

Land and Landscape, Longing and Belonging in *Daniel Deronda*

1. Pity that Offendene was not the home of Miss Harleth's childhood, or endeared to her by family memories! A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of the earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakeable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge: a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection, and kindly acquaintance with all neighbours, even to the dogs and donkeys, may spread not by sentimental effort and reflection, but as a sweet habit of the blood. (3, 19)
2. No youthful figure there was comparable to Gwendolen's as she passed through the long suite of rooms adorned with light and flowers, and, visible as a slim figure floating along in white drapery, approached through one wide doorway after another into fuller illumination and definiteness. She had never had that sort of promenade before, and she felt exultingly that it befitted her: anyone looking at her for the first time might have supposed that long galleries and lackeys had always been a matter of course in her life; while her cousin Anna, who was really more familiar with these things, felt almost as much embarrassed as a rabbit suddenly deposited in that well-lit space. (5, 39–40)
3. It was an exquisite January morning in which there was no threat of rain, but a grey sky making the calmest background for the charms of a mild winter scene: – the grassy borders of the lanes, the hedgerows sprinkled with red berries and haunted with low twitterings, the purple bareness of the elms, the rich brown of the furrows. The horses' hoofs made a musical chime, accompanying their young voices. She was laughing at his equipment, for he was the reverse of a dandy, and he was enjoying her laughter: the freshness of the morning mingled with the freshness of their youth; and every sound that came from their clear throats, every glance they gave each other, was the bubbling outflow from a spring of joy. It was all morning to them, within and without. (7, 63)
4. It was a fine mid-harvest time, not too warm for a midday ride of five miles to be delightful: the poppies glowed on the borders of the fields, there was enough breeze to move gently like a social spirit among the ears of uncut corn, and to wing the shadow of a cloud across the soft grey downs; here the sheaves were standing, there the horses were straining their muscles under the last load from a wide space of stubble, but everywhere the green pastures made a broader setting for the corn-fields, and the cattle took their rest under wide branches. The road lay through a bit of country where the dairy-farms looked much as they did in the days of our forefathers – where peace and permanence seemed to find a home away from the busy change that sent the railway train flying in the distance. (13, 124)
5. Gwendolen enjoyed the riding but her pleasure did not break forth in girlish unpremeditated chat and laughter as it did on that morning with Rex. She spoke a little, and even laughed, but with a lightness as of a far-off echo: for her too there was some peculiar quality in the air – not, she was sure, any subjugation of her will by Mr Grandcourt, and the splendid prospects he meant to offer her; (13, 125)
6. The sweet dews of the morning, the cows and horses looking without any particular reason, the early travellers on the road with their bundles, seemed all very melancholy and purposeless to them both. The dingy torpor of the railway station, before the ticket could be taken, was even worse. (14, 148)
7. Gwendolen felt that the dirty paint in the waiting-room, the dusty decanter of flat water, and the texts in large letters calling on her to repent and be converted, were part of the dreary prospect opened by her family troubles, and she hurried away to the outer-door looking towards the lane and fields. But here the very gleams of sunshine seemed melancholy, for the autumnal leaves and grass were shivering, and the wind was turning up the feathers of a cock and two croaking hens which had doubtless parted with their grown-up offspring and did not know what to do with themselves. (21, 218–19)
8. There was a dreamy, sunny stillness over the hedgeless fields stretching to the boundary of poplars, and to Gwendolen the talk within the carriage seemed only to make the dreamland larger with an indistinct region of coalpits, and a purgatorial Gadsmere which she would never visit; till, at her mother's words [about Offendene standing empty], this mingled, dozing view seemed to dissolve and give way to a more wakeful vision of Offendene and Pennicote under their cooler lights. She saw the grey shoulders of the downs, the cattle-specked fields, the shadowy plantations with rutted lanes where the barked timber lay for a wayside seat, the neatly-clipped hedges on the road from the parsonage to Offendene,

the avenue where she was gradually discerned from the windows, the hall-door opening, and her mother or one of the troublesome sisters coming out to meet her. All that brief experience of a quiet home which had once seemed a dullness to be fled from, now came back to her as a restful escape, a station where she found the breath of morning and the unreproaching voice of birds, after following a lure through a long Satanic masquerade [...]. (64, 734)

9. Here he could see [...] a great reach of the park, where the old oaks stood apart from each other, and the bordering wood was pierced with a green glade which met the eastern sky. This was a scene which had always been part of his home – part of the dignified ease which had been a matter of course in his life. And his ardent clinging nature had appropriated it with all affection. He knew a great deal of what it was to be a gentleman by inheritance, and without thinking about himself [...] – he had never supposed that he could be shut out from such a lot, or have a very different part in the world from that of the uncle who petted him. (16, 162)
10. The bright morning sun was on the quay – it was at Trieste – the garments of men from all nations shone like jewels – the boats were pushing off – the Greek vessel that would land us at Beyrout was to start in an hour. [...] I said, I shall behold the lands and people of the East, and I shall speak with a fuller vision. [...] 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 [...].(43, 521)
11. He was forgetting everything else in a half-speculative, half-involuntary identification of himself with the objects he was looking at, thinking how far it might be possible habitually to shift his centre till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape, – when the sense of something moving on the bank opposite him where it was bordered by a line of willow-bushes, made him turn his glance thitherward. (17, 181)
12. When the wherry was approaching Blackfroiars Bridge, where Deronda meant to land, it was half-past four, and the grey day was dying gloriously, its western clouds all broken into narrowing purple strata before a wide-spreading saffron clearness, which in the sky had a monumental calm, but on the river, with its changing objects, was reflected as a luminous movement, the alternate flash of ripples or currents, the sudden glow of the brown sail, the passage of laden barges from blackness into colour, making an active response to the brooding glory. (40, 473)
13. One evening we went down to the shore through the Tunnels to see the sunset. Standing in the “Ladies’ Cove” we had before us the sharp fragments of rock jutting out of the waves and standing black against the orange and crimson sky. How lovely to look into that brilliant distance and see the ship on the horizon seeming to sail away from the cold and dim world behind it right into the golden glory! I have always that sort of feeling when I look at a sunset; it always seems to me that there in the west, lies a land of light and warmth and love. (*Journals*, 272)
14. [When evening falls, it has the effect of] scattering abroad those whom mid-day had sent under shelter, and sowing all paths with happy social sounds, little tinklings of mule-bells and whirring of thrummed strings, light footsteps and voices, if not leisurely, then with the hurry of pleasure in them, while the encircling heights, crowned with forts, skirted with fine dwellings and gardens, seems also to come forth and gaze in fullness of beauty after their long siesta [...]. (50, 600)