

## Hospitality in *Silas Marner* and *Daniel Deronda*

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### Nineteenth-century hospitality

In Chapter 18 of *Daniel Deronda* (1876), Mirah, a destitute Jewish woman, enters an unknown household and asks for sanctuary.<sup>1</sup> Taken into the ‘full light of the parlour’, she is welcomed with open generosity by ‘four little women’.<sup>2</sup> ‘We will take care of you — we will comfort you — we will love you’, is the enthusiastic cry of Mab Meyrick, one of the four. ‘I am a stranger. I am a Jewess. You might have thought I was wicked’, is Mirah’s reply (p. 168). Under the ‘full light’ of cosmopolitan embrace, the tripartite pattern of Mirah’s speech matches Mab’s and gives the exchange the air of a ritual, framing this moment as though it were a set-piece drama in a novel in which such moments multiply. What is distinctive about this scene of hospitality, which sets it apart from the aristocratic balls and social gatherings which provide a backdrop of generalized conviviality to so much of the plot, is that it stages a precise cross-cultural encounter of Christian and Jew as though it were an ethical encounter between self and other: Mirah (dubbed both ‘the poor wanderer’ and ‘the bewildered one’ — each name evoking biblical allusions) looks at the ‘four faces’ (evoking the four beasts that drive God’s chariot in the Book of Ezekiel) ‘whose goodwill was being reflected in hers’ (p. 168). There are other, comparable scenes of hospitality in the novel: the Cohens’ welcome of Daniel to their modest home in Chapter 34 (‘nothing could be more cordial’ (p. 331)), and the evening in the Hand and Banner pub in Chapter 42, when the philosophers’ club of self-taught artisans welcome Daniel, a newcomer, into their discussions.

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<sup>1</sup> In writing this article, I am deeply indebted to two remarkable books and their authors: Isobel Armstrong, *Novel Politics: Democratic Imaginations in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), and Demetra Kasimis, *The Perpetual Immigrant and the Limits of Athenian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Kasimis’s forthcoming article, ‘Medea the Refugee’, *Review of Politics*, 82.3 (2020), has also been formative. I am grateful to both for our ongoing conversations, to which I offer this article as a contribution.

<sup>2</sup> George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. by Graham Handley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 167.

These moments, and others like them, suggest that we might see the novel as a series of scenes in which thresholds are crossed, and warm welcomes extended to newcomers across religious, ethnic, and class divides.

Scenes of hospitality are frequent in nineteenth-century literature and art. Often drawing on stories from classical and biblical sources, in which the treatment of a stranger was a test of a person's moral values, the Victorians focused on such moments as sites in which to probe crucial questions regarding the virtues of their society. Paintings such as William Holman Hunt's *Light of the World* (1851–56) achieved huge popularity perhaps because the question of hospitable inclusion at that time had become so fraught.<sup>3</sup> In the painting the figure of Christ, dressed as a king and bearing a glowing lamp, stands on the threshold of a doorstep overgrown with weeds and knocks on a door for which there is no exterior handle (*Fig. 1*). Dramatizing Revelation 3.20 — 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me' — the painting presents a scene of Christian enlightenment through the allegory of the stranger's arrival.<sup>4</sup> But in contexts in which the question of inclusion operated on a social rather than an allegorical level, and when at issue was the restricted availability of material goods, the idea of an open threshold was treated cautiously. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, Malthusian doctrine taught that the indiscriminate welcome of paupers would stretch a society's resources too thinly, and as a consequence destroy human lives and chip away at the very structure of civilized values. In the controversial 1803 edition of his *Essay on Population*, Malthus even staged this scene as one of hospitality — or rather inhospitality — in which an allegorical personification of Nature, the Mistress of the Feast, 'bid' the uninvited — that is, the unentitled or illegitimate — guests 'be gone'.<sup>5</sup> Not surprisingly,

<sup>3</sup> Judith Bronkhurst notes that Hunt's *Light of the World* was exhibited throughout the UK 'to promote sales of the engraving. This was published in May 1860 and sold phenomenally well, realizing £10,000 in the first year. By the end of the century, prints [after different versions of the painting] together with numerous photographic piracies, helped to make *The Light of the World* not only the best known and most popular of all Hunt's works, but the most famous religious image of the Victorian era.' See Judith Bronkhurst, *William Holman Hunt: A Catalogue Raisonné*, 2 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 1, 153.

<sup>4</sup> Hunt considered *The Light of the World* to be part of a pair with his *Awakening Conscience* (1853), his narrative painting of a domestic scene of a bourgeois man and his mistress. The pairing suggests that Hunt himself saw his allegorical scene of Christ on the threshold in the context of narratives about sexual regulation and the family (Bronkhurst, 1, 165). On George Eliot and Hunt's pair of paintings, see Hugh Witemeyer, *George Eliot and the Visual Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 78, 91.

<sup>5</sup> This was the second, enlarged edition of the *Essay*, which was published initially by Joseph Johnson in 1798. In the offending passage, Malthus writes, 'At nature's



Fig. 1: William Holman Hunt, *The Light of the World*, 1851–56, oil on canvas, 49.8 × 26.1 cm, Manchester Art Gallery. Wikimedia Commons.

perhaps, the scene repulsed many of its readers, and crystallized criticisms of Malthusian population theory as unchristian and demoralizing.<sup>6</sup>

The arrival of a stranger was a constituent in Eliot's fictional works throughout her oeuvre.<sup>7</sup> All three of the stories in her first published work, *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), revolve around the appearance of newcomers

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mighty feast there is no vacant cover for him. She tells him to be gone, and will quickly execute her own orders, if he does not work upon the compassion of some of her guests.' T. R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, ed. by Patricia James, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), II, 127.

<sup>6</sup> On the critical reception of Malthus's essay, see Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750–1834*, Ideas in Context, 39 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 221–405.

<sup>7</sup> For a different take on strangers in Eliot, see Gage McWeeny, 'The Sociology of the Novel: George Eliot's Strangers', *Novel*, 42 (2009), 538–45. McWeeny sees strangers as anti-domestic figures of urban modernity, which Eliot uses in order to explore new modes of sociability. The scenes of hospitality that interest me stage the stranger precisely on the threshold of the domestic.

and their acceptance or otherwise in sleepy Midlands parishes. A Polish countess in 'Amos Barton', an Italian orphan in 'Mr Gilfil's Love Story', and the Methodist preacher, Mr Tryan, in 'Janet's Repentance': the arrival of all three is the occasion for narrative intrigue and affective display. Eliot's later works likewise figure the advent of incomers: one thinks of the entry of Harold Transome, back from the East, at the beginning of *Felix Holt* (1866); or the arrival of Lydgate, the 'stranger [who] was absolutely necessary to Rosamond's social romance' in Chapter 12 of *Middlemarch* (1871–72); or the less auspicious advent of the blackmailer Raffles on whose intrusion the plot in the later part of the novel depends. Of course, the arrival of strangers is hardly a new subject for narrative fiction: from Oedipus onwards, stories in which a stranger arrives, disruption occurs, and the social order changes are among the most powerful and influential of narratives in world literature.<sup>8</sup> But within Eliot's works, and more widely in the corpus of nineteenth-century English novels, the story of the newcomer takes on some particular and persistent features. Some of these are exemplified in Mirah's arrival in Chapter 18 of *Daniel Deronda*: a stranger stands on or close to a threshold and requests refuge; she is welcomed (in this case) by the hosts; her acceptance — or her exclusion — is presented specifically as a matter of ethical importance for which the hosts are admired or castigated. Often (as in *Daniel Deronda*) the scene is thickly elaborated with cultural allusions to biblical and classical sources, but this is not a requirement. A version of this scene occurs in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), when the monster, having spent some weeks observing the De Lacey family within and learning the lessons of cosmopolitan reason from their conversations and readings, reveals himself to them. In their case the members of the family fail the hospitality test by rejecting the monster on the basis of his ugly appearance. Better in *Jane Eyre* (1847), when Jane, 'absolutely destitute' having fled Thornfield Hall and Rochester's offer of bigamous marriage, stands on the threshold of the Rivers's no less cosmopolitan household.<sup>9</sup> This time she is welcomed into the home, although later she will refuse St John's offer of total integration in marriage. Elements of these threshold scenes reverberate throughout both texts, indicating that they constitute a topos of intertextual significance, and perhaps even serve as each novel's ethical crux.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> On classical, medieval as well as nineteenth-century hospitality narratives, see Marcus Waithe, *William Morris's Utopia of Strangers: Victorian Medievalism and the Ideal of Hospitality* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006), Chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup> Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. by Margaret Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 313 (Chap. 28).

<sup>10</sup> I examine some of these scenes in 'Novel Politics and the Deficit Society', in 'Isobel Armstrong's *Novel Politics*: Four Responses and a Reply from the Author (Part II)', *Textual Practice*, 32 (2018), 1049–93 (pp. 1058–67). On hospitality in the late nineteenth-century novel, see Rachel Hollander, *Narrative Hospitality in*

The persistence of the scene of hospitality in diverse nineteenth-century novels suggests that they have a particular place within this phase of the genre's development. How then might they function in the novels of George Eliot? In this article I will examine some scenes of hospitality in Eliot's works, and ask what these might tell us about the novel genre and its operations both as a narrative form and as a cultural intervention. In doing so I contribute to current debates about novel form and its political efficacy in this period. In *Novel Politics* Isobel Armstrong notes that the tendency within some current readings of the nineteenth-century British novel is to see it as a fundamentally conservative form, complicit with the ideologies of a class-driven, patriarchal, and imperialist culture.<sup>11</sup> As Armstrong writes, such readings emphasize the endings of novels, the ways in which the form of the novel appears to tie up and resolve problems and contradictions that arise in the works. But if one shifts the balance of the reading, to give greater emphasis to the body of the work rather than its ending, Armstrong argues that a more open and genuinely interrogative genre emerges. The novel in her view should be seen as a democratic form, a stage for exploration and debate of the contradictions and dilemmas that emerged in nineteenth-century society — something like the eighteenth-century genre of the inquiry — often taking issue, rather than complying, with the ruling ideologies of capital and empire. Reading, therefore, might be seen as a process of disassemblage, in which the various components of the novel are taken apart and viewed as distinct contributions to an inquiry or an investigation, in which issues are examined and solutions weighed.

Might we consider scenes of hospitality as though they are elements of such an inquiry? Drivers of narrative complication, sites of ethical inquiry, and nodes within dense networks of literary allusion, these scenes also serve as a framework through which narratives imagine and establish a social geography. It is this last aspect of the scene that I pursue here. Scenes of hospitality, I propose, are significant as they present a means through which to imagine borders or frontiers, not as walls or physical borders, such as coasts or rivers, or even administrative checkpoints, but

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*Late Victorian Fiction: Novel Ethics* (London: Routledge, 2013). Hollander takes an explicitly Levinasian approach. She argues engagingly that hospitality emerges as a specific variation on the aesthetic mode of sympathy in late nineteenth-century realist novels. My argument here, that modes of hospitality are rooted in styles of demography which were new in the nineteenth century, suggests a different chronology than Hollander's, as well as a reading of the novel that focuses on social and political questions more than purely ethical questions.

<sup>11</sup> See also, for instance, Elaine Freedgood's bravura reading of Victorian novels in *Worlds Enough: The Invention of Realism in the Victorian Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), in which she argues that the novel is a form that 'thrives on radical change' (p. 136), but that critics have minimized these changes through accounts of realism.

precisely as discursive spaces, places of debate and inquiry, at which the very limits of a society are investigated.<sup>12</sup> In that sense these literary scenes of hospitality might be considered democratic scenes: they examine the boundaries of a community even as they mark them, interrogate their principles of inclusion and exclusion, and the modes of behaviour and ethical standards that govern social relations within.

In seeking to understand these scenes of hospitality in the novel, I take a lead from the political theorist Demetra Kasimis who, in *The Perpetual Immigrant and the Limits of Athenian Democracy*, discusses the ‘metic’ in ancient Athenian thought. The metic is a figure which enjoys some, but not all, of the rights accorded to full citizens in the Athenian democratic state. Although often translated as ‘immigrant’, Kasimis points out that in fact the metic is a ‘unique conceptual category’ because it includes both foreign-born residents and their Athenian-born offspring. It thus cuts across ‘familiar oppositions between natives and foreigners, insiders and outsiders, and citizens and aliens’ (p. 15). For Athenian thinkers, moreover, the metic raised the question: ‘is citizenship a particular way of acting made possible by living in the polis or simply the possession of a legal status [established by birth and] inherited by blood?’ (p. 7). According to Kasimis, these writers ‘draw on the metic [...] not to resecure [an] assertion of naturalized difference but to reveal its fragility and accentuate the political theoretical stakes that are raised by this sort of distinction’ (p. 7). Her analysis highlights not only the ‘racial and genealogical dimensions that democratic exclusion still takes’, but it also ‘prompts us to consider the sense in which this dynamic may in fact be constitutive of democracy as a political arrangement’ (p. 15).

Two elements of Kasimis’s analysis make it suggestive for a reading of scenes of hospitality in the nineteenth-century novel. The first is the way in which she reads scenes involving metic characters as sites in which texts interrogate the principles on which Athenian society makes decisions regarding inclusion and exclusion. These scenes do not necessarily resolve the issues that they identify; but in laying out a series of questions regarding social membership, they suggest ways in which representations of the metic enable an inquiry in the sense that Armstrong has in mind. In

<sup>12</sup> In thinking about borders as discursive spaces, I am influenced by the ways in which the New Keywords Collective conceptualize borders in the context of the current migration ‘crisis’, through notions of ‘border spectacle’, and the ‘border regime’. See Maribel Casas-Cortés and others, ‘New Keywords: Migration and Borders’, *Cultural Studies*, 29 (2015), 55–87 (pp. 66–70). On ways in which borders are marked as discursive spaces in different historical moments, see Elena Isayev, ‘Hospitality: A Timeless Measure of Who We Are?’, *Migration and Society*, 1 (2018), 7–21 <<https://doi.org/10.3167/arms.2018.010103>>. On the logic of wall building as a ‘Pharmakon for waning sovereignty’, see Wendy Brown, *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, new edn (New York: Zone Books, 2017), p. 10.

this way they resemble the scenes of hospitality in the nineteenth-century novel: both can be seen to transform territorial borders into discursive sites (rather than barriers or walls). The second element is Kasimis's intriguing suggestion that discourses around the metic are in fact constitutive of the democracy that at some level they appear to undermine. In relation to scenes of hospitality in nineteenth-century novels, then, we might ask whether these too play a contradictory role in both exposing the scandal of the society's democratic exclusions, while at the same time building on its foundational logic?

The theme of hospitality has come to the fore in recent critical theory, most notably in the work of Jacques Derrida. His *Of Hospitality* opens by establishing the primacy of the concept of hospitality in philosophical inquiry since classical times, and draws out what he calls the 'paradoxical and corrupting law' of hospitality.<sup>13</sup> Derrida identifies two concepts of hospitality that are intimately related yet also radically opposed, and which help us to understand the larger significance of these novel scenes. On the one hand, there is what he calls 'the law of hospitality', an idea derived from the philosophy of Levinas, that is:

absolute hospitality [which] requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner [...] but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names. (p. 25, emphasis in original)

On the other hand, there are 'the laws of hospitality', or 'hospitality by right', which presuppose a set of formal and social reciprocities or obligations on the part of the foreigner or guest:

Precisely because it is inscribed in a right, a custom, an *ethos* and a *Sittlichkeit*, this objective morality [...] presupposes the social and familial status of the contracting parties, that it is possible for them to be called by their names, to have names, to be subjects in law, to be questioned and liable, to have crimes imputed to them, to be held responsible, to be equipped with nameable identities, and proper names. (p. 23, emphasis in original)

This paradox, which lies within all practices of hospitality, engenders the complexity in evidence in the scene of hospitality. That the host's sovereignty is simultaneously assured and challenged by the arrival of the guest is, as Derrida points out, reflected in the etymology of the word *hostis* which

<sup>13</sup> *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 55.

evokes both ‘host’ and ‘enemy’ (p. 53). Host and guest become interchangeable positions:

Anyone who encroaches on my ‘at home’ [...] on my power of hospitality, on my sovereignty as host, I start to regard as an undesirable foreigner, and virtually as an enemy. This other becomes a hostile subject, and I risk becoming their hostage.  
(p. 55)

Host, hostile, hostage: the scene of hospitality tracks the contradictory dynamics of sociality which underpin the ethos of personal morality and of political organization, and exposes the extreme fragility and implicit dangers of both.

Derrida’s analysis illuminates a number of elements within nineteenth-century novelistic representations of hospitality, including the ambivalence and violence that often accompany them. It also highlights the significance of hospitality as an ‘ethos’, a set of laws or regulations that both define a society from within, but equally regulate its boundaries, its mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. These are related to — and to some degree defined by — the laws of the state; but the term ‘ethos’ allows us to think about the ways in which they are also established by custom and the daily practice of individuals and groups, in ways that are not always dependent on the official laws of the polis. To think of hospitality as an ethos also brings its complex environment closer to that which is evoked and interrogated in the novel.

Recent developments of Derrida’s account of hospitality have dwelt on its utopian aspects, as an ontological state of openness, and an ethical ambition.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to remember the extent to which

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<sup>14</sup> These have taken two main directions. On the one hand, Rachel Hollander focuses on the ethics of hospitality as the basis of a particular variation on the idea of sympathy, which she argues is characteristic of late nineteenth-century novels; that is to say, an openness to the other and the unknown as the distinctive ethical state that is both represented and theorized within fictions of this period. Hollander accounts for the shift from sympathy to hospitality as a response to the new conditions of late nineteenth-century imperialism and changes in the domestic social structure, but this is the backdrop rather than the central matter of her argument. See also, Athanassia Williamson, ‘Against Egology: Ethics and Style in George Eliot and Emmanuel Levinas’, *George Eliot Review*, 48 (2017) <<https://georgeeliotreview.org/items/show/864>> [accessed 22 January 2020]. On the other hand, philosophers and critical theorists have explored the utopian possibilities of Derrida’s work in relation to political conceptions of a borderless world. See, for example, Pheng Cheah, ‘To Open: Hospitality and Alienation’, in *The Conditions of Hospitality: Ethics, Politics, and Aesthetics on the Threshold of the Possible*, ed. by Thomas Claviez (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), pp. 57–80, which explores the political possibilities of absolute hospitality as a critique of nation states, and the possibility for imagining a borderless world. Following Marx’s and Hannah



nineteenth-century British discourses of hospitality were embedded in a specific set of historical concerns which should also have a bearing on how we interpret them. Some of these are to do with a shared if imprecise sense of a national past. Marcus Waithe writes that the nineteenth-century idea of the medieval age as a time of open generosity encouraged a nostalgic belief in hospitality as a defining characteristic of the nation. Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819), his influential novel of Anglo-Saxon and Norman families in twelfth-century Britain, presents numerous scenes in which a person's character, and the character of his race, are judged by the standards of unbounded hospitality. But, as Waithe explains, 'the most important catalyst for the popularity of the Merry England myth, and by extension, the construction of an idyllic and hospitable Middle Ages, was the introduction in 1834 of the [N]ew Poor Law' (pp. 17–18). Established on Malthusian principles, the New Poor Law was considered by many to be an affront to the ancient laws of hospitality. Malthus's Mistress of the Feast, the notorious allegorical figure referenced earlier, who turned people away from her dining table in his 1803 *Essay*, haunted these discussions, as either the harbinger of moral decline or the upholder of social order.<sup>15</sup> What is significant here is the way in which, through Malthus's population theory, reproduction and kinship come to the fore.<sup>16</sup> In the Malthusian view, decisions regarding inclusion and exclusion revolve around the family and the regulation of sexuality, and become the basis of the dominant nineteenth-century regime of hospitality. For the novel, a genre in which the family had always been an important organizing principle, scenes of hospitality, I suggest, distil a political problematic in which the stakes seem especially legible.<sup>17</sup>

There is one more context to take into account: settler colonization. In the mid and late nineteenth century, new forms of demographic mobility made questions of hospitality central to the everyday experience of people in new ways. This was a time when, in global terms, more people moved

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Arendt's linking of the discourse of hospitality to a critique of property and capital accumulation within nation states, Cheah explores the proposition that 'absolute hospitality' is 'a constitutive movement of expropriation' (p. 73). For a suggestive account of the affinities between Eliot's novels and Derrida's work on hospitality, see K. M. Newton, 'George Eliot and Jacques Derrida: An Elective Affinity', *Textual Practice*, 23 (2009), 1–26.

<sup>15</sup> Anne Digby, 'Malthus and Reform of the English Poor Law', in *Malthus and His Time*, ed. by Michael Turner (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986), pp. 157–69.

<sup>16</sup> On kinship as an analytical frame, see Janet Carsten, 'Introduction: Cultures of Relatedness', in *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, ed. by Janet Carsten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1–36.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Catherine Gallagher, *The Body Economic: Life, Death, and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), especially Chapter 6, 'Malthusian Anthropology and the Aesthetics of Sacrifice in *Scenes of Clerical Life*'.

more often and over longer distances than ever before. Transnational mobility was a worldwide phenomenon, involving people from every continent of the world; but for people in Britain, overseas movement predominantly took the form of emigration to settlements, especially in North America, Australasia, and South Africa.<sup>18</sup> In this massive, worldwide, demographic redistribution, the laws of hospitality were particularly vexed.<sup>19</sup> Was a newly arrived settler from England in a British colony in Canada, for instance, a guest or a host? And what of the people who already lived there? Did it offend the laws of hospitality to take land and livelihood from an indigenous people? In the context of British settlements, the possibility that a guest might turn the host into something like a hostage was explicitly and violently enacted over and over again.<sup>20</sup>

These are issues that George Eliot's novels explore with different degrees of precision and self-awareness, and on which we might see her novels as conducting an inquiry. In the rest of this article I consider two works, one early, one late, which present scenes of hospitality with particular insistence. *Silas Marner* (1861), possibly the most parochial or provincial of Eliot's works, and *Daniel Deronda* (1876), her most cosmopolitan, are nevertheless both novels of settlement. In the first, Silas Marner, a displaced weaver, settles in an English village; in the second, a self-displaced Jewish couple, Daniel and Mirah, set out to build a colony in 'the East'. This plot line in *Daniel Deronda* is still the most controversial part of all Eliot's

<sup>18</sup> On nineteenth-century global demographic change, see Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. by Patrick Camiller (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 117–66. On the emigration of Britons, see James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Patrick Wolfe, 'Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8 (2006), 387–409; Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Jodi A. Byrd explores the complicities of settlement, displacement, and transit in *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). And for further illumination of the complexities of settlement, see Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015). The operations of kinship within practices of migration are complex and vary at different moments. On contemporary situations, see, for example, Deborah A. Boehm's discussion of the family in the fraught context of the Mexican–US border, in 'Un/making Family: Relatedness, Migration, and Displacement in a Global Age', in *The Cambridge Handbook of Kinship*, ed. by Sandra Bamford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 432–50; on migrants' rights to family life, see Jacqueline Bhabha, *Child Migration and Human Rights in a Global Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); and essays in *Citizenship in Question: Evidentiary Birthright and Statelessness*, ed. by Benjamin N. Lawrance and Jacqueline Stevens (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017). In the context of nineteenth-century settler colonialism in which Eliot wrote, the heteronormative family serves as a principal technology of diaspora.

oeuvre, as it appears to endorse settler colonialism in Israel-Palestine, and by extension even to condone its subsequent violent history.<sup>21</sup> By reading the novel through the lens of hospitality I do not aim to exonerate Eliot from these charges, but rather to see what motivated her analysis. The scene of hospitality, I suggest here, allows us to see the novel as undertaking an inquiry into the basis of settler colonialism, and in the process exposing the contradictions on which it rests.<sup>22</sup>

### Provincial hospitality: *Silas Marner*

*Silas Marner* tells the story of a weaver who, having been unjustly expelled from a dissenting community in a Midlands town, drifts into a rural English village, Raveloe, to live and work in exile. While in the beginning his new neighbours treat him with suspicion, over the course of the narrative they gradually absorb him into their community and welcome him. The narrative has constant recourse to a vocabulary of refuge: Raveloe is named a 'refuge', a 'land in which [Silas] had taken refuge', a place of 'Lethan exile', providing 'shelter' and 'protect[ion] [...] from persecution'.<sup>23</sup> In both its central themes and an idiom that highlights an ethos of social care, the novel idealizes the traditional English village as the locus of true hospitality.

Perhaps the most convivial of all Eliot's works, *Silas Marner* is dotted throughout with scenes of village hospitality, especially those set at the Rainbow Inn, the village pub, a hostelry where locals gather to gossip, celebrate festivals, including, at the end of the story, the wedding of Silas's adopted daughter, Eppie.<sup>24</sup> What makes the engagement with the idea of hospitality even more pronounced in this work is the fact that Silas's acceptance in the village is precipitated by his own adaptation to the values of open hospitality. A reclusive miser, living in isolation and nursing the

<sup>21</sup> From its first publication, *Daniel Deronda* divided readers on the Jewish Question. On its early reception, see David Glover, *Literature, Immigration and Diaspora in Fin-de-Siècle England: A Cultural History of the 1905 Aliens Act* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 15–46. In recent decades Edward Said's powerful critique of imperialism has set the terms for all ongoing discussion of the novel. See Edward W. Said, 'Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims', *Social Text*, 1 (1979), 7–58. The most insightful account of the controversy that it has provoked is Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 94–97.

<sup>22</sup> Compare with Newton, in 'George Eliot and Jacques Derrida: An Elective Affinity', who identifies the figure of hospitality as a route to unpacking the complexity of Eliot's writing on the question of colonialism.

<sup>23</sup> George Eliot, *Silas Marner, the Weaver of Raveloe*, ed. by Terence Cave (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 15, 14 (Chap. 2), 41 (Chap. 5), and 7 (Chap. 1).

<sup>24</sup> On inns as traditional sites of English medieval hospitality, see Waithe, p. 15 and *passim*.

wounds inflicted on him by the cult which evicted him, ‘he invited no comer to step across his door-sill’, until a young child appears on his doorstep (p. 6). In a narrative that at this stage evokes Holman Hunt’s *Light of the World*, he is coaxed into a new life by his uncharacteristic admission of Eppie. Through this act, Silas begins his gradual reparation and simultaneous integration into the village. The excess of conviviality and openness to strangers in Raveloe also differentiates it from the austere and exclusionary society of Lantern Yard, the primitive religious cult from which Silas had been evicted. Towards the end of the novel, Silas and Eppie take a trip back to Lantern Yard but find that it has disappeared in the further industrialization of the town. Its physical disappearance suggests a kind of evolutionary advance from the industrial town to the country village: one a remnant of a discarded society, the other a living entity.<sup>25</sup> The rural village (in contrast to the industrial town) is presented as an adaptive organism, able to incorporate newcomers, while retaining its traditional customs and institutions — the inn, the church, and the family — and above all, its ethos of hospitality.

Scenes in which a stranger arrives in *Silas Marner* not only generate intrigue within the narrative; they also provide the novel with its primary scenes of ethical inquiry.<sup>26</sup> There are many such instances, but pivotal is that of the arrival of the child, Eppie, in Chapter 12. The scene follows the pattern of Mirah’s arrival at the Meyricks’ in *Daniel Deronda*: the child stands on the doorstep; Silas allows her in; he is rewarded for his action by his acceptance into the village community. This version of the scene, however, is complicated by Silas’s unusual psychological condition. He suffers from a kind of epilepsy (in the novel it is referred to as ‘catalepsy’) which casts him into states of unconsciousness, and when the child ‘toddles’ in, he is standing unwittingly at the door of his cottage. That is to say, it is not clear that he has willed her entry. Instead it seems to be a moment of almost supernatural or divine intervention. The same condition that had earlier enabled Dunstan, the thief, to enter Silas’s house while Silas was similarly stricken by catalepsy and take his hoarded gold, now enables the entrance of the golden-haired child: ‘[Silas] was arrested [...] by the invisible wand of catalepsy, and stood like a graven image, with wide but sightless eyes, holding open his door, powerless to resist either the good or the evil that might enter there’ (p. 108 (Chap. 12)). Through scattered classical and biblical allusions — the ‘invisible wand’ brings to mind a caduceus, the wand carried by the messenger god, Hermes; Silas’s ‘sightless eyes’ recall

<sup>25</sup> Josephine McDonagh, ‘Space, Mobility, and the Novel: “The spirit of place is a great reality”’, in *Adventures in Realism*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 50–67 (p. 63).

<sup>26</sup> Moira Gatens identifies this as the central scene in her Spinozian reading of *Silas Marner*, as ‘a meditation on the fragility of the meaning and value of a human life and on the interdependence of our capacities to survive and flourish’. See Moira Gatens, *Spinoza’s Hard Path to Freedom* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 2011), p. 40.

Tiresias's blind eyes; and the 'graven image' evokes the Bible's injunction against the making of such images — the scene is framed as a prophetic one in which Silas blindly participates (unlike the threshold scene in *Daniel Deronda*, when the play of glances between Mirah, the 'four faces', and Daniel is carefully choreographed).

Elsewhere in *Silas Marner*, thresholds are presented as sites of both divine justice and human intervention. 'You have woven a plot to lay the sin at my door' (p. 12 (Chap. 1)), Silas rightly accuses William in Lantern Yard when he is wrongly accused of theft; and later, in Raveloe, in his dispute with Godfrey Cass (Eppie's natural father) regarding the paternity of Eppie, Silas authorizes his claim when he says, 'When a man turns a blessing from his door it falls to them as take it in' (p. 164 (Chap. 19)) — an expression that Godfrey repeats verbatim to his wife indicating that he accepts Silas's higher claim. The door as both a material site as well as a metaphor is recurrently evoked as the place of ethical dilemmas which constitute the central agenda of the novel. How to distinguish between money and human life; how to take responsibility for one's actions; and most of all, how to create social cohesion through warm hospitality: all these questions are posed on doorsteps. From the scene of ingress is thus summoned an entire social vision of a good society built on the principles of open hospitality.

But not everyone has entry into this society: hospitality in *Silas Marner* falls short of the absolute hospitality imagined by Derrida. The most striking exclusion is that of Molly, Eppie's mother. When Eppie crosses Silas's threshold, her mother lies outside, dead in the snow. The novel's account of the exclusion of Molly, an opium addict, is precise. We are told not only the causes of her dereliction, but also that she is conscious of these causes: 'Molly knew that the cause of her dingy rags was not her husband's neglect,' we are informed, 'but the demon Opium to whom she was enslaved' (p. 105 (Chap. 12)). Her ostracism by society is seemingly justified, not only by her weakness of will that allowed her to fall into addiction, but also by her own 'vindictive' (the word is used twice) behaviour (pp. 105, 106). Intent on 'mar(ring) [her husband's] pleasure', she turns him into a kind of victim (p. 105). Perhaps most damning in the context of this novel is the fact that she intends to wreak revenge on him by committing an offence against hospitality: she is on her way to the New Year's party at the Red House, in order to expose him to his family as her secret husband and father of her child. Unlike Eppie, who charms her host (Silas) with her innocent play, Molly sets out to be a bad guest and to abuse the ethos of hospitality.

The treatment of Molly within the narrative is often overlooked in accounts that find *Silas Marner* to be a touching parable of human acceptance and integration, as indeed, in a way, it is. But if her death seems like a harsh punishment for an unfortunate woman, we should also recognize the forensic analysis to which it is subject. In this text the narrative requires

Molly's demise in order to sustain the ethos of hospitality the novel proposes. Put simply, without her death, Eppie would not have arrived so fortuitously at Silas's door. Within the context of mid-nineteenth-century Britain, it is difficult not to see at this point in the story the insertion of a Malthusian logic, adapted to suit the story's themes, and it is that logic (rather than Molly's deviant behaviour) that is under scrutiny. Although not strictly unmarried, Molly is nonetheless a version of the wayward, sexually active woman that Malthus castigates as the origin of surplus population — a concept which for him is catastrophic. Her enslavement to opium is a way of indicating both her uncontrolled desires and her weakness of will. Her death is thus as inevitable in the text as it is unmourned. These are the conditions, the text says, under which certain people live and die, and it is these conditions that the text critiques. The critique operates by turning Molly's offspring, equally a part of the surplus population and who for Malthus is a living reproach to its wayward begetters, into the agent of social renewal. In the end the text opens the possibility that a restricted reversal of Malthusian doctrine, rather than complicity with it, is the path to a better world.

Considering this scene of hospitality in its full rendition, therefore, allows us to see the social map that the novel produces and simultaneously critiques. In Armstrong's terms, it is a site of inquiry. The threshold appears at first reading to be only a point of ingress, a scene for staging the ethical transformation of Silas, a replay of Hunt's *Light of the World* in which Eppie plays the part of Christ.<sup>27</sup> But it is also a site of exclusion, and it seems relevant that the person who must be excluded is the woman whose sexuality and appetites threaten the equilibrium of the village. We might see this threshold as a kind of border or frontier that establishes the contours of the community. Molly's corpse in the snow outside reminds us that its customs require a logic of exclusion — and that the casualty must be a woman. If in the coolness of its vision the narrative remarks on the cruelty of this situation — Molly's vindictiveness, it seems to say, is the result (rather than the cause) of her exclusion as a woman — it also offers the possibility of change by seeing in her child the seeds of redemption.

At the very end of the novel, Eppie arrives again at Silas's threshold, this time with her bridal party. It revises in a different key Eppie's surprise arrival as an infant on the fateful December night. Now Silas's home has been extended and improved. Its 'larger garden', we are told, 'was fenced

<sup>27</sup> When Eppie enters Silas's home, she is chasing the flickering light shining from his hearth within. On *The Light of the World*, Eliot wrote that 'it is impossible to look at the picture without feeling the power there is in it — but it is too medieval and pietistic to be rejoiced in as a product of the present age'. See letter to Cara Bray, 19 May 1854, in *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. by Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954–78), II: 1852–1858 (1954), 156. On Eliot's being influenced by Hunt's painting, see also Witemeyer, p. 91.

with stones on two sides, but in front there was an open fence, through which the flowers shone with answering gladness, as the four united people came within sight of them' (p. 176 (Conclusion)). This is an image of human society at one with nature, in which a hospitable welcome is made by the flowers to a group of 'four united people', made up of adopted father, his daughter, her husband, and his mother, an adaptation of the conventional family. Yet the passage also stresses that the improvements to the home are 'at the expense of Mr. Cass, the landlord [and Eppie's natural father], to suit Silas's larger family' (p. 176). Silas is not a property owner, only a tenant, and Cass still plays a commanding role in this extended family community as both property owner and patriarch. This is not God's land but Cass's. And his domain is expanding: the 'open fence' at the front of the garden provides both an aperture through which the family can freely enter, but also the possibility for further encroachment of the land. By now the novel has forgotten the excluded and punished Molly; but it has not forgotten that kinship and property drive each other ever onwards in an unstoppable progress of appropriation, cultivation, and exclusion.

*Silas Marner's* final vision of a good society, therefore, reflects the ideology of settlerism. No matter how much the family is adapted, and no matter how harmonious the cultivation of the land might seem to be in these closing lines, the text is nevertheless underpinned by a belief that the regulated reproduction of the family will drive, and justify, the ever-expanding colonization of land and territory. Silas *settles into*, that is, assimilated into, the neighbourhood. But he also *settles* in the prominent (even dominant) nineteenth-century sense of the word as to colonize. Ruth Livesey has pointed out how Silas's settlement involves his constant movement across the region, what she calls his 'micro-mobilities' which ultimately create a sense of 'portable place', or 'an embodied practice of dynamic place'.<sup>28</sup> This includes his ethical re-education in the natural environment, led by the innocent Eppie. In Livesey's nicely turned phrase, 'Marner experiences the "unfolding" of a new place-ballet of "at-homeness" through haptics and analogical development growing out of miniature objects' (p. 567). But Livesey's 'non-suspicious' reading (her term) exonerates the novel from its final recourse to the inevitability of the appropriative logic of settlement. In fact, rather than overlook this, the novel illustrates it, and makes the point, powerfully articulated by Arjun Appadurai, that a 'moment of colonization' is an inevitable part of the practices of 'all locality building'.<sup>29</sup> That there is a violence attached to this is made manifest in the cruel death of Molly. By reading the novel as an inquiry constructed around its scenes

<sup>28</sup> Ruth Livesey, 'On Writing Portable Place: George Eliot's Mobile Midlands', *Mobilities*, 12 (2017), 559–71 (p. 561).

<sup>29</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Public Worlds, 1 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 183.

of hospitality, we can see how it both exposes and interrogates — but does not resolve (*pace* Livesey) — the problematic logic of settler colonization.

### Cosmopolitan hospitality: *Daniel Deronda*

*Silas Marner* is an exceptional novel among Eliot's works because it is so inward-looking and makes barely any reference to places outside England's borders. Unlike all other works by Eliot which imagine England in the context of the wider world, in *Silas Marner* there appears to be no outside.<sup>30</sup> When the word 'country' is used, it is not to reference a nation but rather a region, such as the 'unknown country' from which Silas hails (p. 81 (Chap. 10)); and 'my country, [is] a good way off' (p. 122 (Chap. 14)). And when foreigners are imagined, as they are by the drinkers in the Rainbow, they are people with a 'swarthy foreignness of complexion which boded little honesty', and sporting earrings (p. 59 (Chap. 8)). That is to say, they are gypsies, the typical inhabitants of any picturesque English scene. The studied introversion of *Silas Marner* makes even foreigners seem autochthonous.

*Daniel Deronda* is a very different novel. As *Silas Marner* gazes inwards at its local community, *Daniel Deronda* looks outwards directly to imagine the diasporic and dispersed communities of settler colonization. To that extent, therefore, it sets out to examine settlerism head on. The colony that it projects, however, is not an Anglo-Saxon settlement of white Britons, in line with historical trends in migration in this period. Rather, it imagines a settler colony of European Jews in Palestine. Although this colony is never actually realized within the novel — it ends with Daniel and Mirah on the brink of their journey east — the idea of it dominates the novel, and the scenes of hospitality that are dotted throughout operate within its concerns. By choosing to represent settler colonization through a story

<sup>30</sup> References to the outside world are abundant in Eliot's other provincial novels. To take just two examples: in *Adam Bede*, Eliot has Hetty go to Australia, and Arthur Donnithorne to India; and in *Middlemarch*, an episode famously takes place in Rome, and there are plenty of references throughout to Paris, Boulogne, Poland, and the Levant. Eliot was an enthusiastic traveller in Europe. On the ways in which her fiction drew on her own experience of travel, see John Rignall, 'George Eliot and the Idea of Travel', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 36.2 (2006), 139–52. For her relationship to the British Empire, see Nancy Henry, *George Eliot and the British Empire*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture, 34 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). While she did not physically travel beyond Europe, she did so virtually. On her visit to a panorama of 'The Overland Route to India' in 1851, see Isobel Armstrong, 'The Traffic in Representations: The Case of Kipling's *Kim*', in *Commodities and Culture in the Colonial World*, ed. by Supriya Chaudhuri, Josephine McDonagh, Brian H. Murray, and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 199–210.



about Jews, a group of people who have been excluded throughout history because of their religion, the novel is predisposed to see the idea of the settlement as a refuge or place of asylum for an unjustly displaced people, rather than as encroachment on pre-inhabited land.

It is this process that is one of the principal objects of inquiry of the novel, and it is opened in the scene of Mirah's arrival in Chapter 18. Inevitably, the scene of hospitality here is more complex than in *Silas Marner*. In this version of the scene of hospitality, the stranger, an adult and a Jew, has arrived from abroad (Prague) in the metropolitan centre of an expansive empire. Despite its village-like qualities — the all-female household she enters is composed of a family of craftworkers engaged in collaborative labour, a cooperative venture that resembles the pre-industrial work of rural communities — the Meyrick household is embedded in metropolitan networks: the terraced house they live in backs onto the River Thames, abutting the transportation networks that link London to the wider world.<sup>31</sup> In fact, nowhere could be less like the isolated hamlet of Raveloe, famously cut off from transportation and print networks, than the Meyricks' house in Chelsea. The cosmopolitan nature of the household is emphasized throughout by its interior decoration: for example, the engravings on the walls which 'held a world-history in scenes and heads' (p. 164 (Chap. 18)). It is also encoded in the activities that happen within: the women embroider scenes of 'the great world' on satin cushions, while reading aloud a novel in French, Erckmann-Chatrion's popular work, *Histoire d'un conscrit de 1813* (1864), a sentimental novel about the Napoleonic wars advocating peace between nations, and evoking, however distantly, Immanuel Kant's classic statement on cosmopolitanism, *Towards a Perpetual Peace* (1795). Mrs Meyrick is half-French and half-Scottish (p. 165), like the heroine of Madame de Staël's cosmopolitan novel, *Corinne* (1807). Even the Persian cat, whose name, Hafiz (p. 166), refers to the Islamic prophet who memorized the Quran, helps to establish the cosmopolitan — and ecumenical — assemblage of the household. In fact, every detail in this meticulously documented scene emphasizes a cosmopolitan culture to the extent that Mirah's unequivocal welcome seems almost to be overdetermined. Mrs Meyrick remarks to her daughters that their young guest appears to be 'quite refined', that she 'know[s] Italian and music' (p. 167), as though she is already well versed in the common culture of cosmopolitanism; as though she fitted in before she had even arrived.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> On the Meyrick family and work, see Armstrong, *Novel Politics*, pp. 233–34. On the concept of the village in global contexts, see my 'A Genealogy of the Village', in *Commodities and Culture in the Colonial World*, ed. by Chaudhuri and others, pp. 145–60; and on Eliot's villages, 'Imagining Locality and Affiliation: George Eliot's Villages', in *A Companion to George Eliot*, ed. by Amanda Anderson and Harry E. Shaw (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 353–69.

<sup>32</sup> The most searching account of cosmopolitanism in *Daniel Deronda* is by Amanda

All the more surprising, therefore, that their hopes of cosmopolitan integration are dashed. The Meyricks wish that her Jewishness ‘would gradually melt away from her’, but there is no sign that this will happen (p. 303 (Chap. 32)). In the end there are limits to the Meyricks’ hospitality. In a later scene Mrs Meyrick writes to Daniel, that ‘at breakfast time we all look towards the door with expectation to see her come in; and we watch her and listen to her as if she were a native from a new country’ (p. 302). After this, the narrative goes on casually to adumbrate the differences between Jewish and Christian religious customs that, for the Meyricks, erect an irresolvable distance between them. Even though to the Meyricks, ‘any criticism, whether of doctrine or of practice, would have seemed to these generous little people an inhospitable cruelty’, Mirah’s attachment to her inherited religion bewilders them (p. 303). The reference to their diminutive size serves to frame this scene as an ethnographic one: Mirah is like ‘a native from a new country’, Brobdingnagian in her proportions; and they her observing witnesses. It is as though all that Mirah is able to do is endlessly repeat an act of arrival that only enforces her otherness. What should happen next cannot be conceived.

The novel’s decision about Mirah’s outsider status seems to be inscribed through this attenuated scene of arrival. How the narrative accounts for her exclusion is more complex. In *Silas Marner* Molly was excluded because of her sexual deviancy as a not really married woman. In this text Mirah is doubly excluded: she is a single woman lacking the protection of either father or husband, and she is also a Jew. The Meyricks respond compassionately in relation to the first; but they cannot entirely condone the second. Yet curiously, they conflate religious difference with the laws of kinship. It is specifically the Jewish customs around the treatment of women which — for Christians in the novel including the Meyricks — mark a decisive division between Jewish and Christian society. Of all the differences between Jews and Christians that are noted in the novel, this is the most insistent.<sup>33</sup> When Mab and Amy go with Mirah to the synagogue, they are appalled by the segregation of men and women in Jewish religious ritual. Throughout, the novel dwells on the repressive treatment of women in Judaism, not just Mirah. The reason that Daniel’s mother, Leonora, rejects the Jewish religion, relinquishes her son, and hides from him his religious inheritance, is her father’s extreme patriarchal domination over her. His determination that she be a good Jewish wife and mother, to have children

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Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 119–46. Also important is Irene Tucker’s *A Probable State: The Novel, the Contract and the Jews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>33</sup> The idea that the treatment of women is a gauge of a society’s civilized values is well established. The classic rendition is William Alexander, *The History of Women*, 2 vols (London: Strahan, 1779).

and to reproduce her race at the expense of her own vocation as an opera singer, compelled her to act in this way. ‘I was forced into marrying your father’, she says bitterly to Daniel (p. 527 (Chap. 51)). The enforcement of these gender roles denies women the possibility of self-determination and excludes them from public life. If they transgress, they will be ostracized. ‘Every woman is supposed to have the same set of motives, or else be a monster’ (p. 529), she complains.<sup>34</sup> The double dilemma for Jewish women in the novel is that to rebel against patriarchy is to be ostracized; and to comply with patriarchy, to be properly Jewish, is to be ostracized too.

Mirah’s history, which is more extreme than Leonora’s, repeats the same patterns. Her father has total domination over her, abducts her from her mother and brother, and exploits her labour as a singer for his own gain. At his most extreme, the disreputable Lapidoth even tries to sell his daughter to another man for sex. Mirah, in the most explicit way possible, refuses the exchange of women for the material gain and power of men.<sup>35</sup> Such transactions are the basis of the patriarchal family, and are those from which Leonora escapes. When Mirah arrives at the Meyricks’, she too has escaped from the clutches of a tyrannical father; and at first look, the matriarchal household in Chelsea seems like the perfect refuge. But as we have seen, her religious difference makes integration impossible. The scene of hospitality at the Meyricks’ repeats that of Eppie’s arrival in *Silas Marner*, but now Mirah, whose childishness and womanliness are stressed in equal measure throughout the novel, plays the role of both Eppie and Molly; she is both welcomed (like Eppie) and rejected (like Molly). Mirah’s exclusion, however, rests on her religion and ethnicity, rather than her wayward sexuality. Yet that too is a matter of kinship: if Mirah had married Hans Meyrick, for instance, as he would have liked, her integration would have been complete. Unassimilated into the Meyrick household, Mirah becomes in a sense an outcast, a kind of refugee. In the end religious exclusion and kinship rules combine to cast her from the household and determine her migration to the East with Daniel. The scene of hospitality, therefore, is linked to the settler project that dominates the novel. The colony is an asylum from the failed hospitality of Christian England enacted in the Meyrick household. It is the necessary resort for refugees.

Yet if Christians despise Jews for their domineering fathers, as they do throughout the novel, Anglo-Saxon patriarchy is shown to be no less

<sup>34</sup> Leonora evokes Shelley’s Frankenstein in speaking of monsters. On gendering the monster female, see, for example, Barbara Johnson, ‘My Monster/My Self’, *Diacritics*, 12.2 (1982), 2–10.

<sup>35</sup> To that extent, then, Mirah understands the nature of kinship as explained by Lévi-Strauss, as ‘an exchange of women between men’. See Gayle Rubin’s still seminal essay on kinship as an economic network: ‘The Traffic in Women: Notes on the “Political Economy” of Sex’, in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. by Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157–210 (p. 171).

problematic. In fact throughout, we are made aware that it is this that underpins an entire system of power and privilege that is the target of so much critique. Alongside the issue of Jewish integration, this is the main object of inquiry in the novel, and the two questions intertwine.<sup>36</sup> The laws of inheritance exclude daughters from inheriting the property of their families (the inability of the Mallinger daughters to inherit Sir Hugo's estate provokes Sir Hugo's involvement with Grandcourt), and at the same time cast illegitimate children into the wilderness. These laws also account for Grandcourt's tyranny over Gwendolen, to such an extent that their marriage is frequently compared with enslavement. Gwendolen marries for money, an act that turns out to have been a terrible error. But she does so because of the lack of alternatives that she has as a woman through which to support her own fatherless and penniless family. The novel focuses obsessively on the forms of exclusion that the patriarchal family inflicts and their consequences: the extreme cruelty of Grandcourt to Gwendolen; Daniel's shame at his early (mis)recognition of his status, as he imagines himself to be the illegitimate son of Sir Hugo; the social slur surrounding Grandcourt's mistress, Lydia Glasher, and her three illegitimate children. As in *Silas Marner*, the family as an institution is shown to create outcasts, those who cannot be assimilated into the community, the women and children who are the surplus population of the novel. It is not the Jewish family that produces these exclusions. Rather, it is the Anglo-Saxon, English family that endorses brutal class hierarchies, ostracizes unmarried women, and sustains the underlying racism that is tracked throughout the conversations of the English characters, including the Meyricks.

The exclusionary politics of the family are revealed in dramatic scenes which occur throughout the novel. Invariably, these are scenes of ingress in which thresholds are crossed — not exactly scenes of hospitality, but ones in which the dynamics of hospitality are revised. Perhaps the most dramatic of these occurs on Gwendolen's marriage night. The entire scene is depicted as one long arrival of the couple in their marital home, Ryelands. The splendour of her marriage is indicated through the opulence of the entrance hall of the house: 'But there was a brilliant light in the hall — warmth, matting, carpets, full-length portraits, Olympian statues, assiduous servants' (p. 299 (Chap. 31)). The newly married couple begin a long, stately walk into the interior of the house, in which the crossing of thresholds is eroticized: 'Gwendolen felt herself being led by Grandcourt along a subtly-scented corridor, into an ante-room where she saw an open doorway sending out a rich glow of light and colour' (p. 299). The sensuousness of scents, colours, lights, Gwendolen's passivity 'being led by Grandcourt', as they pass from one chamber to the next; the tension before

<sup>36</sup> I am indebted here to Armstrong's powerful analysis of illegitimacy in *Daniel Deronda* in *Novel Politics*, pp. 162–80.

the consummation builds. ‘These are our dens’, Grandcourt says ominously, as though the inner sanctum of the house is a kind of lair (p. 299). Enconced in her own ‘den’, Gwendolen receives a package of jewels — her wedding gift from her husband, transmitted by their former owner, Lydia Glasher. The accompanying letter curses Gwendolen for having usurped Lydia’s place and that of her children as Grandcourt’s rightful heirs, making clear that Gwendolen has been complicit with the exclusionary — and unjust — laws of kinship for her own gain. When she sees Grandcourt, ‘the sight of him brought a new nervous shock’, and Gwendolen screams hysterically. His entry into the room is thus the second in a series of unwelcome arrivals. First the jewels, then Grandcourt: ‘there was a tap at the door and Grandcourt entered, dressed for dinner.’ As Gwendolen ‘screamed again and again with hysterical violence’, the narrative comments that ‘in some form or other the furies had crossed his threshold’ (p. 301). In this scene the crossing of a threshold is associated with transgression rather than hospitality: first eroticism, then the trauma provoked by the rebuke of the outcast mistress and her offspring. The emphasis on thresholds encourages us to see this as a reworking of the scene of hospitality. Just as the arrival of Eppie necessitated the exclusion of Molly, her mother in *Silas Marner*, here Gwendolen’s arrival is at the expense of Lydia Glasher, the sexually deviant woman.

### Conclusion: Mirah as Medea?

In concluding my excursus into these scenes of hospitality, I draw out two points. The first is that in *Daniel Deronda* the backdrop of cosmopolitanism and world affairs redefines what in *Silas Marner* is an issue of small-scale community ethics as a question of international relations and the founding of a new Jewish nation. But despite this scaling up, *Daniel Deronda* presents a similar world view — and this is what is made legible by the scenes of hospitality. Both texts find the same contradictory logic at work. In both, acts of hospitality create an asylum for displaced people; but they also operate to exclude people, creating refugees in the process. In Kasimis’s terms, this is the politics of democratic exclusion. In *Silas Marner* and *Daniel Deronda* we see that the politics of exclusion work in a cyclical way. But while in *Silas Marner* the process is contained within the geographical terrain of Raveloe, in *Daniel Deronda* displacement projects people across the world, to settlements in a distant continent. As many have noted, Eliot’s novel does not take account of the impact of this on the native people in Palestine, about whom she was certainly aware. Should we imagine that they, like the Meyricks, watch Mirah and Daniel arrive ‘at breakfast time’ as though ‘native[s] from a new country’ (p. 302 (Chap. 32))? There is little to suggest that this might be the case, although the failure of the Meyricks to imagine

Mirah's continued life within their household pre-empts the failure of the novel as a whole to imagine Mirah's future in the East.

The second point is the importance of kinship within these scenes of hospitality. Each of them demonstrates the significance of marriage and the regulation of women to the upholding of the social body. Each novel provides critique of this exclusionary and unjust process. More significantly in this context, however, is the way in which Eliot identifies kinship as a factor in the processes of exclusion that she links in both texts to displacement and migration. The reference to the furies, who in classical mythology were the goddesses of vengeance who punished men for their transgressions against the natural order, reminds us that the arrival of the diamonds in *Daniel Deronda* replays an episode in Euripides' *Medea*, in which Medea sends a poisoned dress to Jason's new wife, who has usurped her, before murdering his children.<sup>37</sup> In the novel Lydia Glasher is repeatedly associated with Medea, as the vengeful other woman. But we should also remember that Euripides' *Medea* is an immigrant twice over. First, she leaves her native home to come with Jason to Corinth; and after his betrayal, becomes a refugee and asylum seeker in Athens.<sup>38</sup> As Kasimis points out, her passage to Athens is made possible because she helps Aegeus with his fertility problem: in effect, she swaps Jason's children (who she murders) for Aegeus's (who she helps be born).<sup>39</sup> Euripides' tragedy is, she argues, 'an instructive investigation into the making of a refugee' ('Medea the Refugee'). Encrypted in the figure of Medea, therefore, is not just the epitome of an abused and angry ex-wife, but more importantly, a recognition of the significance that kinship plays in the processes of exclusion and inclusion, and of the laws that define that society, that mark its borders, and eject those who do not belong.

We might then think not only of Lydia as a Medea figure, and Molly too, in *Silas Marner*, who, like Medea, is actively vengeful and neglects her child. But perhaps also Mirah, the immigrant and refugee, who like Medea recognizes the importance of kinship in the making of nations and their borders. Mirah's goodness shines brightly throughout, so the association with Medea is preposterous. But it is also the case that she understands

<sup>37</sup> Gillian Beer, *George Eliot* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), pp. 144, 208. See also, my *Child Murder and British Culture 1720–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 167–68.

<sup>38</sup> Kasimis discusses this in 'Medea the Refugee'.

<sup>39</sup> Compare with Kasimis: 'The political kinship positions to which women are assigned by the regulation of marriage and biological reproduction emerge first in Corinth and then, if differently, in Athens as the only available yet contingent routes for acquiring authorization, residency, and protection. The text's critical power would thus seem to reside partly in its capacity to show us how the regulation of migration and the adjudication of asylum demands can work to reinforce (women's) subjection even when they offer refuge' ('Medea the Refugee').

and, by marrying Daniel, takes control of the symbolic system in which women are requisitioned for their reproductive roles. Her marriage choice, we might say, is calculating, and we can only imagine what Mirah would do if Daniel, like Jason, betrayed her. After all, while courting Mirah, Daniel has engaged the passionate feelings of another woman, Gwendolen. In the final chapter, in which Mirah's wifely devotion is unquestioned, Daniel receives a letter from his 'other woman', Gwendolen, who professes her ongoing gratitude to him. A replay of Gwendolen's own fateful marriage letter, perhaps? It makes clear that these triangulated relationships in which substitution is always imminent continue, and will underpin the settlement in the East.

Rather than seeing the novel as providing a rationale and justification for settler colonialism in Palestine, then, as has been the tendency in recent criticism, reading the novel through its scenes of hospitality highlights some ways in which the text interrogates the conditions that make this act of settlement seem both necessary and inevitable. This is the inquiry that preoccupies the novel. It is deeply embedded in the novel's plot lines and its thickly allusive surfaces, and we should see it as an element of the novel's form. By taking apart the narrative and stacking up the scenes of arrival, we can see in the novel an uncomfortable and unresolved examination of questions about refuge, asylum, and settlement, as well as the politics of the family and the exclusion of women from nineteenth-century democratic society.