where nationalism liberates the assimilated Deronda from the realms of art, exchange, and prostitution (Deronda himself is commoditized, transferred at birth to Sir Hugo Mallinger, who declares that he would "pay money to have such a boy"), it is nationalistic Hebrew cultural production that is associated with dependence, prostitution, and deformed masculinity.¹⁹

Male anxiety was intertwined not just with the status of Hebrew authorship but with the search for a Jewish secular national identity as well. While the quasi-colonial state of traditional Jewish communities involved a split between an inner Jewish identity and an outer European one, the emergent national consciousness was to differentiate itself from and replace European culture. The common Zionist motto "[T]o be a nation like all nations" meant, among other things, to own a literary canon that stood up to that of all (European) nations. To achieve this, modern European culture, viewed as the backbone of the modern nation-state, was not to be rejected outright but, on the contrary, to be incorporated into the world of Hebrew letters. Modern European culture, however, was not easily accessible to most traditionally educated Jewish men. While in many colonial and postcolonial models, women are by convention the gatekeepers of identity, and men represent secularism and the West, the opposite was true in the Jewish model.²⁰ Women, even Orthodox women, had greater access to European culture than did men. Forbidden their brothers' traditional Jewish education, middle- and upper-class Jewish girls often studied European languages and culture with tutors or in special girls' schools. As Esther Solomon writes:

The traditional Jewish community actively encouraged women's literacy not, of course, in the male ritual/study realm of Hebrew, but in Yiddish and European languages to bolster their capabilities as the prime breadwinners of the family while the men studied in yeshivas full time. Jewish women's education was thus a curious combination of neglect and manifest permissiveness. Many women became, sometimes unwittingly and sometimes self-consciously, agents of enlightenment in their communities. . . . This was an entirely unforeseen and ironic consequence of the effort to preserve a male monopoly on religious learning.²¹

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these practices were increasingly controversial in Orthodox communities. The early-twentieth-century Jewish press cites, for instance, the case of Mikhlin Aratin, daughter to a wealthy Hasidic family, who on the eve of her arranged marriage to a Jewish scholar disappeared into a nearby convent. When it became known that Mikhlin had had a fine general education in European languages and culture, a debate over Jewish women's education was waged. One critic wrote in 1900:

The same dedication that they show in educating their boys in the Torah, [Orthodox parents] show in educating their daughters in foreign schools . . . and they are proud of their girls' achievements in the secular studies in these schools. . . . Their entire childhood they are left to do as they please and when it is time to marry them, then [the ultra-religious fathers] become strict and with a heavy hand they will fight their young daughters, using stick and a whip, to force them into marrying a boy of their choosing. Reader, judge for yourself, if you possess a soul within you: sophisticated, educated girls, brought up in a foreign spirit, are forced to abandon their lives hitherto, their girlfriends and sometimes their boyfriends, and go marry righteous religious scholars. A chasm separates the girls and boys of Hassidic homes! Is it a wonder, then, that many of these virgins, knowing their fate, will reject it and find a refuge from their stern fathers in the convent?²²

Indeed, as Iris Parush has shown, it was through women's reading that modernity and secularism filtered through to even the most gated ultra-Orthodox communities.²³ Yet women's greater access to secular culture was a threat not only to the traditional Jewish way of life but also to the emergent nationalistic circles. Given their association with material culture, which was now highly valued, and their access to non-Jewish learning, which was now needed in the service of modern, secular nationalism, women came to occupy a powerful position vis-à-vis the primarily male effort of creating a secular, national Jewish culture.

If women (Deronda's mother, for example) have greater access to, and represent, secular "universal" culture, they may stand in judgment of the emergent secular modern Hebrew culture. Thus Eliot's translator David Frishman addresses his "Letters Concerning Literature"—an apologia for the new Hebrew literature—to a worldly, sophisticated, Westernized Jewish woman:

You, my friend, who always complained from your elevated and lofty place, shut your small, cute nose with your slender, white fingers whenever I brought you to the poor and mean dwelling of our literature, so as to avoid the bad smell. You, whose entire life was spent in the gorgeous museums, among the most beautiful treasures of the large cities, who every day saw the paintings and sculptures and literary works, you bent your pretty red lips in disdain at the sight of the "paintings" and "sculptures" of the people of Israel. . . . You, whose entire life was spent reading the best poets of the universe's two parts, you could not understand how anyone could call by the name of literature the bag of tricks of our writers and authors.²⁴

We thus have a literary market that aims to please the refined nose of an imagined worldly lady but whose writers and readers are all men. Where does Eliot fit in this picture? Eliot, who had one of the most refined noses in Europe but who also gave herself a traditional Jewish (male) education, who by all accounts was steeped in the sacred Jewish texts, and who had studied Jewish history and Hebrew in preparation for writing *Daniel Deronda*: what was her place in relation to the Hebrew Renaissance? How was she regarded within this predominantly male world?

Nothing demonstrates the complex status of Eliot and *Daniel Deronda* among these male readers more than the history of the book's Hebrew translation, which despite its enormous impact on Jewish nationalist circles took, again, almost twenty years to appear. In 1885, a portion of John Cross's *George Eliot's Life* was translated into Hebrew by a Berlin-based writer. Two years later, the author, critic, and translator Frishman initiated his serial translation and publication of the novel in Hebrew. As he explained, it had awaited translation for a long time:

Because the first part of the story does not deal with Hebrew things alone but with life in general and the lives of aristocrats and British families, translators were bound to retreat; they saw that this portion would be a burden to Hebrew readers who would run out of patience waiting for the additional parts.²⁵

Frishman's solution to this problem, reversing Leavis's proposal, was to condense the Gwendolen part to the minimum necessary for the coherence of the plot. His guiding principle, it appears, was to cut or trim chapters that deal strictly with Gwendolen or with "the lives of aristocrats and British families" alone. Chapter 1, for example, which portrays Deronda's first encounter with Gwendolen, is faithfully recounted. Yet chapters 3 through 14, detailing mostly Gwendolen's past and present predicament, are crammed in the Hebrew translation into one medium-length chapter (chapter 10). Chapters 22 through 26, involving the subtleties of Grandcourt and Gwendolen's courtship, are also condensed into one chapter. All in all, the "English part" is reduced from forty-one to twenty-two chapters. Beginning with book 6—"Revelations"—the translation tracks the original more or less faithfully until the end, with slight omissions of extended Gwendolen/Grandcourt exchanges. Frishman also omitted most of the epigraphs, retaining those directly related to the Jews or quoted from Heine, with whom most Hebrew readers were familiar. Rather than follow the original separation into books, Frishman divided the novel into three untitled parts. Many of the narrator's comments, for instance the meditation on the need for a family home at the beginning of chapter 3, were truncated as well.

Frishman, who was a realist writer, an influential critic, and a trendsetter in modern Hebrew letters, justified his interventions in a preface to the first installment:

[It] has wonderful imagery, strong logic based on theories of cause and effect and power relations, and may greatly enhance any human being; yet for the Hebrew reader—for him the translator felt obliged to shorten and change the first part as he saw fit, and by doing so *did not omit a single thing from the story*.²⁶

Unlike Leavis, who veiled a nationalistic motivation behind an aesthetic justification, Frishman claims to sacrifice aesthetic achievement for a nationalistic purpose. Yet his appeal to the limited taste of the Hebrew reader is only somewhat convincing, since it was the quest to transcend particularity and become a universal human being that was the pedagogical aim of the national project. This would have provided Frishman with a reason to retain the first part of the novel and strengthen its bond with the second. Translation was one of the most potent vehicles for assimilating universal culture and concerns into the incipient national culture, and by the beginning of the twentieth century a mass translation into Hebrew of "great works"—from

Homer to Oscar Wilde—was in full swing.²⁷ The Hebrew translation of *Deronda* predates this trend by about a decade; still, the Hebrew reader's disregard for all things non-Jewish simply isn't true.

What is true is that *Deronda*, as Leavis noted, is long and winding and a demanding read, especially in half-biblical Hebrew. What is also true is that the "English part" involves a subversive and arrogant heroine whose morally ambiguous storyline was less than palatable for the Hebrew (male) reader. Frishman cut many references to Gwendolen's cockiness, including much of the tantalizing exchange between her and Grandcourt, and emphasized instead her deference to Deronda and Herr Klesmer, her loyalty to her mother, and her unlucky fortune as a penniless widow. The very relations between Gwendolen and Grandcourt lose their edge in the translation; his passion, "flickering" in the original, is only "constant and calm" in the translation.²⁸ The problem was not, I think, the reader's limitation but rather Gwendolen's contradictory, insolent, ambitious, and calculating nature; the second, fully translated half of *Deronda*, it should be noted, features "Hebrew things," as well as Gwendolen's ultimate humbling. If translation always involves a loss, lost in the Hebrew translation are not just the complexities of Deronda's Jewish identity but also the complexities of gender and sexuality that are played out over hundreds of pages in Eliot's original work.

Yet the greatest confusion, it appears, was due to Eliot's own gender-bending ambitions—to have assumed the role of a Jewish scholar and to have called for national renewal for the Jews before they themselves had wholly articulated this desire. Frishman, it is true, took great liberties with Eliot's original creation, greater, perhaps, than he would have taken with the work of a male writer. He cut out chunks of the storyline and many of the narrator's interventions, presumably Eliot's own authorial voice.²⁹ But he also lavished Eliot with the highest praise and read her authorial voice as nothing less than prophetic:

Most of all, we are amazed that Eliot knows the Jewish literature. She is proficient in phrases from the holy books and their judgments; she knows how to support her claims when needed. Jewish history is always before her and she knows to name Yehudah Halevi, Ibn Gbirol, and Ben Ezra and their likes. This time it isn't possible to mock women who demand education and know everything from buffalo's horns to nits, but when asked who was Yehudah Halevi, who was Ibn Gbirol, and who was Moshe Ben Ezra, they stand like brutes who know nothing. Indeed, George Eliot knows of all these important people and of the wisdom of Israel, and at times she knows more than some of the learned of Israel themselves.³⁰

Eliot is singled out above Jewish women “who demand education,” above those worldly ladies with refined noses but little knowledge of Jewish matters. Yet her scholarly accomplishment is not read as evidence for the inclusion of women in the study of Hebrew; she is the exception that proves the rule (“This time it isn’t possible . . .”). Moreover, her accomplishment is regarded as impressive yet puzzling, and her authorial agency is questioned even as it is praised. “Who taught this foreign woman about the ways and lives of the Jews?” Frishman asks:

How did this wonderful author know what other authors, including Hebrew authors, did not know? Where did the wisdom to know and judge the Jewish texts come from? Who planted in her the spirit of truth and prophecy? Who awakened her to prophesize our future and to call on us to return to Zion?³¹

The answer to these questions may lie in the realm of divine inspiration. Like Mordecai, Eliot is seen as possessed by the creative spirit of an all-knowing male God who “rises in her.” This spirit gives agency to an otherwise passive organ—the eyes—which penetrate the thus far unspoken desire for national renewal. In a perfect reversal of the opening scene of *Deronda*, in which an all-knowing man (Deronda) gazes at an unknown woman (Gwendolen), Eliot is positioned as gazing and instantly knowing the “hidden secrets” of her all-male Hebrew audience:

The answer to these questions is: There is indeed a spirit in the human being! And when we read the book of *Daniel Deronda* we know: There is indeed a wonderful spirit in George Eliot, a spirit from above rises in her, and it has opened her large eyes to penetrate us and to know our dreams and our hidden secrets!³²

In *Deronda*, as Catherine Gallagher has shown, Eliot negates everything she has previously meant by the act of writing—a social-economic act operating within the market—in favor of a dream of the kind of language and authorship that denies its own materiality, that erases the gap between writer and audience, language and body.³³ This dream takes the form of a fantasy according to which the artist’s body, made fertile by the influx of some divine inspiration, voices its poetry without the need for intermediary forces. What is embodied in *Deronda* for both Eliot and her Hebrew translator and readers is thus a fantasy about art, and a correlative fantasy about national identity.

Eliot is imagined tapping into the minds of her nationalistic readers much in the same way that Mordecai links to *Deronda*: that is, through an act of perfect merging. Mordecai, with all his pathos and intensity, calls his instruction to *Deronda* “a way of printing”: a printing on the body that remains free of the printing industry, a hostile audience, and anti-Zionist sentiments.³⁴ And yet if for Hebrew readers Eliot is Mordecai, a prophet who through divine inspiration has come to know them, her words are *a priori* someone else’s and her artistic authority is by definition compromised. Indeed, as we have seen, Daniel *Deronda* had impacted semiconscious absorption into early national Hebrew culture as *persona exemplaris* transcends the novel’s origin and fictionality. No wonder, therefore, that *Deronda* ends with the birth of a nation, an entity that by its very definition must erase the fictionality of its own beginning for the purposes of its own self-narration.

POSTSCRIPT

To date, *Daniel Deronda* has not been translated in full into Hebrew. Sixty years after Frishman’s rendering, a translation edited by Dr. Aaron Ben-Orr was published in Tel Aviv.³⁵ This version, however, was even shorter than Frishman’s, not to mention the original: only fourteen chapters, 166 pages, including “a biography of the author and her picture.”³⁶ Just six years after the foundation of the modern state of Israel, *Deronda* was read as belonging to the historical past and furthermore as aesthetically dated. The editor explains this in a brief introduction:

The novel *Daniel Deronda* had caused much commotion in the world because of its bold and new ideas. This novel had particular influence on young people and educated for us the first generation to Zionism (Israel Belkind, the founder of Bilu; Eliezer Ben Yehudah; and others). It was translated into Hebrew by David Frishman, but because this translation has since aged, and the novel’s form—the long conversations and inquiries—is not to the taste of the contemporary Hebrew reader, the publisher has found it necessary to hand it to the reader in a new format, without omission of tales and action, but in the form of a short summary and in modern Hebrew style.³⁷

In the six decades between the novel’s first and second Hebrew translations, much had happened to the Jews: the pogroms and the Holocaust; the mass migration of Jews to Palestine; the War of Independence; the founding of the nation-state; and the beginning of the

Arab-Israeli conflict—a theme that would occupy Hebrew culture for the decades to come. Hebrew was now a language read and spoken by men *and* women, and it was rapidly changing to accommodate the needs of daily life. New generations of Hebrew novelists were emerging, giving voice to contemporary concerns: the colonization of the land, military culture and struggles, political strife, economic distress, love and hate and death in this new world called the State of Israel. With the ideological stress in the early years of statehood on action over words, doing over talking, Ben-Orr found it necessary to reduce *Deronda* to the bare bones of “tales and action,” told in “modern Hebrew style,” and to discard the “long conversations and inquiries” of the original translation. This included the Zionist manifesto outlined in the “Hand and Banner” scene, now abbreviated to a mere few pages. Gwendolen, however, regained some of the seductive and arrogant qualities that had been lost in the Frishman translation. All in all, Ben-Orr’s *Daniel Deronda* reads less like a Zionist or even a Jewish novel than like an entertaining tale of two rival men and a beautiful woman, with Grandcourt’s jealousy of Deronda much highlighted. This, evidently, was what the new nation needed.

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NOTES

¹ David Frishman, introduction to *Daniel Deronda*, by George Eliot, ed. and translated into Hebrew by Frishman (Warsaw: Achiasaf, 1893), 6. The translation from the Hebrew is mine, as are all other translations unless indicated otherwise.

² Quoted in Claudia L. Johnson, “F. R. Leavis: The ‘Great Tradition’ of the English Novel and the Jewish Part,” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 56 (2001): 215. This article contains the complete history of Leavis’s suggested intervention in *Daniel Deronda*. See also Richard Storer, “Leavis and ‘Gwendolen Harleth,’” in *F. R. Leavis: Essays and Documents*, ed. Ian MacKillop and Storer (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 40–49; and F. R. Leavis, *The Critic as Anti-Philosopher: Essays and Papers by F. R. Leavis*, ed. G. Singh (London: Chatto and Windus, 1982), 65–75.

³ Quoted in Johnson, 216.

⁴ Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1964), 80.

⁵ Quoted in Johnson, 216.

⁶ For a summary and an analysis of this subject, see Johnson.

⁷ Some women did read Hebrew and actively sought out Hebrew literature; their numbers were, however, disproportionate to those of male readers. For a discussion of nineteenth-century female readers in Eastern Europe, see Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginalization and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society*, trans. Saadya Sternberg (Boston: Brandeis Univ. Press, 2004).

⁸ See Ahad Ha’am [Asher Ginzburg], “Hikuy ve-hitbolelut” [Imitation and assimilation], in *Kol kitvei Ahad Ha’am* [The Collected Works of Ahad Ha’am] (Jerusalem: Dvir, 1947), 86–92.

⁹ Review of *Daniel Deronda*, *ha-Asif* (1884): 54.

¹⁰ See Gordon S. Haight, *George Eliot: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), 486–88.

¹¹ For the complete history of the Guedella affair, see Shmuel Versus, “*Daniel Deronda* ba-itonut u-ba-sifrut ha-ivrit” [*Daniel Deronda* in Hebrew journals and literature], *Molad* 39–40 (1980): 176–88.

¹² Letter to the editor, *ha-Tzifira* (1877): 15, quoted in Versus, 179.

¹³ Letter to the editor, *ha-Levanon* 13 (1876): 10, quoted in Versus, 179.

¹⁴ Yehiel Bril, letter, *ha-Levanon* 13 (1876): 18, quoted in Versus, 179; my emphasis.

¹⁵ *Memoirs*, ed. Nahum Sokolow (Warsaw, 1889), 189–90, quoted in Versus, 180.

¹⁶ Shlomo Zemach, *Sipur hayay* [The Story of My Life] (Jerusalem: Dvir Publishers, 1983), 16, quoted in Dan Miron, *Bodedim be'moadam* [When Loners Come Together] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1987), 312.

¹⁷ David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, *Culture and the State* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 6.

¹⁸ See, for example, Yosef Hayyim Brenner, “Me-saviv la-nekuda” [Around the point] and “ba-Horef” [In winter], in *Ktavim* [Writings] (Tel Aviv: ha-Kibbutz Hame'uchad, 1978), 391–541, 95–267.

¹⁹ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (London: Penguin, 1995), 634. There are also parallels, of course, to Eliot's own anxieties about the link of authorship and prostitution. See Catherine Gallagher, “George Eliot and *Daniel Deronda*: The Prostitute and the Jewish Question,” in *Sex, Politics and Science in the Nineteenth Century Novel*, ed. Ruth Yeazell (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1986), 39–62.

²⁰ On colonial and postcolonial models, see R. Radhakrishnan, “Nationalism, Gender, and the Narrative of Identity,” in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, ed. Andrew Parker and others (New York: Routledge, 1992), 77–95. As Radhakrishnan writes: “It is important to notice how nationalist ideology deploys the inner/outer split to achieve a false and repressive resolution of its identity. Forced by colonialism to negotiate with Western blueprints of reason, progress and enlightenment, the nationalist subject straddles two regions or spaces, internalizing Western epistemological modes at the outer or purely pragmatic level, and at the inner level maintaining a traditional identity that will not be influenced by the merely pragmatic nature of the outward changes. . . . The inner and inviolable sanctum of Indian identity had to do with home, spirituality, and the figure of Woman as representative of the true self” (85).

²¹ Esther Solomon, “The Light Brigades,” *Ha'arets*, 14 October 2005. For extensive research on this subject, see Parush. See also Rachel Menkin, “Tehila's Daughter and Mikhlin Aratin, That Damned Convert,” *Ha'arets*, 27 June 2003.

²² Shimon Menachem Lazar, “The Treacherous Daughters,” *ha-Magid* (March 1900), quoted in Menkin.

²³ See Parush.

²⁴ Frishman, *Michtavim al doar ha-sifrut* [Letters Concerning Literature] (Jerusalem: Newman, 1968), book 1, letter 4, pages 40–41.

²⁵ Frishman, introduction, 5.

²⁶ Frishman, introduction, 5–6; my emphasis.

²⁷ For a discussion of the literary and translation projects in Hebrew and the scope of the Hebrew Renaissance at the beginning of the twentieth century, see Miron.

²⁸ Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 156; Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, trans. Frishman, 55.

²⁹ Like Leavis, Frishman was a strong advocate of realist fiction; he published numerous realist short stories himself. See Frishman, *Michtavim al doar ha-sifrut*.

³⁰ Frishman, introduction, 4.

³¹ Frishman, introduction, 4.

³² Frishman, introduction, 4.

³³ See Gallagher.

³⁴ Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, 476.

³⁵ See Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed., trans., and intro. Aaron Ben-Orr (Tel Aviv: Shlomo Shraberk, 1954).

³⁶ Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. Ben-Orr, title page.

³⁷ Ben-Orr, introduction to *Daniel Deronda*, 7–8. The Bilu Society was founded by Russian Jews in 1882. Its aim was the political/economic, as well as the spiritual/national, revival of the Jewish people through settlement in Syria and Palestine.