

The Function of Poetic Epigraphs in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda**

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Daniel Deronda was never what one might call a "popular" novel. When F. R. Leavis, in 1946-47, notoriously described it as consisting of two separate halves, he was merely summarizing the critical reception of the book since its publication. By comparing the "magnificent [...] achievement [of] the good half" to the "astonishing badness of the bad half" (94), Leavis voiced the common discontent with the book's lack of unity. He therefore suggested a new title for "the good part of *Daniel Deronda*," which he then kept using throughout his essay: "*Gwendolen Harleth*" (100). The considerable impact of Leavis's *Great Tradition* on the further reception of *Daniel Deronda* can be seen by the humble scholarly interest the novel attracted in the period immediately after the publication of Leavis's book.¹

Leavis's criticism is at odds with Eliot's expressed belief in the novel's unity. In 1876 she complained to Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon about readers who "cut the books to scraps and talk of nothing but Gwendolen," and added: "I meant everything in the book to be related to everything else there" (*The George Eliot Letters* 6: 290). The sharp contrast between the notion of unity on the one hand (Eliot), and the feeling of a split between plot lines on the other (Leavis) has been an issue of critical debate ever since, and an unresolved one, mostly due to the fact that literary critics never agreed on what "unity" in a fictional text is supposed to denote. Apologists of the novel's unity have argued for such diverse forms of "unity" as self-sufficiency (Leavis 138), "thematic unity" (Beaty 18), "structural unity" (Carroll 369),

*For debates inspired by this article, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debkronshage0232.htm>>.

“unity of imaginative conception” (Daleski 28), and a unity of imagery (Hardy 14). In addition, the general dissatisfaction that readers have felt about *Daniel Deronda*’s bipartite structure ever since its publication seems to be based on the Aristotelian notion of the unity of plot, in which the “various incidents must be so arranged that if any one of them is differently placed or taken away the effect of wholeness will be seriously disrupted” (Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451a). That concept reverberates in one of Eliot’s later poetic essays, “Notes on Form in Art” (1868), in which she defines unity as that in which “no part can suffer increase or diminution without a participation of all other parts in the effect produced and a consequent modification of the organism as a whole” (*Selected Critical Writing* 358). The resemblance between Eliot’s definition of formal unity and Aristotle’s definition of plot unity points at her notion of the novel as a “wholeness [...] which may be broken up into other wholes” (*Selected Critical Writing* 358), i.e. formal unity *and* plot unity.

I argue that Eliot attempted to achieve an overall unity by, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, including quotations from other texts than her own in the form of epigraphs. These paratextual elements link the main text of the novel to numerous other texts outside it, thereby potentially threatening the sense of closure that a novel often is supposed to have. Eliot’s specific use of epigraphs does, however, achieve a unifying effect by linking several aspects of the novel (different topics, characters, plot lines, images and so forth) together. To highlight this idea of internal unity achieved through the inclusion of external texts, I will confine the following analysis to the *poetic* epigraphs in the novel. Thereby I intend to demonstrate how Eliot uses texts from another genre (poetry) to unite different characters and topics of her prose work, the novel *Daniel Deronda*. I further argue that Eliot employs a dialectic method to create a sense of unity, by subverting the epigraph’s internal/external, textual/paratextual, and poetic/prose dichotomies. A detailed survey of the epigraph’s literary functions, its formal classification, and its quality to indicate literary

history is added to the analysis of the organic function in *Daniel Deronda* in form of a comprehensive supplement.

Poetic Epigraphs and Organic Unity in *Daniel Deronda*

Daniel Deronda contains a total of 74 epigraphs, one book epigraph, and one epigraph for each of the 70 chapters, of which three contain an additional second epigraph. Of these 74 epigraphs almost two thirds, 44, are poetic epigraphs (i.e. heterogeneric, see supplement 1.a),² while only one third is written in prose (homogeneric). It is conspicuous that the poetic epigraphs in *Daniel Deronda* constantly resurface in the main body of the text. The epigraph to chapter 17—the crucial chapter in which Deronda meets his future wife, Mirah Lapidoth, for the first time and saves her from drowning herself in the Thames—is taken from Alfred Lord Tennyson’s dramatic monologue “Locksley Hall” (written in 1835; published 1842):

This is truth the poet sings
That a sorrow’s crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.
—TENNYSON: Locksley Hall

By quoting the Poet Laureate of her day (1850-92), Eliot includes the authoritative voice of a prominent poet in her own text. The final word of the first line, “sings,” adumbrates some of the events in the chapter itself (proleptic function; supplement 2.e), as it is through singing that Deronda and Mirah meet in this chapter. In addition, the twice repeated word “sorrow” foreshadows the desperate situation of Mirah, which gives her the idea of committing suicide, thus providing emotional foreshadowing (supplement 2.f). Furthermore, these two lines have a clear affective function: the “crown of sorrow” is meant to set readers in the appropriate mood for the encounter with Mirah Lapidoth, and to rouse their compassion.

The two lines from Tennyson’s poem reappear in the chapter itself. Deronda is rowing in his boat on the Thames one fine summer eve-

ning. While he follows the current he thinks about the course of his own life, feeling deeply insecure about which road to choose. A barge approaches him, and he is forced to navigate closer to the shore. Unconsciously, he sings a song, a

low-toned chant which had haunted his throat all the way up the river—the gondolier’s song in the “*Otello*,” where Rossini has worthily set to music the immortal words of Dante—

“Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria:”—

and, as he rested on his oar, the pianissimo fall of the melodic wail “*nella miseria*” was distinctly audible on the brink of the water. [...] Deronda, awaiting the barge, now turned his head to the river-side, and saw at a few yard’s distance from him a figure which might have been an impersonation of the misery he was unconsciously giving voice to: a girl [...] (187).

This passage corresponds both directly and indirectly to the poetic epigraph to this chapter, the two lines from Tennyson. Firstly, it contains singing: Deronda is singing a song from an Italian opera (Rossini) based on an English play (Shakespeare’s *Othello*), which also contains the words of yet another poet, Dante, in the form of a quotation from the *Inferno* (5.121-23). Then, it also describes, just as Tennyson’s poem does, the “sorrow’s crown of sorrow,” the “*maggior dolore*,” which is (Tennyson again) “remembering happier things,” “*ricordarsi del tempo felice*.” In order to further highlight this connection, Eliot even inserts a footnote (i.e. another paratextual device) after the Dante quotation, in which she explains: “Dante’s words are best rendered by our own poet in the lines at the head of the chapter” (187).

This is not an isolated case. Chapter 39 of *Daniel Deronda* displays a similar structure of quotation and repetition. After having rescued Mirah from committing suicide, Deronda intends to establish her as a singing teacher in London’s high society and arranges an audition with the famous German musician, Herr Klesmer. The chapter opens with a poetic epigraph taken from Goethe’s *West-Östlicher Divan*, quoted in German:

Vor den Wissenden sich stellen
 Sicher ist's in allen Fällen!
 Wenn du lange dich gequälet
 Weiß er gleich wo dir es fehlet;
 Auch auf Beifall darfst du hoffen,
 Denn er weiß wo du's getroffen. (*Daniel Deronda* 481)³

At this point of the novel the reader knows that the expert in question (“der Wissende”) is Herr Klesmer (and his wife, the pianist Catherine Arrowpoint, now Mrs. Klesmer), and that it is Mirah who wants to step before that “Wissender” to sing—which she does (affording an opportunity to quote numerous songs and poems put to music in the course of the chapter). Finally, Herr Klesmer passes his judgment, saying to Mirah: “Let us shake hands: you are a musician” (484). He recommends her an appropriate teacher to further her musical education and explains:

“She [the teacher] is a thorough musician, and has a soul with more ears to it than you will often get in a musician. Your singing will satisfy her:—
 ‘Vor den Wissenden sich stellen;’
 you know the rest?”
 “‘Sicher ist's in allen Fällen,’”
 said Mirah, promptly. And Klesmer saying “Schön!” put out his hand again as a good-bye. (485)

Here the epigraph recurs, quoted by one of the characters. It thus becomes directly incorporated in the main text itself, making explicit what the reader already knew, namely the quite straightforward relation between epigraph and plot of this particular chapter. The epigraph, generally separated from the rest of the text (written, as Genette says, *en exergue*, literally meaning “off the work”; Genette 144), is thus made an organic part of the chapter itself. The poem by Goethe reappears a second time in the chapter when Mrs. Meyrick, the woman who has taken care of Mirah in London, approaches and asks her about the meaning of Klesmer’s final words. Mirah translates—both for Mrs. Meyrick’s convenience and for the convenience of those readers of the novel who do not understand German: “It means

that it is safer to do anything—singing or anything else—before those who know and understand all about it” (487).

Both examples (from chapters 17 and 39) demonstrate the recurrence of words and phrases from the poetic epigraphs either in the discourse of the narrator or the direct speech of characters: sometimes *verbatim*, sometimes slightly modified, sometimes translated. Moreover, both poetic epigraphs occur in chapters that are deeply concerned with singing. Following this hint of a nexus between music and poetry, I would like to bring into consideration a contrasting example.

Unlike the chapters that deal with Mirah’s success as a singer, those telling of Gwendolen’s complete failure to ascend to the high ranks of musical genius are preceded not by poetic epigraphs, but by epigraphs written in an extremely vitriolic prose, like the following, which precedes chapter 23:

The most obstinate beliefs that mortals entertain about themselves are such as they have no evidence for beyond a constant, spontaneous pulsing of their self-satisfaction—as it were a hidden seed of madness, a confidence that they can move the world without precise notion of standing-place or lever. (250)

As if the smashing of Gwendolen’s hopes by Herr Klesmer had at this point in the novel not yet been made obvious enough, the narrator evokes, just before the arrival of the sincere musician, the two roles in which Gwendolen had formerly imagined herself: that of Saint Cecilia (chapter 3) and Hermione in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* (chapter 6). Gwendolen is waiting for Klesmer, while

the melancholy waning sunshine of autumn rested on the leaf-strown grass and came mildly through the windows in slanting bands of brightness over the old furniture [...] over [...] the superannuated organ at which Gwendolen had pleased herself with acting Saint Cecilia on her first joyous arrival, the crowd of pallid, dusty knick-knacks seen through the open doors of the ante-chamber where she had achieved the wearing of her Greek dress as Hermione. (251)

Not only does the “superannuated organ” in this scene foreshadow the failure of her musical career, it also signals the role evoked by Hermione, which had peculiarly mortified her. When Herr Klesmer, accompanying the play, had struck a chord, a hidden panel in the wall had sprung open, revealing the portrait of an upturned dead face. On this occasion, Gwendolen “looked like a statue into which a soul of Fear had entered: her pallid lips were parted [...] she fell on her knees and put her hands before her face” (61). The reader is alerted that the upcoming meeting with Klesmer will have disastrous consequences for her future life: a warning conducted by both the extensive allusions to two of Gwendolen’s greatest artistic failures and the epigraph itself. The epigraph, against all expectations, is not a *poetic* epigraph, but a sardonic and biting criticism in a matter-of-fact *prose*, finding fault with “obstinate beliefs,” “madness,” and “self-satisfaction”—in reference to Gwendolen, as the reader may understand. It is not difficult to see the difference between this prose and the earlier quoted poetry, “Auch auf Beifall darfst du hoffen, / Denn er weiß wo du’s getroffen.” Again there are words and phrases from the epigraph which resurface in the chapter itself, as for instance the quoted “self-satisfaction,” which variedly recurs as Gwendolen’s “self-estimate,” “her self-confidence,” her “self-opinion,” her “self-contentment,” and her “self-confident visions,” all against which Klesmer in his speech sets the need for her “self-denial” (251, 256-57, 262-63).

The novel’s preoccupation with music and musicians brings me to the musical aspects of the epigraph. The recurrence of words and phrases from the poetic epigraphs within the chapters proper can be compared to the musical motif, especially since this interpretation is in line with the musical content of the respective chapters that deal with Gwendolen’s failed opera career, Mirah’s beginning musical career, and Leonora’s former musical career. The epigraphs establish a nexus between poetry (in the form of poetic epigraphs) and music, which remains mostly constant throughout the novel.

A further illustration of this connection between music and poetry in the novel occurs in chapter 51, when Deronda travels to Italy in

order to meet, for the first time in his life, his mother, the princess Leonora von Halm-Eberstein, the former Primadonna Alcharisi. Prefixed to this chapter is another poetic epigraph which deals with musical art:

She held the spindle as she sat,
 Erinna with the thick-coiled mat
 Of raven hair and deepest agate eyes,
 Gazing with a sad surprise
 At surging visions of her destiny—
 To spin the byssus drearily
 In insect-labour, while the throng
 Of gods and men wrought deeds that poets wrought in song. (624)

This poem is Eliot's own, "Erinna," and deals with the eponymous young Greek poet who was chained to the spinning wheel by her mother, which precluded the development of her artistic talent. The final word of the poetic epigraph ("song") opens up a door to the story of Leonora's life, just as *Deronda* is opening the door to her hotel rooms in the very first sentence of the chapter directly following the epigraph. The reader is thus invited to compare Erinna, the poet who was forced into a social code of conduct by her parents and who died in consequence, to Leonora, the artist who disobeyed the law of the father and lived. The relationship is thrown into further relief by the resurfacing of certain motifs from the poetic epigraph, when Leonora tells her son:

"[...] you can never imagine what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl. [...] My father [...] hated that Jewish women should be thought of by the Christian world as a sort of ware to make public singers and actresses of. As if we were not the more enviable for that! That is a chance of escaping from bondage." (631)

The difficulties depicted in the poetic epigraph, Erinna's inability to free herself from the fetters of social constraint in order to write poetry, recur in Leonora's narration, yet with a decisive turn. Unlike

Erinna, she managed to use her talent as a singer to surmount her father's will, even though this decision forced her to give her two-year old son Daniel Deronda into the care of Sir Hugo, where he grew up in ignorance of his mother's identity.

Thus Eliot's epigraphs form throughout her novel an almost Wagnerian *leitmotif*, a musical phrase, as, for instance, a particular melody or chord, which announces the occurrence or approach of some character or some action, or which even—and this was certainly the real innovation of Wagner's technique—evokes some thought process, a psychological dimension otherwise inexpressible. Yet Wagner's music is, as Carl Dahlhaus has pointed out, more than just a *leitmotif* collection ("Ansammlung von Leitmotiven"; Dahlhaus 230) of simply illustrating character. What is more important about Wagner's technique is the combination of the motifs into a symphonic fabric ("Verknüpfung der Motive zu einem 'symphonischen Gewebe'"; Dahlhaus 231), or, in other words, into an "organic whole," a phrase that Eliot uses in her essay "Liszt, Wagner, and Weimar" when she describes Wagner's theory of the music drama:

An opera must be no mosaic of melodies stuck together with no other method than is supplied by accidental contrast, no mere succession of ill-prepared crises, but an organic whole, which grows up like a palm, its earliest portion containing the germ and prevision of all the rest. (*Selected Critical Writing* 86)

Just like the Wagnerian *leitmotif*, Eliot's use of epigraphs accomplishes two effects. It both creates foreshadowing (largely preempting the feeling of a "mere succession of ill-prepared crises") and enhances the sense of an organic whole. The recurring word "sorrow" from the Tennyson epigraph in chapter 17, for instance, not only evokes the sadness of Mirah but also the idea expressed in the poetic epigraph, that this sadness derives from "remembering happier things." When Deronda in the same chapter describes Mirah as a "sorrowful image of womanhood," an "image of helpless sorrow," and thinks that "sorrowful isolation had benumbed her sense of reality," this sorrow

is explained in this chapter exclusively through the epigraph—for Mirah tells her own life story only three chapters later. Here, the poetic epigraph in its function as *leitmotif* helps the reader to understand Mirah's psychology—despite the fact that the scene is internally focalized through Deronda and contains no free indirect speech for Mirah, which elsewhere is Eliot's preferred literary device for the presentation of thought processes. Through the emphasis of the connection of song and sorrow, the epigraph links Mirah's fate to that of Gwendolen (who fails at banishing her sorrowful thoughts through music) and Leonora (whose sorrows are the result of her music, i.e. her decision to value her professional career higher than her personal feelings toward her son).

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, Eliot famously said about *Daniel Deronda* that she meant "everything in the book to be related to everything else there." The poetic epigraphs are an important technique by which she achieves this high level of unity in the novel,⁴ a unity which holds together the two different plot lines that F. R. Leavis wanted to separate: the (in his view) inferior Deronda and the superior Gwendolen parts. In addition to the numerous general epigraphic functions (see supplement), the organic function of the poetic epigraphs in *Daniel Deronda* stands out as most important for Eliot's conception of the novel's unity.

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Supplement: The Epigraph: Formal Classification, Literary Function and Historical Symptoms

The following supplement focuses on the form of the epigraph,⁵ its functions within the literary text, and its quality to indicate literary history. Where possible, I try to adhere to the established terminology and to build upon existing research.

1. Formal Classification

a. Generic Qualification

It may well be the case that the generic distinction is so obvious that no one has yet cared to point it out. I believe, however, that it is important to differentiate between prose and poetic epigraphs. When a poetic epigraph is included in a prose text (and vice versa), the epigraph is heterogeneric. Poetic epigraphs in poetic texts and prose epigraphs in prose texts, on the other hand, are homogeneric.

Heterogeneric epigraphs may introduce aspects traditionally associated with a different genre. A case in point is the topos of poetry as vocation, which can be found in the epigraph to Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*.⁶ Here we find a biography of a novelist, written by another novelist, using a poetic epigraph by a prominent Victorian poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, taken from *Aurora Leigh*, her "novel-poem," as she herself called it in many of her letters (Barrett Browning 330 *et passim*), which describes the life of yet another poet. The apostrophe to God in the quoted passage seems to echo the extensive prayer in the Book of Esther and serves to link the social role of Victorian women with the topos of divine vocation.⁷ The poetic epigraph skillfully anticipates the combination of two central aspects of Brontë's life (as presented in Gaskell's biography). First, the fact that the rural Yorkshire environment clearly restricted the free development of a female writer's skills; and, second, the fact that any woman in such circumstances must have felt a truly strong vocation to overcome those limitations, perhaps even a divine vocation. Gaskell's choice may therefore be understood as the transfer of a well-established poetic topos to the domain of the novel; it is doubtful whether Gaskell would have found an equally suggestive prose epigraph. The intended connotation could be given complete expression only in the poetic form of the epigraph, i.e. in a heterogeneric quotation.

b. Allographic vs. Autographic

The general need for distinguishing between autographic and allographic epigraphs seems to date back to the large-scale “invention” of epigraphs by Sir Walter Scott. Scott had confessed in *Chronicles of the Canongate* that many of his mottoes were invented rather than taken from actual literary texts.⁸ His epigraphs have attracted relatively large scholarly attention, and several attempts have been made to label the invented mottoes, for instance as “feigned mottoes,” “fabricated epigraphs,” and “faked mottoes” (Berger 378-79). Genette suggests more neutral terms: “autographic” epigraphs (written by the author of the text to which they are prefixed) and “allographic” epigraphs (taken from the work of another writer) (Genette 151-52).

The allographic motto seems to be the norm, both in nineteenth-century and contemporary literature,⁹ and yet its autographic counterpart never went out of fashion since Scott.¹⁰ Writers “invented” epigraphs either out of necessity or as a conscious game between author and reader (see Grutman 293; Higdon 129). *Daniel Deronda* itself is prefixed by an autographic motto,¹¹ although, as Leah Price has shown, Eliot’s authorship of the poem was revealed shortly after the novel’s publication by Alexander Main’s anthology *Wise, Witty, and Tender Sayings in Prose and Verse Selected from the Works of George Eliot* (Price 145-47), thus putting an end to any conscious game Eliot might have intended.

c. Identified vs. Unidentified (or Ascribed vs. Unascribed)

At first sight, this category seems closely related to the previous one. Yet even autographic epigraphs are sometimes (falsely or misleadingly) ascribed. Scott, for instance, often referenced ominous sources like an “Old Play,” an “Old Ballad,” or an “Old Poem” for his epigraphs, when they were in fact written by himself without any preexisting literary text.¹²

Sometimes the epigraph is ascribed to a fictional character, as for instance in Joseph Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*, where the book's epigraph features an aphoristic remark ostensibly by Miss Haldin, who is a character in the novel itself. Similarly, in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, the poetic epigraph is ascribed to Thomas Parke D'Invilliers, who is a character in Fitzgerald's debut novel, *This Side of Paradise*. There does not yet exist any statistical survey of the distribution of identified and unidentified epigraphs. It seems, however, that in nineteenth-century fiction unascribed mottoes gradually made way for ascribed ones, so that the lack of (unambiguous) ascription could commonly be considered an indicator of autographic mottoes.

Often, as Genette remarks, the purpose of the ascription is merely to include the authority of a prominent name, and the content becomes subordinate to the epigraph's author (see Genette 159). Charlotte Smith's choice of epigraph in *The Old Manor House*, taken from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, is obviously such an inclusion of external authority, as the epigraph is not related to the novel's content. It is not unlikely that Jane Austen had this function of authoritative quotations in mind when she opened the first chapter of *Northanger Abbey* by ironically stating that Catherine Morland received the better part of her education from Pope, Gray, Thompson, and Shakespeare, for the quotations the narrator lists are themselves rather arbitrary, and receive their value largely from their ascription.

d. Complete vs. Incomplete

The epigraph is by definition a short text. As an inscription, it needs to fit the limited space of a plate. Consequently, most epigraphs are incomplete, i.e. brief quotations extracted from longer texts. Not surprisingly, therefore, the only examples of complete epigraphs that I was able to detect were poetic mottoes, as for instance the short poem "Das Glück ist eine leichte Dirne" by Heinrich Heine, prefixed to chapter 62 of Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*.

Incompleteness of the epigraph may generate various effects, for instance through the omission of important information (*ellipsis*¹³) or the deliberate breaking off of a sentence (*aposiopesis*¹⁴). Completeness, however, is a difficult category regarding autographic epigraphs, as these mottoes are potentially interminable. Yet the autographic sonnet that precedes chapter 57 of *Middlemarch* demonstrates that autographic epigraphs might sometimes be considered as at least formally complete or as conveying a clear sense of completeness (e.g. the short poem in chapter 8 of *Daniel Deronda*, “What name doth Joy most borrow,” see below).

e. Language

The example of Heine’s poem further demonstrates that epigraphs are written either in the same language as the text in which they are included (homolinguistic) or in a different language (heterolinguistic). In the early stages of the literary epigraph, the foreign-language epigraph was clearly the standard form, as books in modern languages commonly included mottoes in classical Greek or Latin. Only in late eighteenth-century literature, epigraphs of the same language gradually replaced the classical quotations. In Eliot’s novels both kinds can be found: epigraphs in the same language (i.e. English) and in different languages, for polyglot Eliot commonly quotes Dante, Molière, Goethe and others in their original languages. In *Daniel Deronda*, for instance, eleven of the 74 total epigraphs are written in a language other than English, including the two that are given in English translation (the quotation of Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations* in chapter 57, presumably translated by Eliot herself, and the one by Guido Guinicelli in chapter 61, translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti). The inclusion of a great number of foreign-language quotations poses a considerable challenge to any reader, and increases the risk that he or she might eventually decide to skip the epigraphs. Tye believes that Eliot removed the chapter epigraphs from *Romola* before the novel’s

publication because she might “have felt it prudent to lighten the burden of erudition,” which resulted especially from epigraphs in foreign and classical languages (Tye 237).¹⁵ Single book epigraphs in foreign languages, however, seem to have prevailed (again) since early modernism.¹⁶

The increase of epigraphs in foreign languages from the late-nineteenth century onwards may be understood as an increase in international literary exchange. The demise of circulating libraries in England, which notoriously refused the inclusion of foreign novels in their programme (Mudie’s Select Library is only the most prominent case in point), marks the international expansion of the British narrative market.¹⁷ Since epigraphs remind us that all writers are always also readers, the usage of quotations in foreign languages may signal changing reading habits around the turn of the century, probably as a direct influence of the changing European book markets.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the fact remains uncontested that quotation in languages other than English had its heyday in the romantic and the modernist period, and almost completely disappeared from realist fiction—with the one canonic exception of George Eliot’s novels.

2. Literary Functions

Although no empirical study of general reading behavior regarding epigraphs has yet been carried out, there is reason to believe that mottoes are often read with diminished attention, or even skipped over entirely (see Berger 396; Simon-Baumann 156). Whenever epigraphs serve a particular function within the literary text, the reader skipping them runs the risk of missing input vital for a full understanding.¹⁹ As an intertextual device, the epigraph commonly exceeds the merely ornamental; it rather opens up the semantic horizon of another literary work of art, which may invite comparison, affirm or contradict the general meaning of the main text, elucidate otherwise unintelligible passages, or foreshadow plot events. The epigraph is

not limited to a single function but can perform several functions at the same time. The following list outlines six frequent epigraphic functions (or rather functional groups).

a. Contrastive vs. Affirmative Function

Among the most obvious epigraphic functions are affirmation and contrast. Both have been analyzed repeatedly, although under different names. Tye calls affirmative epigraphs “illuminating adjuncts” (249), Ginsburg understands the relationship as “one of illustration” (547), Higdon describes the relationship, in his analysis of epigraphs’ “organic function,” as one of “structural allusion” (134-35), and Simon-Baumann points out the general affinity in terms of subject matter (“äußere Stoffähnlichkeit”; 163). Such epigraphs affirm by repeating the general idea of the following text, although it would be more correct to say that the text repeats the idea of the epigraph, because the epigraph *precedes* the text and not the other way round. Since the reader cannot possibly know that a given epigraph is affirmative, its function is realized only in hindsight, after the text itself has been read.

The same holds true for contrastive epigraphs, whose function is also realized retrospectively. They, too, repeat the general idea of a given text, yet in inversion. Such epigraphs oppose the main text by inviting possible alternative readings that are not otherwise inherent to the text. This is illustrated by an example given by Ginsburg: the short quotation from Dante’s *Purgatorio* that is prefixed to chapter 19 of *Middlemarch* is slightly changed by Eliot, reading “altra” instead of the correct “altro” (Ginsburg 547). The change of grammatical gender invites a direct comparison between Dorothea Brooke and Henry I of Navarre (c. 1244-1274), who is described by Dante as the one “ch’ha fatto alla guancia della sua palma, sospirando, letto” (*Purgatorio* 7.107-08²⁰; quoted in *Middlemarch* 176), a phrase that resurfaces in the chapter proper: “one beautiful ungloved hand pillowed her [Dorothea’s]

cheek" (177). The complex allusion to the French king in the *Antipuratorio*—"who neglected what he should have done" (*Purgatorio* 7.92)—indicates Dorothea's current awareness of her own failure to live up to "the lofty conception of the world" that her mind has formed, as the very first chapter of the novel tells the reader (8). In chapter 19, when Dorothea is secretly observed by the German painter Naumann, he seems to see only her "antique beauty" (177) and is consequently reprimanded by Will Ladislaw, who reminds him that "the true seeing is within" (179). This "within" is expressed by the contrastive epigraph at the beginning of the chapter, especially by the word "sospirando" ("sighing"), which does not appear in the otherwise quite literal translation of Dante's lines in the chapter proper. The epigraph adds a layer of meaning to the text, which the text itself cannot (or cannot easily) express. That additional meaning must not necessarily *contradict* the meaning of the primary text; it rather *complements* it by saying something that the text itself does not say, i.e. it serves as a *contrastive foil*.

b. Ironic Function

The ironic epigraph, however, is more than just a complementary contrastive foil; it expresses the exact opposite of the main text. Often analyzed by scholars, the ironic function is, along with the affirmative function, the most prominent topic of research. Higdon discusses at great length epigraphs containing "ironic comments on the material within the following chapter" (142) and lists irony as one of the "organic functions" of the epigraph. Böhm subsumes the ironic function under the contrastive function (164), thereby limiting the contrastive to a binary opposition, rather than embracing its potential as juxtaposition.²¹ Wayne C. Booth discusses the epigraph in *A Rhetoric of Irony* as "a kind of nudge" and a "straightforward warning in the author's own voice" (53, 55) that the following text should be taken with a pinch of salt. This may well generate dramatic irony; the reader,

alerted by the epigraph, presumes that the ensuing text means the exact opposite of what it says (see Higdon 144-45).

As such, the ironic epigraph has a certain signal effect, for instance, when it is taken from the works of a well-known ironist (see Booth 54). However, the signal effect of the epigraph usually only *marks* the irony that the text already possesses; it does not *establish* the irony for an otherwise irony-free text or textual part. An exception is chapter five of *Daniel Deronda*, which is free from all irony in its description of Gwendolen's failure to excel in her musical talents at a dinner-party at the Arrowpoints' Quetcham Hall (43-51). It is through the epigraph from Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (3.1.55-57) that her failure receives the decisive ironic twist:

Her wit
Values itself so highly, that to her
All matter else seems weak
—*Much Ado about Nothing* (*Daniel Deronda* 43).

With hindsight the reader understands at the end of this chapter that Gwendolen's failure is tragic because she believes herself to be superior to everyone else—Catherine Arrowpoint included. The point about that excessive self-confidence is conveyed only by the epigraph, which in this case therefore *establishes* the irony, rather than simply *marking* it.²²

c. The "Epigraph-Effect"

According to Genette, the most complicated function of the epigraph is the effect of its mere presence: the "epigraph-effect" (160). In a literary work, epigraphs are part of a cultural currency, or, as Rainier Grutman writes, "much like smoke indicates fire (i.e. is an *index* of fire), an epigraph signals culture" (284). To be more precise, an epigraph signals a particular culture in which it was considered a valu-

able currency. That was especially the case in (late) eighteenth and (early) nineteenth-century literature, in Radcliffe, Scott and Stendhal. Yet in every economic system excess inevitably leads to inflation, and the “mottomania” of the early nineteenth century soon became an “eccentric mannerism, an annoying tic” (Grutman 284), serving to inflate the value of that literary currency, thus leading to its abandonment by the subsequent generation of writers.

The epigraph-effect can be intensified when the motto is identified/ascribed (see above). In this case the epigraph exceeds its own status as a mere sign of culture and becomes the sign of a very particular culture, often of high culture, by referencing certain “highbrow” writers. The opposite, i.e. references to popular culture, certainly became more common by the late twentieth century (although such references are not automatically to be classified as the opposite of “highbrow” culture). Interestingly, such epigraphs seem to derive quite often from (pop) songs, and are therefore hetero-generic: e.g. in Thomas Pynchon’s *Vineland* (epigraph by US-American blues singer Johnny Copeland’s “Every Dog’s Got His Day”); John Irving’s *Last Night in Twisted River* (Bob Dylan, “Tangled Up in Blue”); and Jeffrey Eugenides’s *The Marriage Plot* (Talking Heads, “Once In A Lifetime”).

d. Explanatory/Commenting Function

While affirmative epigraphs (see above) function as *amplifiers* of a given text, explanatory epigraphs serve to *elucidate* that text. Without them, understanding the text might appear difficult, in some extreme cases even impossible (although that is rather a theoretical case). According to Genette, the epigraph explains either title or text (156); he adds that the explanation must not necessarily be unambiguously clear, but can also be rather enigmatic. Berger’s more nuanced account distinguishes between six different explanatory relationships: that of epigraph and the following text; the plot; the general theme; charac-

ters; setting; and “other constituent parts” (388). Tye adds another form of relationship, that of the text toward itself. In such cases the author uses the epigraph to “address the reader on the technical problems of writing” (244). The explanatory function of such metatextual epigraphs is therefore self-reflexive.

Whenever the epigraph suggests a certain interpretation of the following text, its function is not so much explanatory, but rather that of making a commentary. Such epigraphs are indeed often used to convey moral lessons. Tye identifies direct moral comments in many of Eliot’s epigraphs, such as the prose motto prefixed to chapter 39 of *Felix Holt*,²³ which “undoubtedly provided her [Eliot] with an additional opportunity to exert the moral force of her medium without intrusion *in propria persona* where she might have felt such intrusion inappropriate” (239). Grutman agrees with Tye’s interpretation when he describes epigraphs as “ideal vehicles for ideological messages” (293). At any rate, such explanatory, commenting epigraphs demonstrate the independence of the motto from the main text, even showing that sometimes the main text seems to depend on the epigraph. Such cases provide the most obvious evidence of the epigraph’s surpassing the status of the merely ornamental, but these clear cases are rare indeed.

e. Proleptic vs. Analeptic Function

In his brief analysis of the epigraphs in H. C. Andersen’s novels, Søren Kierkegaard expresses his reservations about mottoes that only summarize the content of the following chapter.²⁴ One must not necessarily share Kierkegaard’s critique, for even when the epigraph really does summarize, it usually relates to the following chapter, i.e. it foreshadows its content. These epigraphs therefore have a proleptic function, anticipating either certain elements of the following plot, aspects of particular characters, thematic strata, or even textual strategies. My research has not yielded a single example of an epigraph that

Eliot, though more usually one of the two functions seems to be dominant in literary epigraphs. However, the epigraph in question is not made redundant by simply being a distillate of the longer narrative that is about to follow in the ensuing text; rather, it has a certain “guiding function” (see Berger 384),²⁵ structuring the material. This also implies the possibility of a conscious confusion of the reader; the guiding function then becomes a “misguiding function,” for instance, when a seemingly proleptic epigraph in fact serves an ironic purpose—which may be interpreted as another form of the conscious game between author and reader that I mentioned above (see also Grutman 293).

f. Emotional vs. Intellectual Function

The distinction between the emotional and the intellectual function is less clear-cut than the others. Both functions may even overlap with the other functions of the epigraph at certain points. It may therefore also be regarded as complementary to the former distinctions. Genette treats it as such when he distinguishes between the emotional and intellectual effects of the explanatory epigraph (158), whereas Böhm interprets them as distinct, autonomous categories: emotional attunement (“emotionale Einstimmung”; 115) and rational preparation (“rationale Vorbereitung”; 122). Böhm’s former category is consistent with Kierkegaard’s more positive account of the ideal epigraph’s power as a “prelude which may get the reader into a certain mood.”²⁶ The latter features only *en passant* in Kierkegaard’s theory of the epigraph as a “relationship [*forhold*] to the entire passage” (49; my translation). Kierkegaard’s dialectical use of the Danish word *forhold* (relationship²⁷) proves that he also understands the (intellectual) relationship between epigraph and text as dialectical. Higdon expresses a similar thought in his reference to a letter from George Eliot to Frederic Harrison (*The George Eliot Letters* 4: 300-01), when he writes:

“The epigraphs often cite the ‘spirit’ which the chapter develops as ‘flesh’” (Higdon 140).²⁸ Without the epigraph, Higdon seems to imply, the chapter sometimes would be nothing but “flesh” (or “spiritless” flesh), while, without the flesh of the actual chapter, the epigraph would lose its sensual certainty (“sinnliche Gewissheit” in Hegel’s terminology; see *Phänomenologie des Geistes* 82 *et passim*). In this context, Böhm’s idea of the intellectual dimension of the epigraph as rational preparation must be extended; the epigraph not only prepares the reader for the (complex and intricate) argument that is about to follow, but is already part of the very argument itself (in the dialectical process described by Kierkegaard and Higdon). A case in point is Eliot’s autographic motto to chapter 16 of *Daniel Deronda*, which begins with the words, “Men, like planets, have both a visible and an invisible history” (164). The chapter itself, however, tells us about Deronda’s visible history, his “education [as] an English gentleman” (172), while only slightly hinting at the existence of the invisible part of his biography (his Jewish ancestry). The chapter therefore seems to contradict the theory formulated in the epigraph, establishing a dialectical relation (Kierkegaard’s *forhold*) between the two, leaving its final import in suspense for another 35 chapters.

The emotional aspect pertains either to the reader or to certain strata of the text itself, although it is often difficult to keep these two levels separate. The above-mentioned example of how the “crown of sorrow” in chapter 17 of *Daniel Deronda* is meant to set the reader in the right mood for the ensuing description of Mirah Lapidoth’s attempted suicide, illustrates Böhm’s concept of “emotionale Einstimmung” (115). At the same time, as Tye remarks, epigraphs also “reflect the mood and temperament of the principal character of the chapter, in the form of introspection” (239). Tye gives examples from Eliot’s *Felix Holt*, where the epigraphs describe the feeling of a character in the chapter: Ch. 1, Mrs. Transome; Ch. 14, Mr. Lyon; Ch. 41, Esther (see Tye 240). These examples clearly demonstrate that the idea of the reader’s emotional attunement by and of the reflection of a character’s emotions through the epigraph often go hand in hand.

3. Epigraphs as Indicators of Literary History

The literary epigraph may be considered a symptom of a particular historical constellation, development or occurrence, especially since its history is a relatively short one. Genette provides a substantial historical survey (144-49), demonstrating that the earliest canonic examples only date back to the late seventeenth century. Long into the eighteenth century, classical Latin epigraphs prevailed, although they were, as Genette points out, mostly prefixed to philosophical, (auto)biographical or scientific texts, and not to fictional ones. During the period of the "rise of the novel," as Ian Watt has termed it, only a handful of novels were preceded by epigraphs, for instance, Rousseau's epistolary novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67). Epigraphs achieved the status of a common literary device only in the days of the English Gothic novel. Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), for instance, contains not only a book epigraph, but also continuous chapter epigraphs. Moreover, Radcliffe exclusively chooses quotes from British poets (i.e. heterogeneric and homolinguistic quotes): Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Collins, Thomson, and others. This also partly explains the additional title to Radcliffe's novel: *The Mysteries of Udolpho: A Romance. Interspersed With Some Pieces of Poetry*.

As mentioned above, the literary epigraph clearly reached its preliminary climax with the novels of Sir Walter Scott, who used them in all of his novels except *Waverley*. With the broad success of Scott, other European writers soon began to employ the chapter epigraph as literary device. The later generation of realist writers, however, dropped the epigraph almost completely. There are no chapter epigraphs in Austen, Balzac, Dickens, the Brontë sisters, Thackeray, Trollope, Flaubert, and Zola. This may be seen as marking the difference between romantic fiction and these novelists' realist writing, as well as their awareness of the radical departure from the (still basically Aristotelian) poetic rules of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature. Instead of chapter epigraphs, realist writers pre-

ferred the use of brief and descriptive (and largely proleptic) chapter titles; this is the practice in Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*; in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*; in Trollope's Barchester novels; and in Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*. There are also chapter titles in the early novels of George Eliot, in *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), and *Romola* (1862-63), although Eliot had originally intended to use chapter epigraphs in *Romola*.

Considering the predominance of chapter titles in the time between 1832 (Scott's death) and 1866 (the publication of *Felix Holt*, Eliot's fifth novel and the first of novels to contain chapter epigraphs), it can justly be said that Eliot revived and promoted a literary device that had been out of fashion for almost thirty-five years. The epigraph to her Gothic novella *The Lifted Veil* (1859), for instance, connects the short novella with the epigraphic tradition of Gothic novels by Ann Radcliffe and C. R. Maturin, simply through its presence. By the mid-1860s, Eliot was experimenting with new subject matter in her novels, and with new forms, especially poetry.²⁹ These two distinct reorientations demonstrate Eliot's search for new ways of aesthetic expression. Indeed, her two approaches overlap, at least in one direction, as her last three novels contain chapter epigraphs (as a new form in a new genre), and, what is more, an abundance of *poetic* chapter epigraphs.³⁰ In doing so, Eliot attempted to transcend not only literary genres but also the historical gap that separated her realist novels from the romantic, Gothic and proto-realist novels by Radcliffe, Scott, Yonge, and Bulwer-Lytton.

Literary epigraphs can be seen as symptoms of both an increased cultural exchange and an increased literary historical consciousness, and, in Eliot's case, as her desire to extend cultural horizons. Her inclusion of epigraphs from non-English poets and writers furthers the concept of *Weltliteratur*, a comparative (not competitive) approach to literature, and an interest in exchange (not exclusion). Eliot's intertextual strategies are as extraordinary as her revival of the literary epigraph, and, I believe, both have substantially contributed to the reception of her fiction as a prime example of cosmopolitan open-

mindedness (see Appiah xv-xvi).³¹ The combination of both is indeed unprecedented, providing further evidence for her epigraphs to be indicators of an increased cultural exchange and of an increased literary historical consciousness,³² which interprets *Weltliteratur* as an organic whole.

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NOTES

¹For the 1950s, the MLA database lists only nine articles on the novel, three of which address, in direct response to Leavis, the aspect of the novel's unity: Maurice Beebe's article "'Visions are Creators': The Unity of *Daniel Deronda*" (1955); Jerome Beaty's article on "*Daniel Deronda* and the Question of Unity in Fiction" (1959); and David R. Carroll's excellent article "The Unity of *Daniel Deronda*" (1959).

²Counting quotes in verse from plays by Shakespeare and others as "poetic epigraphs," the exact percentage is 59.5 percent.

³This is the twentieth poem of the fourth book of Goethe's *West-Östlicher Divan*, "Tefkir Nameh, Buch der Betrachtungen." The poem was added to the *Divan* in 1827, eight years after the first publication of the text.

⁴In his appropriately titled book *Unities*, H. M. Daleski identifies another unifying technique in *Daniel Deronda*. He writes "that one sure indication of a unity of imaginative conception in a given work is the proliferation of analogous situations in it" (28), interpreting the owning and disowning of the forsaken child as "the core situation that, repeated again and again, functions to relate everything in the book to everything else" (32).

⁵The content of epigraphs varies so widely that it is not expedient to bring about a list of its dominant content-related characteristics. In a given novel, however, it sometimes seems that certain topics dominate the numerous epigraphs. J. R. Tye, for instance, has made a strong argument for the metadiscursive function of literary epigraphs in *Daniel Deronda*, by showing that their content is often poetry itself, or rather "the technical problems of writing" (244).

⁶O my God,
—Thou hast knowledge, only Thou,
How dreary 'tis for women to sit still
On winter nights by solitary fires
And hear the nations praising them far off
(*Aurora Leigh*, 5.434-41; qtd. in Gaskell 1).

⁷Barrett Browning's phrasing is very close to the additions to the Book of Esther, i.e. Esther's prayer (Esther 4:38-39 and 4:43): "open the mouths of the nations for the praise [...] O Lord!" and "You have knowledge of all things" (*The New Revised Standard Version*). Seen in this light, Gaskell's choice seems hardly accidental, given the importance of Esther's predecessor, Queen Vashti, for Charlotte Brontë (see *Villette*, ch. 23: "Vashti"). For further discussion of Brontë's Vashti, see Johnson.

⁸"I found it too troublesome to turn to the collection of the British Poets to discover apposite mottos, and [instead] I drew on my memory as long as I could, and, when that failed, eked it out with invention" (Scott 144).

⁹David Leon Higdon's affiliation of Eliot's allographic epigraphs with certain formal characteristics of the main text seems unconvincing. He writes that "chapters entailing recognitions, confrontations, and reversals almost without exception bear epigraphs from authors other than George Eliot" (Higdon 128). His theory is vulnerable to counterexamples: the central (first) confrontation of Deronda with his mother in chapter 51, for instance, which also includes the central revelation that Deronda in fact *is* Jewish, is preceded by an autographic motto.

¹⁰As Elena Anastasaki demonstrates in her article on E. A. Poe in this issue of *Connotations*, the epigraph to Poe's short story "Ligeia" is ascribed to Joseph Glanvill, while it is in fact by Poe himself.

<<http://www.connotations.de/debanastasaki0232.htm>>.

¹¹58 percent of all epigraphs in *Daniel Deronda* are allographic, with the remaining 42 percent being autographic. The distribution of ascribed/unascribed epigraphs (see below) largely follows the number of allographic/autographic ones. Eliot's letters and notebooks shed no light on the question of whether she was forced (like Scott) to invent epigraphs because of her being pressed for time. That is, however, not unlikely, as her novels were published in separate installments, and she was still working on the last installments when the first ones were out already and readers and critics alike discussed the possible outcome of the plot. *Daniel Deronda*, for instance, was published in eight monthly installments between February and September 1876, yet Eliot only finished the entire book on 8 June 1876, i.e. after the publication of the fifth installment (see Haight 482-85).

¹²Walter Graham identifies an impressively large number of such epigraphs: "[i]n novels following the *Antiquary*, Scott quoted from 'Old Play' ninety-one times, 'Old Ballad' twenty times, 'Old Song' seven times, 'Anonymous' (which was probably employed in the same way) twenty-five times, 'Old Poem' once, and 'Ancient Drama' once; and in nearly every case the motto is believed by [John] Dennis and other editors to be the novelist's own work" (16).

¹³ See, for instance, the omission of the second stanza of a poem by William Blake, which Eliot used as an epigraph to chapter 25 of *Middlemarch*.

¹⁴See, for instance, the unfinished sentence in chapter 3 of *Middlemarch*, a quotation from Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

Say, goddess, what ensued, when Raphaël,

The affable archangel, *had forewarned*
Adam, by dire example, to beware
Apostasy [...] (*Paradise Lost* vii.40-43; my italics)

Eliot breaks off the quotation after “archangel,” leaving out the rest of the sentence (here in italics).

¹⁵The manuscript contains chapter epigraphs for the first nine chapters of *Romola*, or at least leaves a blank space at the top of the first page of each chapter for later insertion of an epigraph. Before publication, however, she abandoned the idea and replaced the already existing epigraphs with descriptive chapter titles.

¹⁶Joseph Conrad’s novels contain many book epigraphs in foreign languages, for instance *An Outcast of the Islands* (Calderón de la Barca quoted in Spanish) and *Almayer’s Folly* (Henri-Frédéric Amiel quoted in French), which contribute to the international settings in the Malay Archipelago. Other modernist writers also preferred epigraphs in foreign languages, as can be seen in T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (Dante, Italian), Ford Madox Ford’s *The Good Soldier* (Psalms, Latin), and Ezra Pound’s *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (Nemesianus, Latin).

¹⁷For an extensive analysis of the number of “foreign novels in British circulating libraries (1766-1861),” see Moretti 148-58, esp. fig. 70.

¹⁸Some scholars have expressed their reservations about an overly assertive interpretation of cultural exchange in the nineteenth century. Rainier Grutman, for instance, recently called into question the idea of a growing literary network. He writes: “We should therefore [...] question the idea that the mere fact of quoting foreign writers guarantees knowledge of or even familiarity with foreign literatures. It might well be a self-serving gesture, used to delineate national spaces and thereby reaffirm borders rather than abolish them” (292).

¹⁹Another imminent danger is that epigraphs may well encompass a broader semantic horizon than intended and thus take on a life of their own, even to the extent that such epigraphs develop “unforeseen and undesired effects” (Berger 396).

²⁰“[...] who has sighing made of his palm a bed for his cheek” (*Purgatorio* 7.107-08).

²¹One definition in the *OED* understands “contrast” in aesthetic contexts as the “juxtaposition of varied forms, colours, etc., so as to heighten by comparison the effect of corresponding parts and of the whole composition” (II.2.a).

²²It also invites the reader to compare Gwendolen’s character to that of Beatrice, who is the person spoken of in the epigraph—and also indirectly spoken *to*, since Hero knows that the hidden Beatrice is listening to her conversation with Ursula.

²³“No man believes that many-textured knowledge and skill—as a just idea of the solar system, or the power of painting flesh, or of reading written harmonies—can come late and of a sudden; yet many will not stick at believing that happiness can come at any day and hour solely by a new disposition of events; though there is naught less capable of a magical production than a mortal’s happiness, which is mainly a complex of habitual relations and dispositions not to

be wrought by news from foreign parts, or any whirling of fortune's wheel for one on whose brow Time has written legibly" (371).

²⁴"[...] et fadt almindeligt Udsagn om det, som Capitlet indeholder" (48) [a dull general statement about that which the chapter contains; my translation].

²⁵Berger seems to think of the reader-response criticism of the Constance School when he describes the "guiding function" of the epigraph as one that "has to rouse the reader's expectation and to draw his attention to a particular issue" (384). Shortly before, he briefly discusses Rainer Warning's "aesthetics of the reader," although he does not make explicit this reference in his discussion of the epigraphs' guiding function.

²⁶My English translation of: "[...] et Motto [...] bør ligesom prælude og derved sætte Læserne i en bestemt Stemning" (48). Kierkegaard's description of the epigraph's effect is saturated with musical metaphors: "musicalske Magt," "præludere," "Stemning," "Stemningens Temperatur," and "den Rhythmus, hvori Afsnittet er skrevet" ["musical power ... to prelude ... mood/tuning ... temperament ... the rhythm in which the passage is written"]. This circumstance links his analysis particularly well to my discussion of the organic function of poetic epigraphs in Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (see above).

²⁷See the famous opening paragraph of *The Sickness Unto Death* (*Sygdommen til Døden*, 1849).

²⁸The dialectical opposition refers to scripture: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (*King James Bible*, Galatians 5:17).

²⁹Right after the publication of *Romola* in 1863, she began writing the verse play *The Spanish Gypsy* (published in 1868). In 1869, she simultaneously wrote her "Brother and Sister" sonnets, the quite well-known poem "Armgart," and *Middlemarch*, while in the years after that she sat down to write "The Legend of Jubal and Other Poems" (published 1874) and her final novel *Daniel Deronda* (published 1876). In the light of the particular function that the poetic epigraph fulfills in her last novel, the simultaneity of poetry writing and the inclusion of epigraphs in Eliot's late work hardly seem coincidental.

³⁰As Leah Price has shown in her excellent analysis of the many editions of Alexander Main's *Wise, Witty, and Tender Sayings in Prose and Verse Selected from the Works of George Eliot* (first published in 1870/71), Eliot was quite aware of the anthologization of her own poetry and poetic epigraphs (Price 145-47). In a letter, she once wrote, "there should be a good sprinkling of the best quotations from my Poems and poetical mottoes" (*The George Eliot Letters* 6: 431).

³¹As Kwame Anthony Appiah has correctly observed, Eliot calls any form of naïve impartial ethics into question by presenting the moral shortcomings of a main character to whom "tolerance was the easiest attitude" (*Daniel Deronda* 545). Only at the end of the novel is Deronda able to leave the "mazes of impartial sympathy" and to choose "with that noble partiality which is man's best strength, the close fellowship that makes sympathy practical" (*Daniel Deronda* 745).

³²While Grutman's general skepticism does not necessarily apply to Eliot's use of epigraphs, Ginsburg in this context strikes another note against any overly affirmative interpretation of the relation Eliot establishes to a past tradition through her epigraphs. Ginsburg concedes that "[t]he use of epigraphs establishes a relation between the text and a past tradition." She adds the cautionary remark that "the relation to the past in George Eliot is never unambiguous," and that in her novels every "acceptance of the past is also a rejection. On the thematic, as on the formal level (in the epigraphs), there is not, in the novels of George Eliot, a simple rejection, or a simple acceptance of past and tradition" (547-49). I agree with Ginsburg's interpretation and add that she points out the dialectics of Eliot's method. It is dialectic insofar that it sublates the past tradition in the double sense of the Hegelian word *Aufhebung*: as preservation and annihilation.

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