Victorian Literature and Culture (2001), 413–433. Printed in the United States of America.

GEORGE ELIOT AND THE COLONIES

By Nancy Henry

> Women are occasionally governors of prisons for women, overseers of the poor, and parish clerks. A woman may be ranger of a park; a woman can take part in the government of a great empire by buying East India Stock.
>
> — Barbara Bodichon, *A Brief Summary in Plain Language, of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women* (1854)

ON OCTOBER 5, 1860, GEORGE HENRY LEWES VISITED a solicitor in London to consult about investments. He wrote in his journal: "[The Solicitor] took me to a stockbroker, who undertook to purchase 95 shares in the Great Indian Peninsular Railway for Polly. For £1825 she gets £1900 worth of stock guaranteed 5%" (qtd. in Ashton, *Lewes* 210). Thus Marian Evans, called Polly by her close friends, known in society as Mrs. Lewes and to her reading public as George Eliot, became a shareholder in British India. Whether or not Eliot thought of buying stock as taking part in the government of a great empire, as her friend Barbara Bodichon had written in 1854, the 5% return on her investment was a welcome supplement to the income she had been earning from her fiction since 1857. From 1860 until her death in 1880, she was one of a select but growing number of middle-class investors who took advantage of high-yield colonial stocks.[1] Lewes's journals for 1860–1878 and Eliot's diaries for 1879–80 list dividends from stocks in Australia, South Africa, India, and Canada. These include: New South Wales, Victoria, Cape of Good Hope, Cape Town Rail, Colonial Bank, Oriental Bank, Scottish Australian, Great Indian Peninsula, Madras. The Indian and colonial stocks make up just less than half of the total holdings. Other stocks connected to colonial trade (East and West India Docks, London Docks), domestic stocks (the Consols, Regents Canal), and foreign investments (Buenos Aires, Pittsburgh and Ft. Wayne) complete the portfolio.[2]

Initiated by Edward Said's claim that the Jews in *Daniel Deronda* (1876) are "European prototypes so far as colonizing the East is concerned" (*Question* 65), critics have addressed Eliot's relationship to the British Empire primarily through a critique of *Deronda* as a novel displaying "a disquieting continuity with imperialist ideology" (Meyer 160).[3] Several critics see "contradictions" in the novel, arguing that Eliot was a moral critic of imperialism (metaphorically, in the Gwendolen plot) whose articulation of Jewish nationalist notions (through her characters in the Deronda plot) nonetheless made her complicit in European imperialism (David, Linehan, Meyer, Lewis, Lesjak).

These critics have confined their analysis of Eliot and empire to her novels and have overlooked other forms of discourse in which Eliot's daily, domestic contact with the empire is evident. No one has considered Eliot's financial investments in the colonies to be relevant to analyses of her apparent discursive engagement with imperialism in fiction. Looking to letters, journals, financial records, and Eliot's largely ignored last work, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879), I will be concentrating on the primary points at which Eliot's life intersected with British colonialism, thereby providing a fuller picture of her relationship to colonialism and imperialist ideologies.

Eliot's investments in colonial stocks between 1860 and 1880 were crucial to the wealth that would make her atypical, even among women writers.[4] Like many Victorians, including her author contemporaries, Eliot helped children — in her case Lewes's sons — to find colonial careers. Thornton (Thornie) and Herbert (Bertie) Lewes both emigrated to Natal in the 1860s. Their residence in Natal gave Eliot an emotional, as well as a further financial, investment in South Africa. Her interest in events there culminated in her condemnation of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, as expressed in letters to some of her closest friends. Placed in these specific contexts, Eliot's fiction reflects interdependencies of English domestic life and colonial expansion that have been overlooked, oversimplified, or unknowingly suppressed in literary criticism ostensibly interested in imperialism during the Victorian period.

I

> I should be satisfied to look forward to a heaven made up of long autumn afternoon walks, quite delivered from any necessity of giving a judgment on the Woman Question or of reading newspapers about Indian Mutinies.
>
> — George Eliot to Sarah Hennell (21 September 1857)

FOR VICTORIAN WOMEN, MARRIAGE AND MONEY were inseparable concerns. The section of Bodichon's *Laws Concerning Women* in which she observes that "a woman can take part in the government of a great empire by buying East India Stock" is entitled "Legal Condition of Unmarried Women or Spinsters." Whereas the money inherited or earned by an unmarried woman was her own, "[m]oney earned by a married woman belongs absolutely to her husband" (4). After her marriage in 1857 to Eugene Bodichon, Barbara Bodichon lived part of every year in French colonial Algiers and the rest of the year in England. She maintained an unusual degree of independence in her marriage, but she was still legally married. Eliot's position was more complicated. She was legally a "spinster," but she chose to call herself "Mrs. Lewes" and to act as if she were married, a moral defense of her decision to live with the still-married Lewes. Even in her role as a "married" woman, Eliot was exceptional. From the publication of her first works of fiction in 1857, she out-earned her husband (*GEL* 2: 383). In 1860, after the publication of *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858), *Adam Bede* (1859), and *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Eliot decided to make her money more productive, a great help to Lewes, who supported his estranged wife Agnes, her children with Thornton Hunt, and his own three boys, Charles, Thornie, and Bertie.

Eliot and Bodichon are good examples of the conflicts faced by independent women in the mid-Victorian period. Bodichon was a supporter of women's rights in England; she

was also an advocate of women's emigration to the colonies, helping Maria Rye to found the Female Middle Class Emigration Society in 1861. Her observations about investing in the empire suggest that the colonies could provide a middle-class woman at home with opportunities for financial independence similar to those available to women who emigrated. From a later feminist perspective, Bodichon's position is ideologically inconsistent; in undermining patriarchal laws, she nonetheless underwrote the economic development of the colonies, raising money to send young women to fill service positions in colonial households. She did not perceive, as many feminists do now, a continuity in the systematic oppression of women whose property was taken from them by their husbands, and colonized subjects whose property was taken from them by colonists. Some of the successes of Bodichon's early feminism seem purchased, at least indirectly, at the expense of native men and women in the colonies to which she encouraged emigration: Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa among them.[5]

Biographers and critics have found Eliot's qualified silence on the Woman Question difficult to reconcile with the strength and complexity of her female characters; her views about the colonies have been subjected to less scrutiny, but they are equally difficult to decipher. In 1857, the year she began her fiction-writing career, turmoil in the empire — specifically the "Indian Mutinies" — seemed distant, unpleasant, and distracting, like the Woman Question. Later, the colonies would provide a solution to the problem of what to do with Lewes's boys; the position of women would become central to her novels; she would become extremely wealthy from her own earned income and from a portfolio of stocks that included colonial holdings; and the reverberations at home of colonial warfare overseas would contribute to her developing a moral position on British imperialism.

The intersecting issues of gender, money, and empire are evident in Eliot's fiction as well as in her life. *Deronda* examines the financial vulnerability of women. The money that Gwendolen would have inherited from her grandfather's Barbados estate is lost through mismanagement. It was perhaps Gwendolen's uncle, Henry Gascoigne, who entrusted the inheritance of his wife and sister-in-law to Grapnell & Co. The very image suggested by Grapnell of a multi-pronged hook or anchor seems to emphasize the menace to vulnerable women who sink their fortunes in a risky market. Financial failure leaves Gwendolen's all-female family destitute and generates the tensions, including pressure from her uncle, that lead her to a disastrous marriage. Gwendolen's mother laments: "It is hard to resign one's self to Mr Lassman's wicked recklessness, which they say was the cause of the failure" (10). Gwendolen asks whether Mr. Lassman has run away with the money. Her mother attempts to explain: "There were great speculations: he meant to gain. It was all about mines and things of that sort. He risked too much" (199). Even from Mrs. Davilow's fragmented account of the affair, we learn that there were "great speculations" in "mines." The basis for some of the wealth was West Indian, and that wealth was gambled in speculations in domestic, foreign, or colonial mines.[6]

The loss of Mrs. Davilow's money is not a matter of women metaphorically identifying (or failing to identify) with colonial subjects; it is a question of middle-class women facing destitution because their inheritance should have been invested more wisely. The Gwendolen plot reflects Eliot's experience with the stock market as well as her insights into the legal complexities confronting twice-married women, mistresses, and illegitimate children. Eliot's investments in the colonial system were part of a strategy that enabled her to overcome threats to her security as a woman in an unconventional domestic arrangement.

II

> If we have young friends whom we wish to send forth into the world, we search the maps with them at our elbows.
> — Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (1859)

IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY DEBATES ABOUT THE economic viability of the colonies and their relationship to industrialization at home, the problem of a surplus labor pool was frequently considered. Great Britain needed colonies "to which she could send her superfluous population, which would consume the excess capacity of her factories, and to which she could export the surplus capital which was driving down the domestic rate of profit" (Semmel 514). But the problem of employment extended to the middle classes, and children coming of age in the 1860s and 70s could find employment in the colonies that did not compromise their middle-class status. Beginning in 1860, when Charles Lewes finished at the Hofwyl School in Switzerland, Lewes and Eliot were faced with launching the careers of young men who were qualified neither for university nor any particular profession. With the help of Lewes's friend Anthony Trollope, Charles found a position in the Post Office, but there seemed few alternatives for the younger Lewes boys apart from emigration.

The experiences of Eliot and Lewes's contemporaries in the same London literary and social circles, and with similar class-driven expectations for their sons, are worth reviewing to show the comparable problems and the colonial solutions to which they turned.[7] Trollope traveled throughout the colonies and wrote about many facets of the empire. His son Fred emigrated to Australia in 1865 at the age of eighteen to farm sheep. When Trollope visited Fred in 1875 to help him out of financial difficulties, he wrote home in a letter (for publication) that there was one class of person who should never emigrate to Australia: "This is the young gentleman, who, finding that no one wants him at home, thinks that he may as well emigrate. Neither will anyone want him here. And here no one will pity him" (*Tireless Traveller* 118). This remark suggests some of the complex reasons that a young man might have for emigrating — because "no one wants him at home" — but his emphasis is on the loneliness of the colony contrasted with the comfort of home.

Trollope's comments reflect his own desire to see his son return. Fred emigrated against the wishes of his parents. After Trollope's death in 1882, his wife Rose considered selling some of her stocks to help Fred. When his mother raised the issue of selling 55 shares in the Standard Bank of South Africa, Fred wrote: "But [don't] my dear Mother let us make too big a hole in your income. I know it was our father's desire to let his death make no difference in your way of living as far as money matters went" (qtd. in Edwards 42). The South African investments by which Trollope had intended to support his widow in England were reinvested in his son's life in Australia. Fred's biographer writes: "By colonial standards his was certainly not a life of unusual vicissitude or hardship, but it was by no means easy or comfortable, and his letters suggest that it left him at heart disappointed and unsatisfied" (Edwards 62). His compromised ambitions and financial hardships made Fred a victim of the Victorian projection of the colonies as a land of opportunity.

In contrast to Trollope, Dickens urged his sons to emigrate. He, after all, had seven sons to worry about placing, to Trollope's two. Alfred Dickens, after failing the entry

examination to become an engineer in the army, emigrated to Australia in 1865 at the age of twenty, and in 1868, his sixteen year old brother Edward ("Plorn") followed. In his farewell letter to Plorn, Dickens wrote: "It is my comfort and my sincere conviction that you are going to try the life for which you are best fitted. I think its freedom and wildness more suited to you than any experiment in a study or office would have been; and without training, you could have followed no other suitable occupation" (qtd. in Lazarus 37). Dickens euphemizes in language that was common at the time: "best fitted," "more suited to you," and "suitable occupation" suggest a kind of social Darwinism mixed with middle-class snobbery. Dickens tells Plorn, with sincere fatherly concern, that he could not survive in the competitive English marketplace, at least not in a "suitable" occupation. A place of freedom and wildness — in short a colony — was the environment to which this petted youngest son, in his father's ambitious eye, was best fitted.

Like Fred Trollope, Plorn Dickens had trouble adjusting to life in Australia. Shortly before Dickens died in 1870, he wrote to G. K. Rusden, a friend and contact for the Dickens boys, that Plorn

> seems to have been born without a groove. It cannot be helped. If he cannot, or will not find one, I must try again and die trying. . . . [He] does not seem to understand that he has qualified for no public examinations in the old country, and could not possibly hold his own against competition for anything to which I could get him nominated. (qtd. in Lazarus 46)

The feeling of parental responsibility in the matter of finding a "groove" for sons was great. The colonies were respectable, but the knowledge of specific colonies among middle-class parents, and their sense of the preparation needed for colonial life, was often ineptly vague. Map-searching, as described by Trollope, suggests the arbitrary way in which careers could be determined. By 1860, the West Indies were no longer respectable. India had attained a desirable status, but entering the civil service there was difficult.

In 1857, Walter Dickens, aged sixteen, obtained a cadetship in the East India Company's native regiments. He was immediately involved in the Indian Mutiny. In 1863, he died in India. Another son, Frank, wanted to be a gentleman farmer in the Cape, Canada, or Australia. He wrote: "With my passage paid, fifteen pounds, a horse, and a rifle, I could go two or three hundred miles up country, sow grain, buy cattle, and in time be very comfortable." His father had a skeptical response to this colonial fantasy: "I perceived that the first consequence of the fifteen pounds would be that he would be robbed of it — of the horse, that it would throw him — and of the rifle, that it would blow his head off" (qtd. in Johnson 2: 954). Frank wanted to emigrate and his father thought him impractical, yet it was his father who helped him obtain a secure position in the Bengal Mounted Police; he arrived in India in 1863, shortly after the death of his brother Walter.

It was also in 1863 that Thornie Lewes, having failed the second part of his Indian Civil Service exam, set sail for Natal. That Thornie was intended for a career in India suggests that his parents' colonial ambitions for him were originally higher than his eventual fate as a would-be farmer in a new colony suggests. India was an aspiration beyond the reach of all three Lewes boys. Lewes and Eliot assumed that Thornie had the ability to pass a Civil Service exam; they expected less from Bertie. The language Eliot uses to describe Bertie is similar to that used by Dickens in writing to Plorn, with the emphasis on what this boy was "fitted" and "suited" to do. Writing to Francois D'Albert-

Durade in 1865, Eliot explained that Bertie was "better fitted for colonial than for English life, at least as far as the means of pushing his fortune are concerned" and, further, that he was "not suited to any other life than that of a farmer, and in England farming has become a business that requires not only great capital but great skill to render it otherwise than hazardous" (*GEL* 4: 212). Farming was respectable at home or in the colonies. Eliot's own father had been a cut above a farmer, but she grew up among the people of the rural Midlands, and her novels show us that farmers had her respect. Bertie was perceived to be capable of managing a colonial farm because colonial farms, she thought, were easier to manage; he was sent first to a farm near Glasgow, and then to another in Warwickshire, to prepare. The few comments about the boys preserved in Eliot's and Lewes's letters show just how little they knew about what farming was like in Natal.

Farming in England required more capital than farming in Natal, where land and labor could be had cheaply. Eliot wrote to her publisher John Blackwood that Thornie had a "grant of land," that Bertie had been "thoroughly drilled" in farming, and that "it seems the best thing we can do for them to set them going as partners by stocking their farm" (305). So Eliot and Lewes, perhaps with some of the money earned from her investments in the Great Indian Peninsular Railroad between 1860 and 1866, reinvested in Natal by "stocking the farm" of their emigrant sons. Despite his parents doing the best they could for him, Thornie, like Walter Dickens, died exactly six years after emigrating. Five years later, in 1875, Bertie died in Durban at age 29. Eliot wrote to John Walter Cross: "we felt ten years ago that a colony with a fine climate, like Natal, offered [Bertie] the only fair prospect within his reach. What can we do more than try to arrive at the best conclusion from the conditions as they are known to us?" (6: 165). The conditions as they were known to Eliot and Lewes must have been sketchy at best.

If his parents thought he was fitted for nothing else, Bertie himself never felt suited to the life that was chosen for him. After Thornie's death, he wrote: "I often wish that I had learned some trade. A man in a colony ought to have some trade, if he has not got enough stock to live on a Farm with" (9: 16). Bertie described many hardships, but "Lewes's diaries contain no hint that he was afraid his youngest son would not live much longer in the hard conditions of Africa" (Ashton, *Lewes* 261). The question of why his parents never considered learning a "trade" as a "fair prospect" for Bertie highlights some of the class issues that shaped British attitudes toward the colonies as potential means of "pushing the fortunes" of British sons. The middle classes entered the Civil Service by passing examinations. Failing that, acceptable careers were left to a patronage system under increasing scrutiny. The literary class was peculiarly placed with respect to inheritance and nepotism. If their sons could not be made into literary men (both Trollope and Dickens tried), they must find their way into another profession without the benefit of familial rights or connections.

Nineteenth-century arguments for colonization as a means of recovering the rural spaces in England that had been spoiled by industrialization seem sadly ironic when one considers the lives and deaths of the Lewes boys. In a prevalent myth about colonial life, England nurtured its exiled native sons to produce loyal minds and strong bodies. When Eliot and Lewes considered the future of Thornie and Bertie, the question was what to do with sons who were virtually unemployable in terms that the Leweses found suitable to their class. They articulated their decision, not as an ideologically justifiable agenda for England, but rather as the most pragmatic option available to them at the time. Eliot and

Lewes sought "a colony with a fine climate, like Natal" for Thornie and Bertie, not for the good of England, but because "in England farming has become a business that requires not only great capital but great skill," and because boys at home interfered with their writing. Thornie and Bertie were like Trollope's "young gentleman, who, finding that no one wants him at home, thinks that he may as well emigrate" (*Tireless Traveller* 118). And like that hypothetical emigrant, they found themselves unwanted in Natal.

III

> I hope soon to have a little wild fighting to describe, but the Basutos are such cowards, they run very soon.
>
> — Thornie Lewes to his father (22 September 1865)

MANY OF THE YOUNG CHARACTERS IN ELIOT'S FICTION display a vivid and excitable imagination inspired by what Martin Green calls "the energizing myth of English imperialism" (3). In *Deronda,* the practical problem of what young men and women coming of age in the mid-1860s might do with their lives (seen as largely a familial and financial problem) is entangled with each young person's egoistic fantasy of the future. Rex and Anna Gascoigne see emigration as a solution to Rex's heartsickness over Gwendolen. Their sadly naive emigration fantasy may reflect Eliot's memory of the Lewes boys, especially Thornie, whose letters reveal an imagination fired with young male bravado. Rosemarie Bodenheimer, in her insightful chapter on Eliot's relationship with her stepsons, writes that in *Middlemarch,* Eliot created a "full-blown study of young men in search of elusive vocations," and in the characters of Will Ladislaw and Fred Vincy, she "rewrites Thornie's story of failure in two different ways" (221). Bodenheimer argues further that "the story of Rex Gascoigne reverses the decision to send the boys abroad, contributing in this way to the novel's persistent critique of colonialism" (224).

Yet Rex's case is interestingly different from that of the Lewes boys. The kind of emigration he imagines — working on the land and escaping society — is distinct from the career in India for which his brother Warham prepares. Rex is the eldest son (like Charles Lewes), with high abilities and the promise to repay the investment in his education. Ideas about emigration remain at the level of fancy for Gwendolen, Rex and Anna, and even Deronda, also a young man who is uncertain about his future, though emigration is not among the possibilities suggested to him as he casts about for a career. Rather than contributing to a "persistent critique of colonialism," the moments of youthful colonial fantasy explore the pervasiveness and variety of colonial discourses. In *Deronda,* irresponsible dreams are overridden by Mr. Gascoigne's rising middle-class ambitions; he persuades Rex of his duties to "old ties" at home. Lewes had no comparable ambitions for his sons, though it is clear that only careers within the realm of middle-class respectability would be considered. Unlike Rex, Thornie and Bertie were asked by their father to sever old ties at home — to their mother, father, "step-mother," and friends — for the sake of emotional and financial independence.

With the exception of Deronda, who leaves for a trip to "various countries" and may or may not return, none of Eliot's characters emigrates. Hetty Sorrel is transported to Australia as a criminal, and when other characters do go off to "foreign parts," as when David Faux of "Brother Jacob" (1864) goes to the West Indies, or Harold Transome of

Felix Holt (1866) to Smyrna, the emphasis is on their return. The narrator's eye does not follow them abroad, nor does it follow Deronda to the East. Emigration, to sheltered middle-class children, conjured images of adventure and self-reliance: "'I will go to Canada, or somewhere of that sort.' (Rex had not studied the character of our colonial possessions)" (70). Gwendolen thinks she would rather "emigrate than be a governess," but the narrator adds: "What it precisely was to emigrate, [she] was not called on to explain" (199–200). David Faux imagines that in the "Indies," "some Princess Yarico would want him to marry her, and make him presents of large jewels beforehand" ("Brother Jacob" 237). For each of these young English characters, fantasies of emigration are part of an imaginative life shaped by books that romanticize imperial adventures. Green argues that writers of adventure narratives "prepared the young men of England to go out to the colonies, to rule, and their families to rejoice in their fates out there" (38). In *Deronda,* the realization of colonial dreams is no more a realistic possibility than Hetty's becoming the wife of Arthur Donnithorne, Maggie's becoming Queen of the Gypsies, or Gwendolen's becoming a great actress.

In his critique of *Deronda,* Said accuses Eliot of perpetuating a myth of empty land: "On one important issue there was complete agreement between the Gentile and Jewish versions of Zionism: their view of the Holy Land as essentially empty of inhabitants . . . " (*Question* 66). His powerful condemnation, which transforms Eliot into a Zionist and an imperialist, has played a key part in subsequent criticism of *Deronda* and has attained the status of fact. Yet this very myth is recognized by Eliot and exposed in *Deronda* as immature and uninformed, an element of the philistinism she satirizes in the novel. Rex argues "There are plenty to stay at home, and those who like might be allowed to go where there are empty places." This erroneous belief characterizes the type of colonial fantasy that Eliot portrays so brutally in "Brother Jacob." Such childish thinking is evident when Rex, like Gwendolen, cannot distinguish among colonies: "Rex thought the vagueness of the phrase prudential; 'the colonies' necessarily embracing more advantages, and being less capable of being rebutted on a single ground than any particular settlement" (72).

Suggested in this portrait of English thinking about the empire may be a kind of self-critique. On 21 August 1863, Lewes wrote of Thornie in his journal: "Finally, he consented to join Bertie in Algiers and learn farming" (qtd. in Ashton, *Eliot* 266). But in 1866, Eliot and Lewes were still searching the map for Bertie. Lewes wrote: "Thornie has been unfortunate in Natal. Bertie must wait another 6 months before going out (to Natal or New Zealand — uncertain which)" (*GEL* 4: 222). In 1933, the Eliot-Lewes biographer Anna Kitchel wrote: "There is nothing insular about the younger Lewes boys. Switzerland, Edinburgh, India, Algiers, Australia, Africa — these are in turn the seat of the careers of Bertie and Thornie" (221). Bertie and Thornie were never as international as Kitchel makes them out to be. They were never to see India, Algiers, or Australia. But for a time, the question of where they should go was an open one, placing Eliot and Lewes in what she called "a nightmare of uncertainty about our boys" (106). Her nightmare was comprised partly of Thornie's dreams; he wanted to fight against the Russians for Polish independence. Lewes wrote that "[H]e refused for a long while to choose any other career, having set his mind on going out to Poland to fight the Russians. The idea of his enlisting in a guerrilla band, and in such a cause was too preposterous, and afflicted us greatly" (qtd. in Ashton, *Eliot* 266).[8]

It is not surprising that Thornie, who lived through the Crimean War (1854–55) at an impressionable age, should have wanted to fight the Russians. The nature of this contest in which Thornie was so eager to participate reveals something about a common English perception of "imperialism" in the 1860s: it was the crime of other nations, like Russia and France. The notion of joining a "guerrilla band" to fight for the liberation of the Polish people from their Russian imperial oppressors is Byronic, but it is also anti-imperialistic. Polish independence, like Greek, Italian, Hungarian, or Chechnyan independence, was approved by liberal Victorians like Eliot and Lewes. Deronda, in the "Hand and Banner" discussion, comes to conceive of Jewish nationalism by comparison to other European nationalisms, particularly Mazzini's Italian nationalism: "As long as there is a remnant of national consciousness, I suppose nobody will deny that there may be a new stirring of memories and hopes which may inspire arduous action" (457). Such a stirring is also projected for "the Arabs, who are being inspired with a new zeal" (448). Daniel's eager idealism is affirmed in the novel, but no Christian English character understands him, and even his adoptive father Sir Hugo might well find his romanticism misguided.

The ultimate choice of Natal for Thornie was a matter of connections. Natal was made a British colony in 1843 and annexed to the Cape Colony in 1844. It was not, by the 1860s, a wholly profitable colonial territory, though a stream of British farmers and traders did make their way there.[9] It was a relatively new colony, not settled like the Cape. It was apparently suited to adventurous males like H. Rider Haggard's fictional hero Alan Quatermain. Haggard himself was placed in Natal by his father in the 1870s, expressing his impressions of events there in *Cetywayo and His White Neighbours* (1882). The difference between Thornie's life in Natal and what it might have been in India is enormous. Natal was a settler colony, and the Natal government promoted emigration by subsidizing travel to the colony, advertising the cheapness of land and labor, and downplaying conflicts with the indigenous population. Thornie expected to make his fortune by taking advantage of these incentives. He, however, possessed neither the entrepreneurial nor agricultural skills required to make his fortune in this newly opened land of opportunity.

Lewes wrote to Bodichon on 30 September 1863: "Have you written the letters to Natal? If so will you please send me the *names and addresses* of your correspondents for Thornie? The Duke of Newcastle has given him a letter to the Governor and one or two other friends have given letters; so he will be well provided" (*GEL* 8: 312).[10] Ashton notes that Thornie had "letters of introduction from Barbara Bodichon, Pigott, and Bulwer (now Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton)" (*Eliot* 274).[11] Considering the conditions into which he would be entering with so little preparation, the notion of Thornie's being "well-provided" seems as naive as Rex's notion that he "should like to build a hut, and work hard at clearing, and have everything wild about me, and a great wide quiet" (71). Dickens had mocked his son Frank's plans to become a cattle farmer. Mr. Gascoigne patronizes Rex's imagined colonial life. One difference between Rex, Frank, and Thornie is that Thornie attempted to live out a colonial dream after his father dispelled his illusions of freedom-fighting in Europe and after he failed the examination for India. These examples suggest a clash of generational fantasies of, and confidence in, the British Empire. Middle-class parents had faith that the colonies would substitute acceptable futures for shrinking career opportunities at home. Middle-class boys, caught between systems of patronage and merit, looked to the colonies as an escape from narrow expectations of respectability.

On 9 November 1863, Lewes wrote to Blackwood about Thornie's "preposterous & romantic idea of going out to Poland to fight the Russians," and to assure him that "he has started for Natal to seek his fortune & shoot elephants instead of Russians" (Lewes, *Letters* 2: 51). Eliot reinforced this image of Thornie and his passion for guns and adventure when she told Sara Hennell that he left "with a large packet of recommendatory letters to all sorts of people, and with what he cares much more for — a first-rate rifle and revolver — and already with a smattering of Dutch and Zulu picked up from his grammars and dictionaries" (*GEL* 4: 109). After his arrival, he wrote of his warm reception in Pietermaritzburg and Durban by the people to whom his letters were addressed, but he was soon shooting at Basutos rather than elephants:

> Who would have thought, that by coming here, instead of going to Poland, I should have fallen from the frying pan into the fire, and instead of fighting an enemy I hate, I should have to fight one I despise. However it is clear to me that fighting is my destiny, and go where I will I shall come in for it, so with all my heart I am going now into Basuto war. (8: 345)

Thornie's manly notions seemed to be fulfilled in the frontier life of the colony. Natal was fraught with tensions between the Boers, the English, the Basutos, and the Zulus among others. His distinction between "hating" and "despising" reveals some gradations in English thinking about imperialism: the Polish are victims of hated Russian imperialists, while the Basutos are despicable natives. It also indicates the active racism into which English colonials fell. Lewes and Eliot soon learned about the anarchic state of the colony and its dangers for a boy with little experience outside of a Swiss boarding school, but because we have no surviving letters from them to Thornie, we can only estimate the distance at which English liberals at home wanted to hold such sentiments.

Deronda's Gwendolen Harleth, at the age of 20 in 1864, is an exact contemporary of Thornie, who was born in 1844. Eliot's portrait of her suggests a regendering of Thornie's experience in that she too must submit to a reality that is in conflict with her imagination:

> She rejoiced to feel herself exceptional; but her horizon was that of the genteel romance where the heroine's soul poured out in her journal is full of vague power, originality, and general rebellion, while her life moves strictly in the sphere of fashion; and if she wanders into a swamp, the pathos lies partly, so to speak, in her having on her satin shoes. (43)

Eliot's decision to set the action of *Deronda* in the mid-1860s indicates her awareness that Gwendolen's early reading would include the type of novel she had satirized in "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" (1857). The complaints Eliot had about feminine literature of the late 1850s raise questions about the reading of young boys during the same period. Thornie's imagination was informed by the novels he would have read in his youth, for example, those of Captain Mayne Reid and R. M. Ballantyne. But the months on the frontier, traveling pointlessly from place to place, looking for someone to fight, blunted Thornie's enthusiasm. The bravado becomes more and more what it perhaps had always been — a mask put on for his father until he could no longer disguise his vulnerability and failure. The tone of his letters is boastful and vigorous, but the actual events related are sadly inconsequential, lonely, wasteful: "I wish everything was comfortably settled, the state of disturbance here, is so uncomfortable; one can't make up one's mind to settle

down quietly to anything, as at any moment, one may be called out to fight Basutos or Zulus" (*GEL* 8: 352). Life in South Africa could be more frustrating for a young man set on making his fortune than for one looking to fight.

Like the sons of Trollope and Dickens, Thornie quickly spent the money given by his parents to get him started. He anticipated that it would take five years for him to raise the £200–300 he would need to try again, and a year and a half after arriving in Natal, he finds himself "working here, as Kafir storekeeper and general Bottlewasher etc" (343). Once Bertie arrived, the boys endured several false starts until, at the end of 1866, they bought a three to four thousand acre farm for £100 and began to try their luck at farming. In October of 1868, after describing their financial hardships, Thornie wrote, "We therefore write now to ask you to lend us £200, for one year" (433). They wanted the money to pay off their debts and to start on a new venture, ivory trading. In this last letter, Thornie informs his parents of the debilitating illness that would eventually kill him: "I am gradually wasting away," he wrote: "In fact if I were 50 instead of 24, I should have quietly walked some fine day over our waterfall; but while there is youth, there is hope" (433–34). He continued by requesting permission from his father to return to England:

> I know this trip, seeing physicians etc, perhaps undergoing some operation will cost a great deal of money, but — que voulez vous. It is my last chance in life, and you are the only person I can apply to, so I don't hesitate to make the application. (434)

It is at this point that Thornie's bravery and stoicism emerge; it was in his illness rather than in battle that he confronted physical pain and impending death: "while there is youth there is hope." The boys had not made their fortune. They brought little capital with them to Natal and ended with less. Thornie's anxiety about money can only reflect principles of independence urged on him, together with his own youthful, masculine pride. It is painfully ironic that as Eliot and Lewes were enjoying new standards of living made possible by the money her novels earned, Lewes's sons were living, and dying, in poverty.[12] In May 1869, Thornie, financially and physically broken, arrived in England to be nursed and finally to die (allegedly of spinal tuberculosis) on 19 October of that year. Bodichon came twice a week to sit with Thornie and may have felt some responsibility for what Bodenheimer describes as "the scattering and wasting of Thornton's talents in futile South African adventures" (219).

Thornie's suffering and the tales he told about his life in South Africa during the six years since he had last seen her affected Eliot greatly. His illness caused a hiatus in the writing of *Middlemarch.* It may have represented many things to Eliot that are unrelated to the colonies, but his leaving Natal so thoroughly broken, and his brother's continuing on there with no greater hope of success, must have shed new light for her on the social convention of sending boys to colonies. If these boys were connected to the greater world, or engaged in the ideological cause of establishing English dominance because they lived in an overseas colony, the lesson provided by their example was nonetheless obscure. Eliot had written to D'Albert-Durade minimizing the dangers to Thornie, the troubled economic situation, and violence: "Thornton has had some calamities to encounter in Natal, owing to a monetary crisis in the colony and a war with the natives. But he is well in health and shows much spirit" (*GEL* 4: 212). Considering the language she uses — "calamities,"

"crisis," "war" — it is surprising that the references are so few and the tone so detached. Like the British public, she had perceived conflict in the colonies as "little wars."

In *Deronda,* the process of emerging from isolation and egotism into an awareness of the greater world is the revelatory experience for both Deronda and Gwendolen:

> There comes a terrible moment to many souls when the great movements of the world, the larger destinies of mankind, which have lain aloof in newspapers and other neglected reading, enter like an earthquake into their own lives — when the slow urgency of growing generations turns into the tread of an invading army or the dire clash of civil war, and grey fathers know nothing to seek for but the corpses of their blooming sons, and girls forget all vanity to make lint and bandages which may serve for the shattered limbs of their betrothed husbands. (689)

The great movements of the world lying aloof in newspapers (and letters) between October 1864 and October 1866 included the American Civil War and the "world-changing battle of Sadowa" (533). But did these momentous events include the Basuto War, in which Thornie had been involved in 1865?

Eliot's relationship to "the world" after the deaths of two stepsons is comparable to Gwendolen's. In the 1870s, Eliot was looking out to a landscape beyond the domestic. A set of realities about the colonies had entered her life like an earthquake, but colonial warfare hardly seemed a great movement, something humbling and worth sacrificing for, like the abolition of slavery or the mission of "restoring a political existence to my people" (*Deronda* 688). The Lewes boys were sacrificed to no cause at all, dying not in an heroic fight for freedom, nor even for an idea of Empire.

IV

> Soon upon them in their living thousands fell
> Blacks like screaming devils out of Hell,
> Swarming down in mad desire
> As our gunners open'd fire.
>
> — Robert Buchanan, "The Battle of Isandlwana."
> *Contemporary Review* 35 (April 1879)

MIDDLEMARCH, *DERONDA*, AND *IMPRESSIONS OF THEOPHRASTUS SUCH* were published between 1871 and 1879, a period in which new aggression in South Africa was a portent of what would become the "scramble for Africa." Events in South Africa both reflected and influenced changing attitudes toward imperial expansion. Anthony Nutting, writing about the history of consolidation, the official but inconsistent policy in South Africa in the second half of the century, claims that the 1870s "undoubtedly marked the most significant turning point in South African history since the arrival of the 1820 settlers heralded the era of British colonisation" (80). Perceived by liberal contemporaries as the result of anarchic local colonial rule by two key figures, Theophilus Shepstone and Sir Bartle Frere, the Zulu War called forth a new moral critique of the colonial wars in which the government was getting involved.

Evidence of Eliot's evolving position on the British Empire can be found in her letters relating to the Anglo-Zulu War, which brought the minor skirmishes related in "neglected reading" into the realm of the world-historic; it turned isolated incidents into War and into

a cause that few could support and many were roused to condemn. Eliot's letters reveal no moral objection to the "war with the natives" in which Thornie fought. She and Lewes had sent him off with support and encouragement, grateful that he had not gone off to fight the Russians. A *Blackwood's Magazine* article argued that, after conquering the Zulus, "we shall have placed the native question upon a firmer basis, and reached the end of those little wars, which so unsettle the minds of our colonists, impede their prosperity, and burden the revenues of the mother country with expenses" ("The Zulu War" 378). In contrast, Eliot followed the opinions of liberal intellectuals and condemned the war.

Writing on 10 April 1879 to Harriet Beecher Stowe, Eliot laments: "The hopes of the world are taking refuge westward under the calamitous conditions, moral and physical, in which we of the elder world are getting involved. This wicked war in S. Africa (I mean wicked on our part) is sending to England our widowed daughter and two grandchildren" (*GEL* 7: 132). She also refers to "that wicked war" in writing to Cara Bray (124), and to David Kaufmann, with whom she corresponded about her representation of Jews in *Deronda,* she wrote that "the best part of our nation [is] indignant at our having been betrayed into an unjustifiable war (in South Africa)" (138). The widowed daughter, Eliza Harrison Lewes, and two grandchildren were the family of Bertie, to whom Eliot continued to send money after Lewes's death in 1879. They emigrated to England, "terrified away by the image of a Kafir irruption" (127), and became economically dependent upon Eliot.[13]

By some accounts, events in South Africa prior to the late 1870s had been virtually ignored by the British press and its reading public. J. H. Davidson, in his edition of Trollope's *South Africa,* writes: "In the year 1877, during a lull in the Eastern Question, the English newspapers discovered South Africa" (1). The news of the Battle of Isandlwana on 22 January 1879 shocked the home country into an awareness of the Zulu situation — shocked because it was a British loss. On 24 February, Blackwood wrote to Eliot: "Fortunately we have no friends in South Africa where it is very anxious work. But will I think be all right. It will remind you of poor Thornton and Natal. What a state Lewes would have been in" (*GEL* 7: 108). Blackwood is quick to see that war in South Africa, specifically the mass killing of British troops, would put Eliot in mind of Thornie's life there over ten years earlier. In response, Eliot refers to Frere's administration in Natal: "I don't know what you think of Sir Bartle Frere's policy, but it seems to me that we cannot afford either morally or physically to reform semi-civilized people at every point of the compass with blood and iron" (109). Eliot repeats the phrase of her letter to Stowe — "morally or physically" — but with the additional intimacy of shared national loss — "we cannot afford" — that Blackwood would understand. By "policy," she probably meant the demands for the "reform" of Zulu society made by Frere as a pretense for invasion. Trollope, who was also growing more critical of colonial policy, wrote in 1879: "I submit that it is unreasonable to assume a right to invade a foreign country because reforms have not been effected which we knew to have been impossible" (*South Africa* 2: 466). With only slightly more hindsight, Haggard wrote in 1882: "The Government of Natal had no right to dictate the terms to a Zulu king on which he was to hold his throne" (12).

In asking about Frere, Eliot was posing a larger question about British colonial policy. Frere's beliefs, as well as his actions, were severely criticized in the *Fortnightly Review*. For John Morley, who took over the editorship of the journal after Lewes's resignation in 1866, the nature and definition of British colonialism were at stake in the popular and governmental responses to the Zulu War. His comments reveal some of the divisions on

the question of colonialism between political right and left in 1879, differences about methods and responsibilities. The ultimate issue was Englishness: what kind of colonizer will England be? How will our colonial policies shape our national identity? It is significant that even the liberal *Fortnightly* offers no radical critique of colonialism per se, although the moral objection to expansion grew louder after the Zulu War. Morley writes:

> I believe in England's civilising power too, but only on condition that every maxim which Sir Bartle Frere's school think capital, shall be finally condemned by English opinion as infamous. His despatches abound in phrases of edification about our obligations as a civilised and Christian government, about our national guilt in sanctioning elements antagonistic to civilisation and Christianity, and so forth. When I come across such phrases in a blue-book, I shudder; they always precede a massacre. ("The Plain Story" 348)

Frere is portrayed as a renegade colonial administrator whose actions were at odds with "English opinion," rather than representative of national desires and policies. By the next issue of the *Fortnightly,* Morley's rhetoric escalated: "It is for the people of England to decide whether . . . they are content to be taxed for the pleasure of men who unite the mean avarice of hucksters to the lawless violence of buccaneers; and whether the old realm which was once the home of justice and freedom, is to be transformed into a Pirate-Empire, with the Cross hypocritically chalked upon its black flag" ("Further Remarks" 562). Eliot's letters suggest that she too saw the Zulu War as a turning point, with the moral condition of England at stake.

Blackwood, as the editor of Britain's great conservative magazine, was not the most likely person to respond sympathetically to Eliot's moral criticisms, but he expressed personal concern. Referring to Eliza and the grandchildren before they arrived in England, he wrote: "Your young friends at Natal will be all safe now. I do not think Sir Bartle Frere has sufficiently counted the cost of the war either in blood or treasure." In response to Eliot's comments about what "we" could afford, Blackwood conflates the cost issues of "blood or treasure." He continues: "We shall doubtless slaughter those wretched Zulus in any number but that is no satisfaction. One is ashamed to look at the illustrated papers and see the portraits of ourang outangs with whom we are fighting" (*GEL* 7: 112). But ashamed in what sense? The Zulu War was the leading story in the *Illustrated London News* for most of 1879. It is easy to see from its drawings where Blackwood got his image of "ourang outangs."

Even Blackwood could not defend the Zulu War. In April 1879, he wrote: "The telegraphic news from Africa has been coming in all day. In the main the intelligence is satisfactory but there is heavy loss to ourselves and no satisfaction in killing these savages" (140–41). As Eliot had repeated the phrase "moral and physical," Blackwood repeats the notion that there is "no satisfaction" in killing Zulus and so raises the question of what would count for him as satisfaction. With the Zulu War came the sense that nothing was to be gained from the expense of blood. On 29 June, Eliot wrote: "Does not this Zulu War seem to you a horribly bad business?" (174). To which Blackwood replied on 15 July: "The Zulu war is emphatically a useless and miserable business" (181).

The situation in South Africa called forth new and distinctive moral objections to British colonial activities. Eliot could neither condone nor overlook new acquisitiveness on the part of the English, and her most explicit critique of colonial expansion came in 1879,

after she had written her last work, in response to changes in British colonial policy and rhetoric that marked the era of a "new imperialism" she would not live to see. We cannot know whether the effects of Eliot's response to the Zulu War would have found expression in her creative work. We do know, however, that the book she wrote before the Zulu War, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such,* takes a newly self-conscious and moral, if ironic, attitude toward colonialism. Only *Impressions* unites Eliot's broad concerns about economics, the colonies, and English national identity. Crucially, this synthesis takes place through an experimental work investigating the privileges and responsibilities of authorship.

V

> The book, I imagine, is not very well suited to the taste of the Australian Colonies. . . .
>
> — George Eliot to John Blackwood (22 March 1879)

IN DISCUSSIONS ABOUT MARKETING *IMPRESSIONS,* Eliot commented to Blackwood about the work's potential sales in Australia. Blackwood responded that the book "does not seem greatly adapted for the bush" (*GEL* 7: 120). This exchange about *Impressions* reflects two of the book's primary concerns: money and the colonies. Eliot speaks of Australians as she had about "the African daughter-in-law," with an insinuating irony about their lack of taste. In what sense was her book not "suited" or "adapted" to the colonies?

Part of the problem anticipated by Eliot in marketing *Impressions* was the book's concern with Englishness from the point of view of the English at home. Perhaps she had in mind the critical tone of her narrator Theophrastus's comments about British colonialism. Blackwood knew that export to the empire was as important to publishers as to the producers of other British products, and in addition to Australia, Eliot mentions "export to India" (147). *Impressions* examines the profession of authorship, indicting profit-seeking at the expense of moral responsibility. Financial metaphors characterize the discussion of writing, and writing is seen as the repository of national culture, just as banks are the repository of national wealth. Money and morality are playfully yet seriously mixed in the chapter called "Debasing the Moral Currency": "This is what I call debasing the moral currency: lowering the value of every inspiring fact and tradition so that it will command less and less of the spiritual products." In this chapter Theophrastus wonders "where these parents have deposited that stock of morally educating stimuli which is to be independent of poetic tradition" (84).

Integral to the general concern in *Impressions* with the state of English culture are references to the discourses that construct non-English peoples as "other." For example, in "Why We Encourage Research," Eliot mocks the Orientalism of nineteenth-century anthropology. Describing the character Proteus Merman and his treatise on the Magicodumbras and the Zuzumotsis, Theophrastus recounts that "a new idea seized him with regard to the possible connection of certain symbolic monuments common to widely scattered races" (30). Merman's theory is suppressed by the authorities in his field, and Merman himself becomes an outcast, a fate Theophrastus describes in economic terms: "All this might be very advantageous for able persons whose superfluous fund of expression needed a paying investment, but the effect on Merman himself was unhappily not so

transient as the busy writing and speaking of which he had become the occasion" (37). The upstart amateur is pilloried for attempting to contribute to European scholarship about the "comparative history of the ancient civilisations" (29). In a chapter that might be seen to confirm Said's classic characterization of European scholarship about the Orient, but at the same time to reveal a critique of its insularity and damaging power, Theophrastus refers to Merman's "vast yet microscopic knowledge" (32) and the attempts to debunk him by the authors of works with titles such as "*L'orient au point de vue actuel*" (33). Merman perpetrates such blinkered visions: "he tried compendious methods of learning oriental tongues, and, so to speak, getting at the marrow of languages independently of the bones, for the chance of finding details to corroborate his own views" (34). Yet he is also a victim of more powerfully situated authorities when his "mistakes were thus brought under the notice of certain Frenchmen who are among the masters of those who know on oriental subjects" (34). The result of Merman's egoistic attempts to storm the fortress of European knowledge about the Orient is financial ruin. Theophrastus demonstrates a skepticism about this particular arena of academic knowledge of the Orient, while reinforcing the warning throughout *Impressions* about the financial consequences of publication in which the author's ego displaces his commitment to truth and accuracy.

In "A Half Breed," Theophrastus describes the character Mixtus, whose name introduces a racial metaphor to characterize an intellectual and social hybrid, a man who has lost sight of early ideals by devoting himself to commerce:

> he knows the history and theories of colonisation and the social condition of countries that do not at present consume a sufficiently large share of our products and manufactures. He continues his early habit of regarding the spread of Christianity as a great result of our commercial intercourse with black, brown, and yellow populations. (79)

Part of the corruption of Mixtus is his translation of a reforming enthusiasm into a justification of his middle-class life. He embodies the inextricability of colonialism, the English economy, and middle-class complacency.

Eventually, Theophrastus addresses the very category of the moral and its hypocritical application in the public and private spheres. The controlling metaphor is again financial. "Moral Swindlers" begins with a discussion of the activities of Sir Gavial Mantrap, who has fallen into disgrace "because of his conduct in relation to the Eocene Mines, and to other companies ingeniously devised by him for the punishment of ignorance in people of small means" (129). Moving beyond the ironic treatment of Fanny Davilow's loss in *Deronda,* Theophrastus's critique of Sir Gavial portrays him as the ultimate "immoral" man. He defines immorality. He is a Gavial (an alligator, like Grandcourt) and a "man trap" (like Grapnell), enticing people with lies and destroying by swindling them. The Eocene Mines themselves are evoked in the notion of mantrap, but in this essay about the word "moral" and the ways it should be applied, the emphasis is not on those who work in the mines, but rather on "the widows, spinsters, and hard-working fathers whom his unscrupulous haste to make himself rich has cheated of all their savings" (129). Theophrastus's position in this chapter is that "our habitual phraseology" needs to reflect a higher sense of morality than merely the "relation of the sexes." He connects the "informal definitions of popular language" to a larger system of knowledge and relates this knowledge specifically to money and empire:

> knowledge, navigation, commerce, and all the conditions which are of a nature to awaken men's consciousness of their mutual dependence and to make the world one great society, are the occasions of selfish, unfair action, of war and oppression, so long as the public conscience or chief force of feeling and opinion is not uniform and strong enough in its insistence on what is demanded by the general welfare. (132)

The metaphors of debased currency and financial swindling represent Eliot's last and most forceful attempt to characterize and criticize English culture in terms of the interrelated conditions of capitalism and colonialism.

The critique of colonialism and defense of nationalism as an antidote to European racialism and prejudice find their fullest expression in the last and best known chapter of *Impressions,* "The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!" Developing the theme of Jewish nationalism introduced in *Deronda,* "The Modern Hep!" argues for a stronger indictment of anti-Jewish attitudes within the context of English colonial history. In a broad historical survey of British colonialism, Theophrastus comments first on "the Red Indians": "their opinions did not signify, because we were able, if we liked, to exterminate them" (146). He moves on to India and the Indian Mutiny: "but though we are a small number of an alien race profiting by the territory and produce of these prejudiced people, they are unable to turn us out; at least, when they tried we showed them their mistake" (146), and finally to analogies between Jews and American slaves and between the Irish and the Jews: "All which is mirrored in an analogy, namely, that of the Irish, also a servile race, who have rejected Protestantism though it has been repeatedly urged on them by fire and sword and penal laws" (155). Theophrastus writes unambiguously of English identity, including himself in the description: "We do not call ourselves a dispersed and a punished people: we are a colonising people, and it is we who have punished others" (146). Eliot's perspective on "imperialism," in the sense that all of English history is the history of imperialism, is illuminated by Theophrastus's self-conscious reflection on his own Englishness. Taken in the context of her personal experience, the emphasis throughout *Impressions* on the similarities between the English people and the Jews resonates with English colonial history. English emigrants to the colonies were a dispersed people, and some, perhaps like Thornie and Bertie, felt themselves to be exiles.

Even if Eliot thought that her last book would not be suited to the taste of the colonies, Blackwood knew that it would find a market abroad, as her novels had. *Deronda* found an audience among European Jewish communities and, like her other novels, was translated and published in many languages. Foreign and colonial sales were profitable. In 1873, Margaret Oliphant, suffering from a well-documented George Eliot complex, wrote a satirical piece about the visit of the "Great Llama of Thibet" to England. In "A Visit to Albion," Oliphant's crazily Orientalist Llama begs of Queen Victoria, "Majesty of the World . . . let your chief story-teller, the renowned Eliot Khan, narrate to me one of his thrilling tales" (233). The Llama has never heard of Shakespeare, but he knows Eliot, even if that Eliot is a Khan and a man.

Theophrastus comments ironically on the popularity of English fiction abroad, describing his own mixed success as an author. His only published work, a "humorous romance, unique in its kind," is "much tasted in a Cherokee translation, where the jokes are rendered with all the serious eloquence characteristic of the Red races" (7). Perhaps it was this responsibility to be trans-national that drew Eliot back in her last book to a consideration of

what it meant to be English in a world in which England was at once British, European, and Imperial. The twin thrusts of *Impressions* are backward to the ancient Greeks (an ancient writer, Theophrastus, becomes modern) and forward to a revived Jewish nationality (an ancient nation, Israel, becomes modern). Past and future become the deposited stock and the future dividends of English culture. The readers and buyers of Eliot's fiction, like the markets for her investments, were already in the 1870s thoroughly multi-national.

The year *Impressions* was published, Eliot's letters expressed an unprecedented critique of British colonial warfare. Her new mode of fiction writing, the first person narrative of *Impressions,* refers broadly to the English flaws of racialism, prejudice, and bigotry. Despite this belated criticism, at the end of her life Eliot could produce no concept of Englishness that did not accept the colonies and colonialism as integral to the national character. The example of George Eliot presents literary critics with persuasive reasons for considering non-fictional as well as fictional discourses in their generalizations about discursive formations and imperialist ideologies. It also provides biographers with a reason for attending to the language and complexity of literary texts. A more comprehensive intertextual approach to historical cultural studies will result in a more complete picture of the elusive historical circumstances that produced the Victorian texts stocking our cultural archive.

State University of New York at Binghamton

NOTES

1. Cairncross writes: "In Indian Guaranteed Railway Securities there were, in 1870, just over 50,000 English investors holding on an average nearly £1800. Colonial stocks were never issued in London in denominations less than £100 before 1909. Clearly, the bondholders cannot have been a very numerous class" (85). Eliot's income put her in the very top ranks of the middle class and her investments anticipated national trends: "Capital flowed more and more to the Empire and to America; British investors sold off their holdings of government bonds (especially Russian and American bonds) and bought railway stocks" (188).
2. Lewes's journals from 1860 to 1877 and Eliot's diary for 1880 are at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Eliot's 1879 diary is in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library.
3. Said also made this point in his article, "Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims" (1979). Significantly, this article has recently been reprinted, as the first piece in a post-colonial reader, without revisions or qualifications, thereby assuring the authority of this interpretation of *Deronda* for a new generation of readers. See *Dangerous Liaisons.*
4. Other women writers owned stocks. Charlotte Brontë, for example, was advised by George Smith to place her money in the Funds "where it would earn an unspectacular but safe dividend"; her shares in the York & North Midland Railway, following the crisis of 1847, had become by 1849 "virtually worthless" (Barker 617). Barbara Bodichon was given "a portfolio of stocks and shares" by her father Benjamin Leigh Smith in 1848. According to Hirsch: "These yielded between £250 and £300 a year according to the market, so Barbara was able to plan a future and decide on strategies, using her own money" (40). Eliot's investments were very successfully managed. In a memorandum written after Lewes's death, she noted that "by the end of 1863 the interest on money invested from my earnings was £700 a year. By the beginning of 1867 it had become at least £1000 or £1100, and by the beginning of 1873, £1500" (*GEL* 7: 383).

5. Bodichon's position is consistent with Burton's analysis of nineteenth-century British feminism's relationship to the Indian Empire: "In historical terms, middle-class feminism was one of the manifestations of British cultural hegemony as well as one of the technologies of British imperial power" (19).
6. Andres argues that *Deronda* displays a critique of empire: "The misfortune of Gwendolen's family, caused by some colonial speculations gone bad, is representative of prevalent fears and hopes fueled by the bizarre and unstable practices of colonial investing. . . . The British Empire, the sovereign ruler of most of the world, cannot safeguard its own internal economy from the rampant forces that govern colonial ventures" (93–95). There is no evidence in the novel that the mines are colonial, and Eliot's own colonial investments in the 1860s and 70s were quite stable.
7. It is also worth noting that Trollope held colonial stocks, and Dickens "invest[ed] throughout his career in steady Government, Russian, and Indian stock, railway paper and property" (Russell 8).
8. Thornie was no doubt inspired by the Polish Insurrection, which began in January 1863 and ended in Polish defeat in April 1864.
9. In 1854, there were approximately 8,000 white Europeans in Natal; in 1865, approximately 15,000 (Nutting 63–64).
10. Bodichon's connections were to the Buchanan family, the son and daughter-in-law of her childhood teacher, the Swedenborgian James Buchanan. Hirsch writes: "Buchanan was a remarkable man, and in her early years, one of the strongest influences on Barbara's life, second only to her father" (7). Buchanan himself emigrated to South Africa in 1839 to be with his son, and Bodichon continued to correspond with him and with his daughter Annie. James Buchanan's granddaughter, Barbara I. Buchanan, who was raised in Natal, wrote two memoirs about her young life there, *Pioneer Days in Natal* (1934) and *Natal Memories* (1941). She writes that her mother "cheered and encouraged many a young man, who in those early days, found himself stranded in a strange land without home or friends" (*Pioneer Days* 57). Many of the young men came with letters from Madam Bodichon: "She introduced also George Henry Lewes['s], son Thornton, who was a great favourite with us all. He settled near Utrecht, then somewhere in the vaguely-defined 'interior'" (58).
11. Edward Bulwer Lytton had been Secretary of State for the Colonies (1858–59), and the Duke of Newcastle held the same position (1859–61).
12. Ashton usefully emphasizes the juxtaposition of the lavish redecoration of The Priory by Owen Jones, the departure of Thornie for Natal, and the composition of *The Spanish Gypsy (Eliot* 270). She describes the Leweses at this time as living in "a splendid style" (*Lewes* 219).
13. Eliot wrote resentfully of Eliza and her critical attitude toward life in England: "the African daughter-in-law is going on better, and becoming more reconciled to our non-colonial inferiority" (qtd. in Ashton, *Eliot* 371). The problematic Africans were packed off to Brighton, and later Eliot wrote to Charles Lewes: "Don't take a tone of dissuasion about her going back to Natal or remaining. That effects nothing but harm" (*GEL* 7: 185).

WORKS CITED

Andres, Sophia. "Fortune's Wheel in *Daniel Deronda:* Sociopolitical Turns of the British Empire." *Victorian Institute Journal* 24 (1996): 87–111.

Ashton, Rosemary. *G. H. Lewes: A Life.* New York: Oxford UP, 1991.

———. *George Eliot: A Life.* London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996.

Barker, Juliet. *The Brontës.* New York: St. Martin's, 1994.

Bodenheimer, Rosemarie. *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot, Her Letters, and Her Fiction.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994.
Bodichon, Barbara Leigh Smith. *A Brief Summary in Plain Language, of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women: Together with a Few Observations Thereon.* London: John Chapman, 1854.
Buchanan, Barbara. *Pioneer Days in Natal.* Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter, 1934.
Burton, Antoinette. *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915.* Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1994.
Cairncross, A. K. *Home and Foreign Investment, 1870–1913.* 1953. Studies in Capital Accumulation. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975.
David, Deirdre. *Fictions of Resolution in Three Victorian Novels:* North and South*, Our Mutual Friend,* Daniel Deronda. New York: Columbia UP, 1981.
Davidson, J. H. "Anthony Trollope and the Colonies." *Victorian Studies* 12 (1969): 305–30.
Edwards, P. D. *Anthony Trollope's Son in Australia.* St. Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1982.
Eliot, George. *Daniel Deronda.* Ed. Graham Handley. New York: Oxford UP, 1988.
———. *The George Eliot Letters.* Ed. Gordon S. Haight. 9 vols. New Haven: Yale UP, 1954–78. (*GEL*)
———. *Impressions of Theophrastus Such.* Ed. Nancy Henry. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1994.
———. *Silas Marner, The Lifted Veil and Brother Jacob.* Ed. Peter Mudford. London: Everyman, 1996.
———. "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists." *The Essays of George Eliot.* Ed. Thomas Pinney. New York: Columbia UP, 1963.
Green, Martin. *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire.* New York: Basic Books, 1979.
Haggard, H. Rider. *Cetywayo and His White Neighbours; Remarks on Recent Events in Zululand, Natal, and the Transvaal.* 1882. London: Trubner, 1890.
Hirsch, Pam. *Barbara Leigh-Smith Bodichon: Feminist, Artist, and Rebel.* London: Chatto and Windus, 1998.
Johnson, Edgar. *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph.* 2 vols. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1952.
Kitchel, Anna. *George Lewes and George Eliot: A Review of Records.* New York: John Day, 1933.
Lazarus, Mary. *A Tale of Two Brothers.* Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1973.
Lesjak, Carolyn. "Labours of a Modern Storyteller: George Eliot and the Cultural Project of 'Nationhood'." *Victorian Identities: Social and Cultural Formations in Nineteenth-Century Literature.* Ed. Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys. New York: St. Martin's, 1996. 25–42.
Lewes, George Henry. *The Letters of George Henry Lewes.* 2 vols. Ed. William Baker. Victoria, BC: U of Victoria P, 1995.
Lewis, Reina. *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation.* New York: Routledge, 1996.
Linehan, Katherine Bailey. "Mixed Politics: The Critique of Imperialism in *Daniel Deronda.*" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 34 (1992): 323–46.
Meyer, Susan. *Imperialism at Home: Race and Victorian Women's Fiction.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1996.
Morley, John. "The Plain Story of the Zulu War." *The Fortnightly Review* (1 March 1879): 329–52.
———. "Further Remarks on Zulu Affairs." *The Fortnightly Review* (1 April 1879): 546–62.
Nutting, Anthony. *Scramble for Africa: The Great Trek to the Boer War.* Newton Abbot, Devon: Readers Union, 1972.
Oliphant, Margaret. "A Visit to Albion." *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (August 1873): 223–39.
Russell, Norman. *The Novelist and Mammon: Literary Responses to the World of Commerce in the Nineteenth Century.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986.
Said, Edward W. *The Question of Palestine.* New York: Vintage, 1979.

———. "Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims." 1979. *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives.* Ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997. 15–38.

Semmel, Bernard. "The Philosophic Radicals and Colonialism." *Journal of Economic History* 21 (1961): 513–25.

Trollope, Anthony. *South Africa.* 1878. Ed. J. H. Davidson. Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1973.

———. *The Tireless Traveller: Twenty Letters to the Liverpool Mercury,* 1875. Ed. Bradford Allen Booth. Berkeley: U of California P, 1941.

———. *The West Indies and the Spanish Main.* 1859. London: Frank Cass, 1968.

"The Zulu War." [Alexander Allardyce] *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (March 1879): 376–94.