The “Former Sun” in the Sidereal Clock: The Kabbalistic Heavens and Time in *The Spanish Gypsy* and *Daniel Deronda*

Author(s): Caroline Wilkinson

Source: *George Eliot - George Henry Lewes Studies*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (2016), pp. 25-42

Published by: Penn State University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/georelioghstud.68.1.0025>

Accessed: 16-09-2018 23:56 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR

Penn State University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *George Eliot - George Henry Lewes Studies*

The “Former Sun” in the Sidereal Clock: The Kabbalistic Heavens and Time in *The Spanish Gypsy* and *Daniel Deronda*

CAROLINE WILKINSON *University of Tennessee*

In both her epic poem The Spanish Gypsy and her final novel Daniel Deronda, Eliot drew upon kabbalistic concepts of the heavens through the characters of Jewish mystics. In the later novel, Eliot moved the mystic, Mordecai, from the narrative’s periphery to its center. This change, symbolically equated within the novel to a shift from geocentrism to heliocentrism, affects time in Daniel Deronda both in terms of plot and historical focus. Not only does time slow as Mordecai assumes a central role, the astral imagery begins to draw upon a medieval past when Jewish thinkers explored interdisciplinary concepts of the heavens. This essay argues for the centrality of the astronomical imagery in relation to the Jewish themes of Daniel Deronda and shows through its analysis of The Spanish Gypsy how Eliot employed kabbalistic ideas of the skies in an attempt to create a new vision of star-crossed love for literature. Keywords: Kabbala, astronomy, astrology, Spanish Gypsy, Daniel Deronda

The moon marks time, and in the epigraph for Chapter 29 of *Daniel Deronda*, the moon also causes the oceans to mark the world with footsteps. The epigraph reaches for a speaker while drawing the poem’s listener into a planetary vision:

Surely whoever speaks to me in the right voice
him or her I shall follow,
As the water follows the moon, silently,
with fluid steps anywhere around the globe. (DD 274)

These lines, taken from Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, introduce a chapter that shows the power of the passions as linked to the voice. In Chapter 29, Gwendolen hears her future husband, Grandcourt, speak Deronda’s name, and she feels as if her heart “were making a sudden gambol”—a metaphor

that suggests both a desire to move and a heavy, invisible step. Deronda's later desire to confirm his suspicions that he is Jewish similarly expands the range and effects of his hearing. While waiting to receive word from his unknown, possibly Jewish mother, he watches the stars "as he might have watched a wonderful clock" that solemnly strikes every hour; and, as he waits, he keeps "his ear open for another kind of signal which would have its solemnity too" (534). When Daniel goes down to meet his mother in Genoa—and Gwendolen coincidentally travels there at the same time—it seems as if each of them has followed the other as water follows the moon "anywhere around the globe": silently and with an inevitability that gains power through Eliot's representation of the heavens. As Daniel learns of his Jewishness in the novel's middle and later books, Eliot draws upon not only poetic and scientific concepts of the skies but kabbalistic ones as well. These mystical concepts are not isolated within Eliot's work; in her 1868 epic poem, *The Spanish Gypsy*, she touches upon kabbalistic ideas of the heavens through the character of a Jewish astrologer.

This article examines what other critics have overlooked: it argues for the centrality of the astronomical imagery in *Daniel Deronda* in relation to the novel's Jewish themes and connects this imagery to Eliot's earlier exploration of astronomy and astrology in *The Spanish Gypsy*. Both *Daniel Deronda* and *The Spanish Gypsy* open with astral images, the former famously with an epigraph about a clock made of moving stars, the latter with a description of the sky over Spain at dawn. These images help establish not only what time period will be explored but how time will progress in the subsequent narratives. The "sidereal clock" (DD 3) in *Daniel Deronda*, a novel set in the 1860s, expresses Victorian theories about ring-vortices, according to Jane Irwin (*George Eliot's Daniel Deronda Notebooks* 17–18). The image also answered the demands of nineteenth-century astronomers who were searching for symbolic language to describe the vastness being seen through new telescopes (Daw 112). Made of the "stars' unceasing journey" (3), this clock has seemingly familiar materials that make it easy to envision to some extent; its size, however, makes it impossible to imagine in its entirety. Not only is the clock enormous, it is described without a clearly defined sense of perspective. Readers, therefore, do not know in which direction a male personified Science is pointing when he tries to place his finger on the clock. Are the stars above, below, or beside his fingertip? Spatial relationships are similarly unclear when Eliot goes on to open the first chapter with questions: "Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance?" (3) Because readers do not know these

considerations are arising in Daniel's consciousness—and, moreover, they do not know that Gwendolen is the one who is being considered—the observer and observed are suspended, unnamed, and abstract, in a space where basic terms such as “beautiful” are called into question. Mary Wilson Carpenter calls Daniel and Gwendolen “exiles from history” (140) in this scene, citing the characters' shared lack of homelands and spiritual inheritance as the source of their expulsion (139). Certainly, the two characters relate as exiles in time in this opening, thrust together into a foreign present, their connection intense and seemingly isolated from others.¹

The initial description of the heavens in *The Spanish Gypsy* has none of the awkward spatial relations put into motion by the sidereal clock. Set much earlier in medieval Spain, the poem offers descriptions of the skies rendered from the perspective of the earth and endowed with human emotion. The speed with which the stars move in the opening scene foreshadow the haste with which the Spanish knight, Don Silva, will marry his Gypsy love, Fedalma, after ignoring the wise counsel of his astrologer, Sephardo. The poem opens with dawn overwhelming the lofty, cool stars of night:

... the new-bathed Day
With oriflamme uplifted o'er the peaks
Saddens the breasts of northward-looking snows
That loved the night, and soared with soaring stars; ... (7)

The sun is as quick as the soaring stars it conceals, spreading its light in the next lines “to Alhambra, strong and ruddy heart / Of glorious Morisma, gasping now” (7). What evades perception in the fast-moving skies is easily imaginable and becomes apparent once again after the sun goes down.

While the sidereal clock seems to have little to do with the openly visible skies of *The Spanish Gypsy*, its immense workings are not isolated from older ideas of the heavens. The epigraph brings in less purely scientific ideas of the skies through its personified female figure of Poetry, who acts as a deceptive foil in the passage by undercutting Science's authority about the stars and time. Both Anna Henchman and Sally Shuttleworth in their critical analyses of astronomy in *Daniel Deronda* examine the sidereal clock in depth while discussing the novel's complicating perspective on scientific certainty. Neither examines the epigraph's critique of poetry as a discrete genre separate from fiction—understandable given that their inquiries are scientific in focus and that the epigraph's primarily rhetorical goal is to throw doubt on Science's assumed objectivity. Eliot shows how Poetry may lack Science's

reputation for exactitude but proceeds in much the same manner when it comes to locating a possible beginning on the moving clock of stars:

[Science's] less accurate grandmother Poetry has always been understood to start in the middle; but on reflection it appears that her proceeding is not very different than his. Science, too, reckons backwards as well as forwards, divides his unit into billions, and with his clock-finger at Nought really sets off *in medias res*. (3)

While the role of Poetry seems straightforward—she points out a beginning and, along with it, Science's folly—it looks more complex when the narrative is considered “backwards as well as forwards” with the epigraph being read from the perspective of the novel's last chapters. Poetry's relationship to Science appears more significant in light of Daniel's life-altering discovery of a hidden matriarch who confirms his Jewish heritage. Obscured maternal blood ties profoundly influence the overall plot, making Poetry's unexpected connection to Science as a grandmother more than quaintly familial. Not only does Daniel come to feel the importance of maternal bloodlines over the course of the novel, he, and many readers, gain a more intimate understanding of Jewish poetry. The man who directly inspires his search for his mother, Mordecai, is likened to “some New Hebrew poet of the medieval time” when introduced in Chapter 33 (326); and as William Baker documents, the real Jewish poet, Jehuda Halevi, shaped many of the ideas that the mystic goes on to express (*GE and Judaism* 170). I will argue that, as Daniel begins to uncover his Jewish origins, Eliot explores the origins of nineteenth-century astronomy, moving back into the medieval period when ancient connections between astronomy and astrology were more apparent and when Jewish thinkers explored mystical ideas of the heavens, inspired by both poetry and the science of their time. With this exploration of a medieval past from her own Victorian moment, Eliot created an interdisciplinary understanding of the stars through which she developed a vision of passion and fate that, in its complexity, radically challenged well-known stories of star-crossed love in literature.

The character of Daniel Deronda is receptive to learning about the past, and a few chapters after Whitman's lines about the moon, he begins to remember something of his lost history as he recalls walking through a Jewish ghetto in Frankfurt. In the epigraph for this chapter, Eliot introduces a medieval concept of the universe while also referring to the ancient astronomer and astrologer, Ptolemy. The epigraph argues for a new kind of love in literature. The kind

that has enjoyed popularity, Eliot writes, is dramatic both in its power and in its disconnection from spiritual and intellectual desire. The epigraph begins: "In all ages it hath been a favourite text that a potent love hath the nature of an isolated fatality, whereto the mind's opinions and wonted resolves are altogether alien" (304). Eliot concludes by describing how love in reality can extend far into imaginative realms and, ultimately, the soul:

This passion hath as large a scope as any for allying itself with every operation of the soul: so that it shall acknowledge an effect from the imagined light of unproven firmaments, and have its scale set to the grander orbits of what hath been and shall be. (304)

The concept of "firmaments"—a curve of the sky—is rooted in a Ptolemaic view of the heavens, which places the earth at the center surrounded by spheres. The firmament in medieval thought was the sphere that contained the fixed stars and rotated once a day (Meadows 7). In her reference to the firmaments, Eliot brings back an older perspective of the earth and sky and then suggests it may be relevant to the future, speaking of not only "what hath been" but what "shall be."

During Daniel's walk through the Jewish ghetto, the "effect from the imagined light" manifests in an inchoate form that draws upon an idea central to the Kabbala, the Tree of Life. Up until this moment in the novel, Daniel has felt a purposelessness akin to "a form of struggle before the break of day" (309); in Chapter 32, he feels a new sense of connectedness: "the forms of the Judengasse" rouse in him a "sense of union with what is remote" (309). He starts "musing on two elements of our historic life which that sense raises into the same region of poetry" (309). The narrator goes on to define these elements, one of which always lives, the other of which always moves toward death:

—the faint beginnings of faith and institutions, and their obscure lingering decay; the dust and withered remnants with which they are apt to be covered, only enhancing for the awakened perception the impressiveness either of a sublimely penetrating life, as in the twin green leaves that will become the sheltering tree, or of a pathetic inheritance in which all the grandeur and the glory have become a sorrowing memory. (309)

From a decaying past, a new beginning might emerge for Deronda, who, in the subsequent chapter, meets Mordecai for the first time while searching for Mirah's lost brother. Just before recalling his walk in Frankfurt, Deronda learns

this brother's name, Ezra. The new beginning encountered by Daniel in his memory of Frankfurt has a proposed form—a “sheltering tree”—that recalls the Tree of Life. This symbol appears in Christian David Ginsberg's *The Kabbalah: Its Doctrines, Development and Literature*, which Baker cites as “the main source of Eliot's Kabbalistic ideas” (“The Kabbalah” 217). Ginsberg defines this tree as “the Kabbalistic form in which the *ten Sephiroth* are represented” (159), the sephiroth being emanations of divine light. Daniel, as he leaves the “form of struggle before the break of day,” might be reaching the light of this tree. Like the passion championed in the chapter's epigraph, this tree has an immense scope, with every part coming from the “Lord of Light” (Ginsberg 38).

In kabbalistic belief, each of the ten sephiroth is associated with luminaries and planets and attended by angels, a concept of the heavens expressed by Sephardo in *The Spanish Gypsy* when he counsels Silva about love. Looking at the earlier epic poem, one can see how, with *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot was adopting a new strategy for depicting passion through the heavens by trying to show love on a scale “set to the grander orbits”; in *The Spanish Gypsy*, she also addressed the subject of passion through considerations of the stars—but Silva and Fedalma's love notably does not expand into spiritual and intellectual realms. Their passion is an “isolated fatality” that brings up questions about fate and the stars through the character of Sephardo. The poem's use of astrology—a subject that critics have left unexamined—is shown as a weak belief system, not because it necessarily produces false predictions. Sephardo's reading of Silva's chart proves to be generally accurate. He remarks that Silva has a “nature o'erendowed with opposites” (147); and, indeed, the tragedy that befalls the knight arises from his opposing impulses. He must choose between Fedalma and his country, prompting his father-in-law to say: “His soul is locked 'twixt two opposing crimes” (247). In the end, what exposes astrology as weak is the mythology underlying it: while Eliot suggests that the planets have spiritual meaning to Sephardo, they have no such meaning to Silva. Parts of Sephardo's mystical belief system remain hidden in his interaction with the Christian Silva—and marginal within the poem—an orientation that changes in *Daniel Deronda*, published eight years later, when Eliot brought a Jewish mystic, Mordecai, into the center of the narrative. Making this movement possible is her receptive eponymous hero who wants to learn about his spiritual past and therefore is willing to take in Mordecai's lessons about divine light as defined by the Kabbala.

The hero in *The Spanish Gypsy*, in contrast, actively rejects his own spiritual traditions in a poem that burns with an “insistent” and “pitiless” sun after Fedalma marries the fiercely independent knight (178). In his discussion of Silva as a Byronic hero, K. M. Newton shows how the rash lover rebels against his own

Christianity, which the Spanish Inquisition has corrupted, by losing himself in Fedalma (*Modernizing* 30). Newton quotes from a passage that recalls the overwhelming day in the poem's opening, referring to how, in Fedalma, "Silva found a heaven / Where faith and hope were drowned as stars in day" (SG 127). When Silva visits Sephardo, the sun has gone down, leaving the bright planet, Jupiter, visible in the dark sky. Silva, glimpsing the planet through the astrologer's window, asserts that, if Jupiter were still a living god, it would give the "[f]ulness of knowledge" (153) that he so desires. In terms that resemble the "obscure lingering decay" of "faiths and institutions," Silva questions the poor state to which the planets, deprived of their living myths, have been relegated:

Are you certified,
 Sephardo, that the astral science shrinks
 To such pale ashes, dead symbolic forms
 For that congenital mixture of effects
 Which life declares without the aid of lore? (151)

Saleel Nurbahi and K. M. Newton underscore the importance in Eliot's novels of the golem myth through which inert matter gains shape and life; here, Eliot dramatically shows one person's inability to engage with this myth by animating for himself "dead symbolic forms." Sephardo also does not seem to believe in the spiritual power of the planets. At times, his attitude about astrology appears to reflect the skepticism that he ascribes to Abraham Ibn-Ezra, a medieval astronomer and astrologer, who also translated and wrote exegeses. Sephardo characterizes Ibn-Ezra as being both highly reasonable and extremely doubtful (153). Sephardo likewise describes Ptolemy as giving rise to uncertainty, saying that the ancient astrologer names so many causes for events that prediction becomes nearly impossible:

I say—nay, Ptolemy said it, but wise books
 For half the truths they hold are honoured tombs—
 Prediction is contingent, of effects
 Where causes and concomitants are mixed
 To seeming wealth of possibilities
 Beyond our reckoning. (145–46)

Silva wants a yes or no answer as to whether or not he should marry and leave with Fedalma, but Eliot has the astrologer resist giving a simple

response. The author seems to have decided to avoid clear predictive answers during her research for *The Spanish Gypsy*. In her notes on astrology, Eliot copied down a heading from William Lilly's popular occult book, *Christian Astrology*, "To know whether a thing demanded will be brought to perfection" ("Zodiacal Aspects"), but in Lilly's original, this heading ends with a "yea or nay" (124). In keeping Silva from declaring a straightforward yea or nay, Eliot pushes the character into articulating a complicated idea of fate that acknowledges how human natures are made of "elements refined and mixed" (146). This blend makes it hard to predict what choices an individual will make at any given time to shape his or her own future. This nuanced idea of fate expressed by Sephardo is not only complex but grounded; it finds expression, Nancy Henry asserts, in Eliot's subsequent realist novel, *Middlemarch* (Henry 200).

But while Sephardo cites the complications that arise from mixed astrological conditions, he ends up delivering a clear verdict about Silva's character using a metaphor and a simile so mixed one tears the other apart. Before putting the birth chart down in front of Silva to see, the astrologer states:

Your rashness vindicates itself too much,
 Puts harness on of cobweb theory
 While rushing like a cataract. Be warned. (148)

This message of drowning and tearing—of an ineffectual harness washed away or ripped by rashness like water—stands in stark contrast with the tempered remarks leading up to this final declaration. While Ptolemy in his astrological text, *Tetrabiblos*, does speak of the difficulty of knowing how mixed influences will shape an outcome, he adds that astrologers are the ones who, with their "enterprise and ingenuity," should make such determinations (189),² and here Sephardo does so in a warning that undoes its own images. Sephardo's linguistically destructive statement about self-destruction jars and, in doing so, blends into the larger world of *The Spanish Gypsy* as described by David Kurnick, who discusses the poem's radical formal breaks such as metrical irregularities and iambic pentameter cut off by stage directions. These ruptures, according to Kurnick, result from the Gypsies at the poem's center who interrupt and disrupt and cause a "tear in the social body" of the larger Spanish community that excludes them (493). Silva ends up going off with the Gypsies under a sky that loses the little it has to offer him. The "dead symbolic forms," which hold the possibility of a meaningful past

being brought back to life, vanish at one point, leaving him with a blankness void of stars and planets:

He could not grasp night's black blank mystery
And wear it for a spiritual garb
Creed-proof: he shuddered at its passionless touch. (220)

The blank sky shows an absence of constellations. This lack leaves Silva without stories or stars to help him navigate toward a better future. Deborah Nord argues that Eliot represents the Gypsies as being severed from their past and, therefore, unable to secure a beneficial future (101), and Silva shares much the same fate when he travels with them—but he never sees himself as a Gypsy. His fate is disconnected and “passionless.” Eliot does not suggest yea or nay as to whether Sephardo could have stopped Silva with the right words or whether any and all advice would have been no more effective than a cobweb harnessing a cataract.

One fact that Eliot makes certain is that the spiritual force that inspires Sephardo—and could possibly inspire others—separates him from Silva: his Judaism. His religion is what motivates him to help the knight in the first place: he does not want people to slander Israel in the future by citing his failure to come to the knight's aid. Sephardo's love for Israel is fed by Jehuda Halevi. “Israel,” says the astrologer, “Is to the nations as the body's heart: / Thus writes our poet Jehuda” (149). This heart inspires Sephardo to act, but he cannot pass on this inspiration to Silva, who is not part of the “our” that holds Halevi as its own. A mystical vision of the heavens appears throughout Halevi's poems, their lines bringing together angels and stars to create an astral structure that emanates both with and from divine light. In his poem, “Morning Service,” the stars and angels sing to their source in lines that Franz Rosenzweig describes as being recited at dawn by congregants inside “the circle of stars and the circle of angels” (Halevi 159):

All morning stars   sing up to You,
For their luminosity   arises from You. (158)

This vision of the dawn where the morning stars glow and sing contrast with the opening to *The Spanish Gypsy* in which the mountain peaks are saddened by how the coming day will make the stars disappear. The skies that stretch over *The Spanish Gypsy* do not reflect Halevi's vision of the cosmos. This vision remains

as hidden as Sephardo, who lives in a room in a high tower and who, when he does speak of the Jewish mystical heavens, restricts himself to a single phrase: “the luminous angels of the stars” (111). His language recalls the description of the sephiroth from Ginsberg, “luminous emanations” (14). Ginsberg explains how the sephiroth are associated with the planets and luminaries through angels that dwell in different parts of the universe. He writes: “one angel has charge of the sun, another the moon, another of earth . . . &c. &c.” (28). These angels are named after the heavenly bodies they guard, including Venus, Mars, and, more vaguely, “the substance of Heaven” (28). At no point does Sephardo openly refer to the universe as conceived by the Kabbala. Like Mordecai, who “avoids references to periods of the Miracles or to the Five Books of Moses” in front of a possibly unsympathetic audience at the Hand and Banner (Baker, *George Eliot and Judaism* 156), Sephardo does not openly discuss the Kabbala with Silva, whom he identifies as a possible enemy at the onset of the scene, saying that, so long as Christians persecute his people, he will “turn at need even the Christian’s trust / Into a weapon and a shield for Jews” (142).

In *Daniel Deronda*, the mystical beliefs that Mordecai, at times, conceals are considered extreme, which prompts the narrator to compare him to Copernicus and Galileo, two radical thinkers who, in declaring a new placement for the sun, thrust the earth into a more dynamic relationship with the planets and stars. The narrator remarks of Mordecai: “like Copernicus and Galileo, he was immovably convinced in the face of hissing incredulity; but so is the contriver of perpetual motion” (436). Shuttleworth, in her analysis of this statement, argues that Mordecai offers a vision that “leads beyond the stultifying, insular perceptions of English society” (179). This insularity shows itself in the first book of *Daniel Deronda*, “The Spoiled Child,” in which Gwendolen considers marriage and ultimately decides to wed Grandcourt, believing in her power to dominate him. The vanity that Gwendolen displays in “The Spoiled Child” is textually linked to the antiquated idea that the sun moves around the earth. This link is forged by the epigraph to Chapter Six, which Shuttleworth analyzes (178) and Henchman revisits (165–66, 178–79). The epigraph, taken from the French author Bernard Fontenelle, presents a speaker defiantly asserting a lack of care about the news that the earth, in fact, revolves around the sun. Eliot goes on to open the chapter with a description of Gwendolen defiantly refusing to admit that Klesmer’s withering assessment of her singing has caused her pain. As “The Spoiled Child” gives way to subsequent sections, moving toward “Mordecai” and “Revelations,” the narrative moves away from Gwendolen’s narcissistic valuation of her own power and

abilities toward the psychic turmoil that she experiences in marriage. Daniel's plotline, in turn, moves from his struggle with purposelessness toward the inspiration that he finds in Mordecai.

As the Jewish mystic becomes central to the hero's story, some of Mordecai's more radical beliefs emerge not only through his open statements about the Kabbala but through solar imagery that, like the sidereal clock, challenges the imagination spatially and temporally. Innovative and strange, the "former sun"—an image Mordecai uses when he speaks of his tuberculosis—comes out of the Kabbala's doctrine of reincarnation. Mordecai explains this doctrine before speaking about the onset of his illness, telling Daniel that souls are born until they achieve perfection on earth. Mordecai goes on to say that a soul in a weak body, such as his own, may merge with another so that the two can achieve perfection together. The explanation of reincarnation ends with Mordecai sharing his vision of the future with Daniel: "When my long-wandering soul is liberated from this weary body, it will join yours, and its work will be perfected" (461). Daniel's tactful reply—that he will do everything he can in his conscience to make Mordecai's life effective—sets up the following questions about plot: Will Daniel take on Mordecai's soul and realize their two spiritual purposes? And how would he go about accomplishing such tasks? These questions with their "will" and "how" appear to be acknowledged by Mordecai when he starts his subsequent monologue, saying, "You will take up my life where it was broken" (461). Mordecai then tells of the last day he ever experienced health. Bright and shadowed with broken solar imagery, this monologue focuses on a day in Trieste when the mystic's soul felt the light of its "former sun" (462). This light, like that of the sephiroth, knows emanations from elsewhere and does not obscure with its brightness:

It was the first time I had been south: the soul within me felt its former sun; and standing on the quay, where the ground I stood on seemed to send forth light, and the shadows had an azure glory as of spirits become visible, I felt myself in the flood of a glorious life, wherein my own small year-counted existence seemed to melt, so that I knew it not; . . . (462)

In the Kabbala, the source from which the sephiroth emanate, exists outside of time. When souls achieve perfection through their experience on earth, they join this atemporal source. When all souls have reached perfection, Messianic time will commence—but the use of the future tense here is imprecise. According to the central mystical text, the *Zohar*, in which

Eliot was “well-versed” with a knowledge that “manifest in ready allusion” (McKay 71–72), Messianic time does not have clear ending points. “The world to come”—a phrase used throughout the *Zohar*—is “constantly coming, never ceasing” (3: 302). Mordecai, who speaks of Messianic time to Deronda (461), feels his former sun along with the melting of his temporal existence in Italy. He has entered a realm outside of time in which light never stops arriving from a Messianic future.

But Mordecai goes on to explain how this sun is, indeed, former, its light gone, and while articulating this loss, he reveals information that has remained hidden in broad daylight like stars at noon. His monologue acts like a solar eclipse within the context of Daniel’s narrative: through its darkness, it exposes important truths that have guided Daniel’s spiritual journey from its beginnings. On the day he first met Mordecai, Daniel was searching for Mirah’s brother, whose name was Ezra, and it turns out this brother was standing before him, unseen for who he was. Mordecai finally reveals that his name is Ezra while describing how a piece of news blotted out his happiness in Trieste. This news enters his monologue when he tells of how his companion in Italy said to him, “Ezra, I have been to the post” (462). This companion then handed him a letter that told of how Mordecai’s—or, as Daniel now knows, Ezra’s—father abducted Mirah. Upon learning the news, the mystic is immediately thrust into “exile”; as he explains, “Mine was the lot of Israel” (463).

Daniel, upon learning that Mordecai’s real name is Ezra, suppresses questions he would like to ask. He listens to Mordecai in silence just as he listened quietly in the previous chapter in the *Hand and Banner* when Mordecai characterized the present historical moment for the Jews by saying, “the sun is going down over the prophets, and the day is dark above them” (454). This dark day above the Jewish people suggests an eclipse, a phenomenon that, according to Ptolemy, brings about events in those countries and cities where the darkness is visible (161–63). Within Daniel’s narrative, Mordecai’s monologue will affect events through the information it reveals. Daniel’s search for Mirah’s brother finally has come to an end, leaving Daniel to decide what he should do now that he has, at last, located Mirah’s brother. He sees greatness in Mordecai, who has asked for help and needs it; not only is the man gravely ill, he is poor. The narration describes the divide between Mordecai’s material state and his potential while reiterating the connection between Copernicus and the mystic. Mordecai may be on the edge of realizing his ideas only now as he moves to the end of his life, just as “the dying Copernicus [was] made to touch the first printed copy of his book when the sense of touch was gone” (465). Mordecai’s poverty makes

Daniel's first decision about how to help obvious enough. Mordecai requires fundamental material support, and so Daniel, first off, decides to find him a better place to live.

To give help that extends beyond basic material needs, Daniel must explore the "where" in Mordecai's request: "You will take up my life where it was broken." The true "where" in this statement, insofar as Mordecai describes the break in his life, is as difficult to locate in the 1860s as the true beginning on the side-real clock. Mordecai describes the injury as a sudden break from Israel with which, he says, his lot is cast. But Israel did not exist on earth in 1866 when Mordecai gives his account. As a grounded location, Israel is as "former" as the sun that emanates its timeless light from and into Mordecai's incarnate soul. For the mystic, Israel has an existence as "the heart of mankind" (453), a description that he himself gives at the Hand and Banner. Mordecai is referring to Halevi when he gives this description, just as Sephardo is referring to the poet when he says that Israel is to the nations "as the body's heart." Israel is a place acknowledged in prayers and poems such as Halevi's "Maiden Israel's Sabbath," which begins, "Jewel of a day, surrounded / By peace and life,—" (180). Israel lies above in the heavens in Jewish mysticism in the 1860s. In the Kabbala, the soul of matter, including that of Israel, does not die but ascends and can move back into incarnate forms. The endurance and rebirth of matter's essence in the Kabbala finds parallels in the scientific theories that Eliot studied prior to writing *Daniel Deronda*. In 1874, she took notes on James Clerk Maxwell's address to the British Association (*Notebooks* 21) in which the physicist spoke of how molecules remained unchanged, with only their arrangement being reordered and destroyed (Maxwell 13). Maxwell ended his address by connecting the molecules to the divine, calling them "essential constituents of the image of Him" (14). Eliot also took notes in 1874 on the theories of John Tyndall and Hermann von Helmholtz (*Notebooks* 19–22), who, along with Maxwell, were engaged in a debate that Gillian Beer examines. This debate centers on an idea that disturbed many Victorians, including Darwin—that the sun would age to the point where the earth would be too cold to sustain life (Beer, "Death" 158). Mordecai, after being broken, moves into a coldness that resembles the aftermath of the sun's death: "I left the sunshine, and travelled into the freezing cold. In the last stage I spent a night in exposure to cold and snow" (463). Mordecai's centrality in Daniel's narrative forces the reader to confront the death of matter and also the possibility of its endurance. The complications of "where" in Mordecai's request arise out of the spatial and temporal ambitions of a novel that opens with a spinning clock of stars and turns toward a dying mystic whose spiritual matter

might be rearranged in death. This “where” has two definitions. One pertains to the enduring soul, which ascends from earth and dwells above. This “where” is Israel. The other pertains to the incarnate life or, in scientific terms, the formal arrangement of molecules on earth. This “where,” according to the Kabbala as expressed by Mordecai, is energized by Israel as the body is enervated by the heart. It is where the mystic first experiences the break in his life and where Deronda, when he does finally speak at the Hand and Banner, locates old nationalist dreams in the revolutionary Mazzini whom he likens to Mordecai. This “where” is Italy.

Daniel learns that he must go to Italy to meet his mother at the same time Gwendolen learns that she must go there too, creating, as Graham Handley notes, the first moment that the two character’s plot lines are placed in “temporal conjunction” (DD 727). When Daniel and Gwendolen reach Italy, time slows for both of them, for Daniel because he must wait in anticipation for his mother to contact him, for Gwendolen because she is trapped in a slow-moving nightmare of a marriage. E. S. Shaffer calls the emotional intensity of Gwendolen’s and Daniel’s meetings “unequalled in the English novel” (265), and its intensity finds expression in the astral symbols that Eliot uses to bind the two characters together in the Mediterranean scenes. She uses the images of the sun and moon, which, in the Kabbala, represent a singular relationship between a man and woman. The relationship is absolute, indefinable, and subtle, with the sun and moon separate but together always: *“Male and female. He created them—implying this nuance, implying that nuance. Implying that sun and moon share a single bond”* (Zohar 6: 423). Daniel has come to take Mordecai’s life where it was broken, in Italy where “the former sun” last shone. He waits for his mother to call for him, and, as he waits, he watches “the double, faintly pierced darkness of the sea and the heavens” with the “oppressive skepticism which represent[s] his particular lot” (534). Daniel wants to enter Mordecai’s vision of the future. Deronda sees Mordecai’s greatness in terms of the stars’ mythology on the day that the mystic tells of the former sun: “[Daniel] was caring for destinies still moving in the dim streets of our earthly life, not yet lifted among the constellations” (465). In Italy, Daniel waits to learn if he has a chance to join Mordecai’s fate or if Mordecai’s vision of the future is “of no more lasting than a dream” (534). Gwendolen’s visions of past and present, meanwhile, fade nightly and daily not far from Daniel. She has nightmares of being violent and wakes to find “instead of darkness, daylight” (577). While Daniel watches the “revolving of the days” (579), she watches the revolving of the nights that have the potential to blur into days as the

moon shifts through its phases, and she watches “the evening lights to the sinking of the moon” (579). After coincidentally seeing Deronda, she finds new hope. She feels “less of awed loneliness than was habitual to her—nay, with the vague impression that in this mighty frame of things, there might be some preparation of rescue for her” (579). This phrase “in this mighty frame of things” draws together Daniel’s chance appearance with the illuminated sky and, on a metafictional level, refers to the larger narrative in which Daniel rescued a woman previously. During the sole appearance of the moon in “The Spoiled Child,” Daniel rescues a suicidal Mirah by the Thames. When he first meets the desperate woman by the river—and the reader first meets her too, this moment being Mirah’s entrance into the novel—the moon is out but “still entangled among the trees and buildings” (163). Gwendolen waits in Italy for Deronda, reflecting his waiting as the moon reflects the sun.

While Daniel’s eventual choice of Mirah as a wife makes sense symbolically on a technical level—she is associated with the moon from her first appearance—Gwendolen’s inner life shows more richly a mystical astral symbolism in the scenes in Italy, not only through the nights Gwendolen spends watching the moon with Daniel nearby, but through her dreams. She experiences a timelessness in sleep that Eliot describes in kabbalistic terms. The *Zohar* speaks of the process of humans ascending to an atemporal existence during sleep with the soul shedding its physical form, the soul being referred to as an “image and figure,” and the body, “a garment” (*Zohar* 6: 146–7). The image and figure rise up in sleep: “Every single night, the spirit strips itself of that garment and ascends, and the consuming fire consumes it” (*Zohar* 6: 146–47). The image and figure in this process reflect the face and figure in *Daniel Deronda* that first appear in a painting not long before Gwendolen’s marriage. Gwendolen is terrified by the “dead face” and “fleeing figure” in the painting (49). In Italy, the face and figure reappear when Gwendolen wakes from nightmares to find “the palsy of a new terror—a dead white face from which she was ever trying to flee and for ever held back” (577). In Chapter 35, Eliot informs the reader that time has slowed for Gwendolen in marriage with the “seven short weeks” after the young woman’s wedding feeling like “half her life” (363). In Italy, the narration makes the reader feel the slowness with Gwendolen by describing the young woman’s sleep in which she finds not perfect timelessness but a cursed one made of thwarted dreams that turn the day dark. The pieces of Gwendolen’s dreams—the face and figure—enter her waking life in what, in kabbalistic terms, looks like both the emergence of her soul and its scattering. These dreams are as intense as Gwendolen’s emotional bond with Deronda.

One could trace this “single bond” over the footprints made by Whitman’s poem in Chapter 29 and assume on the basis of Gwendolen and Daniel’s emotional connection that they would end up marrying. But Eliot moves her finger elsewhere when she has Daniel choose Mirah as a wife, pointing to Chapter 32 when Daniel first hears the name Ezra and recalls a walk in Frankfurt. In this chapter, which starts with considerations about love with a scale “set to the grander orbits,” the reader can see how “faint beginnings” have grown into a radically new end.

By the last pages of Eliot’s final novel, Gwendolen’s and Daniel’s plotlines are charged with kabbalistic astral symbols, with Eliot having moved the double narratives together not only temporally but symbolically. When she brings Gwendolen and Daniel to the Mediterranean, she turns them around the same center of the former sun, changing both of them and time, which turns strange. It negates itself in atemporal dreams. Night instantly becomes day. A sky becomes a clock to watch while a man waits to learn his fate. This solar center that causes such striking changes has gone through its own dramatic transformation. It has gone dark. It has watched a man go into exile and snow. It may die. Rivkah Zim writes that *Daniel Deronda*’s function is to “disturb and dislodge preconception” (215), which it does when Gwendolen expresses her rage. Her hatred of her husband, confessed to Deronda, jars expectations about marriage in the novel, just as *The Spanish Gypsy* disrupts expectations about all-consuming love in poetry by interrupting meter and lineation and leaving the night sky a passionless blank. Gwendolen, the young lady, ends the novel alone. Daniel, the young gentleman, plans to go to the Middle East. And Mordecai on the last page is about to die in what should be an unquestionably happy matrimonial moment. He tells Deronda that death is coming as a “divine kiss” that will give the mystic “full presence” in Daniel’s soul. The dying man is, Baker explains, referring to the moment of purification when spirits unite with the Heavenly King through a kiss (“The Kabbalah, Mordecai” 218). Mordecai’s death pushes against the absolute end of *Daniel Deronda*, a novel that illuminates and darkens its characters with a scientific and mystic sun and that leaves footprints using a poem and an ocean. The lines from Chapter 29’s epigraph lead within Whitman’s poem to a call for that “which has the quality to bring forth what lies slumbering forever ready in all words.” Gwendolen wakes words before leaving. Daniel listens. In the end, Mordecai’s death overwhelms words on the page. The kiss he envisions dwells in an eternal space too perfect for verbs with their tenses, and so even this novel with its countless beginnings must end.

CAROLINE WILKINSON is a PhD candidate at the University of Tennessee. She has an MFA from Washington University and a BA in English from Vassar. Her review of Anna Henchman's *The Starry Sky: Astronomy and the Reach of the Mind in Victorian Literature* appeared in *George Eliot–George Henry Lewes Studies*.

NOTES

I would like to thank Nancy Henry for her generous help and encouragement with this article.

1. While “the dynamic quality” of Gwendolen’s glance suggests an association with other people generally—or, at least, an ability to affect them—the phrase remains isolated among unanswered questions, estranged from named characters. The description, furthermore, was set apart from readers at the time of the novel’s publication. As Gillian Beer documents, “dynamic” stood out as strange among critics when *Daniel Deronda* first appeared, being seen as too scientific and obscure a term (*Open Fields*, 176, 206).

2. In his note on Sephardo’s remark about Ptolemy, Antonie Gerard van den Broek writes that *Tetrabiblos* underscores the importance of many factors, including sociological ones, in determining an individual’s fate: “[Ptolemy] made clear his belief that a number of variable factors (e.g. a person’s race, country, upbringing, and the position of the sun, moon and planets) all had to be taken into account before one could rely on astrology” (SG 325 n.8). It is important to note, however, that Ptolemy does not separate factors such as race and country from astrology. He, for instance, argues that the people of India are unattractive because of their familiarity with the constellation of Capricorn (143), that Ethiopians are “in habits are for the most part savage” from being oppressed by the sun (123), and that the people from Egypt (Ptolemy’s home country) are “shrewd, inventive, and better versed in the knowledge of things divine because their zenith is close to the zodiac and to the planets revolving around it” (125). Sephardo, as an astrologer, should be able to grasp important sociological factors, according to Ptolemy.

WORKS CITED

- Baker, William. *George Eliot and Judaism*. Lewiston. Salzburg Studies in Romantic Reassessment. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd., 1975. Print.
- . “The Kabbalah, Mordecai, and George Eliot’s Religion of Humanity.” *The Yearbook of English Studies* (1973): 3: 216–21. Print.
- Beer, Gillian. “The Death of the Sun: Victorian Solar Physics and Solar Myth.” *The Sun Is God: Painting Literature and Mythology in the Nineteenth Century*. Ed. J. B. Bullen. Oxford: Clarendon, 1989. 158–80. Print.
- . *Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996. Print.
- Carpenter, Mary Wilson. *George Eliot and the Landscape of Time: Narrative Form and Protestant Apocalyptic History*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1986. Print.
- Daw, Gillian. “Dark with Excessive Light’: Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and the Nineteenth-Century Astronomical Imagination.” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 37.2 (2015): 107–26. Print.
- Eliot, George. *Daniel Deronda*. Ed. Graham Handley. New York: Oxford World Classics, 1998. Print.
- . *George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda Notebooks*. Ed. Jane Irwin. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. Print.

- . *The Spanish Gypsy*. Ed. Antonie Gerard van den Broek. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2008. Print.
- . "Zodiacal Aspects." Eliot IV.16. c. 1864. Yale University Library, George Eliot and George Henry Lewes Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. MS.
- Ginsburg, Christian David. *The Kabbalah: Its Doctrines, Development, and Literature*. London: Longman, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1986. Print.
- Halevi, Yehuda. *Ninety-Two Poems and Hymns of Yehuda Halevi*. Ed. Franz Rosenzweig. Albany: State U of New York P, 2000. Print.
- Henchman, Anna. *The Starry Sky Within: Astronomy and the Reach of the Mind in Victorian Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014. Print.
- Henry, Nancy. *The Life of George Eliot: A Critical Biography*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. Print.
- Kurnick, David. "Unspeakable George Eliot." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 38.2. (Sept. 2010): 489–509. Print.
- Lilly, William. *Christian Astrology*. Bel Air: Astrology Classics, 2004. Print.
- Maxwell, J. Clerk. "A Discourse on Molecules." Bradford: Wm. Byles and Son, 1873. Print.
- McKay, Brenda. "Victorian Anthropology and Hebraic Apocalyptic Prophecy: 'The Lifted Veil.'" *George Eliot—George Henry Lewes Studies* 42–43 (Sept. 2002): 69–92. Print.
- Meadows, A. J. *The High Firmament: A Survey of Astronomy in English Literature*. Leicester: Leicester UP, 1969. Print.
- Newton, K. M. *Modernizing George Eliot: The Writer as Artist, Intellectual, Proto-Modernist, Cultural Critic*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. Print.
- Nord, Deborah Epstein. *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1907–1930*. New York: Columbia UP, 2006. Print.
- Nurbhai, Saleel, and K. M. Newton. *George Eliot, Judaism and the Novels: Jewish Myth and Mysticism*. New York: Palgrave, 2002. Print.
- Ptolemy. *Tetrabiblos*. Trans. F. E. Robbins. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1940. Print.
- Shaffer, E. S. "Kubla Khan" and *The Fall of Jerusalem: The Mythological School in Biblical Criticism and Secular Literature, 1770–1880*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975. Print.
- Shuttleworth, Sally. *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning*. London: Cambridge UP, 1984. Print.
- Whitman, Walt. *Poems of Walt Whitman*. 1868. Walt Whitman Archive. Web. 7 June 2015.
- Zim, Rivkah. "Awakened Perceptions in *Daniel Deronda*." *Essays in Criticism* 36.3 (1986): 210–34. Print.
- Zohar. Trans. Daniel C. Matt. Vol. 3. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005. Print.
- Zohar. Trans. Daniel C. Matt. Vol. 6. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2011. Print.