"Such Passions Dwell in Feminine Breasts Also": The Marriageable Girl in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*

When Queen Victoria married Prince Albert in 1840 at twenty years old, she wore a white wedding dress, which was uncommon for the time; usually women donned their "best dress" for the big day, which could be in any color. However, Queen Victoria started a tradition that people still carry on today by wearing white to her wedding. Women during the Victorian Period, mainly of the upper class, copied this style; rich white silks and satins were chosen to highlight the ornate lace involved, and upper class women were able to afford this expense. However, lower class women would usually just wear their best dress. According to images from Victorian editions of *Harper's Bazar*, a popular American fashion journal, wedding gowns were essentially ornate versions of the style of dress that was common during that period. The wedding dresses from different decades represented in the magazine are white, ornately decorated with lace, and include a long train and floor-length veil, while the dress silhouette is whatever was popular during each distinct period in the Victorian Age. The adjacent picture is a fashion plate of a wedding dress from an 1875 edition of *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine,* a publication run by a husband and wife from 1852 to 1879. As looked at later in this chapter, the style is very reflective of the popular silhouette

for the time, featuring a closely fitted bodice and a bustle with drapery and decoration. This dress looks very similar to the style of a travelling dress during the mid 1870's, while the following image of a fashion plate depicting a wedding dress in 1876 from the French publication *Magasin Des Demoiselles* is more recalling of an evening gown.

George Eliot's 1876 novel *Daniel Deronda* describes two different wedding ceremonies: one of the upper class, and one of a Jewish, middle class couple. On Gwendolen's wedding day, the narrator explains, "half Pennicote turned out to see it, lining the pathway up to the church" (Eliot 298). It was traditional, then, to be married in a church, and the narrator notes the presence of bridesmaids. The ceremony is described similarly to the traditions that are carried on today, with the bride's father, or in Gwendolen's case, her uncle, giving the bride away. Gwendolen is stunning in "her bridal white," but after the ceremony, she changes into a "travelling dress" for the ride to her honeymoon (300). She is defined by the wedding guests as "worthy to be a 'lady o' title'" marrying a Grandcourt (300). But, the narrator notes, Gwendolen does not "present the ideal of the tearful, tremulous bride," but is rather confident and "intoxicated" (Eliot 299).

Comparatively, the novel ends with the wedding of Daniel Deronda, a member of Gwendolen's social class, to Mirah, a "Jewess," who marry for love rather

than social wealth and status. And just as Gwendolen, Mirah's "bridal veil" also "hid no doubtful tremors—only a thrill of awe at the acceptance of a great gift which required great uses" (Eliot 693). The bride and groom married under a "velvet canopy," drank from "the sacramental marriage-wine," and received a "marriage-blessing" according to the "Jewish rite" (693). Their wedding included guests of all social classes, as their friends and family adhered to all different classes of wealth, and they enjoyed a "humble wedding-feast" (694). Compared to Gwendolen's marriage, it is clear that Mirah and Daniel's wedding is simple. The comparison of these two women and the economic class and values they each represent is a constant throughout the novel, especially when it comes to their marriages.

The novel focuses not only on weddings, but ideas surrounding Victorian marriage. Throughout the novel, we follow one Gwendolen Harleth through her life on the marriage market and receive insight into her, largely negative, opinions on marriage as confinement. However, Gwendolen is unlike the other women and wives focused on in this project; she is upper class, and marries into nobility. Therefore, the aspects of courtship and marriage look different than those of the middle or working class. Once a Victorian woman married, "all of a woman's property reverted to" the husband, so Victorian men and women of the upper class "were careful not to lead the other on unnecessarily," since so much money was at stake (Hoppe). Marriages of the nobility were largely planned as a sort of economic transaction to preserve bloodlines and consolidate wealth. There were many specific rules about how to be introduced to someone of the opposite gender, and when it is appropriate to call at someone's house with or without notice, amidst

other courting rules, all of which are outlined in *Daniel Deronda*. The upper class met marriage prospects at "social events throughout the season," which lasted "from April to July" (Hoppe). We see Gwendolen attending many evening events, dances, and archery meetings, at which she meets one Mr. Grandcourt, who starts to court her.

Upper class marriages were not about love. We see Gwendolen's dislike of marriage throughout the novel, an opinion that was uncommon for a woman in the upper class to hold. The narrator explains that Gwendolen's "thoughts never [dwell] on marriage as the fulfillment of her ambition," and although "marriage was social promotion," the "dreary state" of marriage requires a woman to "not do what she liked" (Eliot 30-31). Ultimately, Gwendolen does not want to "renounce her freedom" by marrying someone, because, she says, "I never saw a married woman who had her own way," and Gwendolen wants to have the freedom to do whatever she wants (Eliot 110, 57). She at first decides only to accept Grandcourt's proposal because "she would most probably be able to manage him thoroughly," and thinks that she will be able to control and lead him rather than be controlled or led (115).

Gwendolen thinks that she can learn to love Grandcourt, as long as she can control him. But she learns quickly that Grandcourt is uncontrollable when she meets his ex-lover and mother of four of Grandcourt's illegitimate children, including a male heir to his fortune. "Gwednolen's constitutional belief in the power of her own will, heretofore unchallenged within her small sphere," is confronted by Grandcourt's "sadism and love of mastery" (Miller 87). When learning of Grandcourt's secret, Gwendolen at first turns his marriage proposal down because

of his defiance of traditional Victorian values in having children with Lydia Glasher, and his refusal to marry her to fix his mistake. However, Gwendolen receives word from her mother that her family has lost its entire fortune, and Gwendolen must work as a, gasp!, governess, or else marry Mr. Grandcourt to save herself and her family from financial ruin. Gwendolen tries to fight the monetary loss by suggesting her family go to court over it, but her mother assures her that "one must have a fortune to get any law: there is no law for people who are ruined" (Eliot 199). And after some advice from her uncle that marriage is "a duty here both to [herself] and to [her] family," Gwendolen figures that she can't "help what other people have done," and consents to marrying Grandcourt (Eliot 199, 283). Instead of getting her way, Gwendolen falls into a trap of being used by Grandcourt to cover his past mistakes. Their marriage pushes Lydia Glasher even further from her happy ending of marrying the father of her children, and Gwendolen is placed in the position of being used to try to produce a male heir to receive Grandcourt's fortune, in the place of his bastard child with Lydia. And instead of being in control, Gwendolen becomes pawned.

Similarly, after Gwendolen commits to Grandcourt, she realizes that no matter how hard she tries to gain control of her marriage, she must submit to the archetype of "wife." As explained through conversations between characters in the novel, Victorian marriage provided specific roles for the husband as well as the wife. The husband must lead and make decisions for the couple. When discussing gender matters relating to the topic of gambling, Daniel Deronda says to Gwendolen that it is more regrettable she should gamble as a woman because, as he says, "we need

that you should be better than we are," that men assume women will be good for the men (Eliot 285). But in Grandcourt's eyes, he assumes less of women than Daniel does. Grandcourt instructs Gwendolen that "as [his] wife, [she] must take [his] word about what is proper for [her]," believing it his role to tell her what to do (Eliot 507). He constantly exerts control over her because "he meant to be a master of a woman who would have liked to master him," getting more pleasure out of the fact that he made her "kneel down like a horse" to accept him than if she had actually been in love with him (270, 269).

It was the husband's job to buy expensive things for his wife, and the wife's job to not only enjoy them, but display them. Especially in the upper class, the wife had to look the part of wife, clad in fashionable and expensive attire, and "[take] on the part of marriage," as if it were a role in a play (Eliot 500). And in a way it was; through this focus on material goods and fashionable attire, the wife herself was objectified along with the objects that adorned her. Grandcourt scolds Gwendolen for her independent attitude about herself and tells her, "you will either fill your place properly—to the world and to me—or you will go to the devil" (Eliot 284). In this way he threatens her to act as he wants her to as his wife, controlling her. Literary critic Meredith Miller explains this objectification by explaining, "the critique of marriage throughout [*Daniel Deronda*] exposes this economic and national interest in the use of young women, and the role that fictional romance plays in reproducing the ideological effect that perpetuates it" (87).

Additionally, marriage was seen as a sort of fulfillment for a woman, as Gwendolen's mother, Mrs. Davilow, explains that "marriage is the only happy state

for a woman" (Eliot 22). Especially in upper class society where a solid economic future is at stake, a noble marriage is one to be idolized. It doesn't matter if there is no love when there is so much money involved. And according to Gwendolen's uncle Mr. Gascoigne, "she ought to make a first-rate marriage" based on her looks and fashion (Eliot 28). Miller explains that this line spoken by the Rector "specifically equates young women with market commodities," as Mr. Gascoigne buys Gwendolen a horse and sets her up in a grand house to make her more marketable for men (89).

In the Victorian period, many factors went into a woman being marriage material; she had to not only act as the archetype of wife, but look the part of one. This project has already looked at the Victorian ideal of the angelic wife who puts her children and husband first, always selflessly serving the family. But in addition to a maternal character, a Victorian wife-to-be must meet the fashion standard of an upper class noble if she wants to be one. An October 1876 edition of *Harper's Bazar* explains that in the 1870's, "the ideal at present is the greatest possible flatness and straightness: a woman is a pencil covered with raiment," or clothing (77). It was in fashion for women to look very thin and straight, and the bustle was starting to go out of style in the mid-1870's. During the period of *Daniel Deronda,* the "cuirasse bodice" became popular, consisting of close fitting fabric that extended below the natural

waistline, requiring a tight corset and narrow skirt. The result was a dress that included more drapery than underskirts and new elements such as asymmetry and darker colors. In the adjacent picture of a walking dress from an 1876 edition of *Harper's Bazar*, it is easy to notice the slenderness of the silhouette and incredibly close fitting fabric; it is no wonder that Gwendolen often needs her mother to help her undress.

As an upper class woman of a marriageable age, Gwendolen was required to always look appropriate at the many evening parties and daytime events she attended. And luckily for her, ready-to-wear fashion was becoming more popular and accessible for women to buy pre-made instead of having to wait long amounts of time and spend more money on something custom made. In cities "everywhere, the big department store was the apotheosis of shopping in the second half of the nineteenth century" (Wilson 147). And while clothing stores used to be attended by rowdy male shop employees, now, "a new emphasis on respectability" brought in many female workers that created an experience of great refinement for the customer (Wilson 149). In department stores, "bourgeois culture was on display," depicting "the proper household and correct attire" for visitors to familiarize themselves with the new fashions and innovations (Wilson 150). In a way, the department store also freed women from the confinement of the home and allowed them to be independent when shopping.

Gwendolen would have been familiar with the latest fashions on display in these department stores, and her closet would be up to date. There are a few particular mentions of popular articles of clothing that Gwendolen dons throughout

the novel. Before departing for home after she hears of her family's financial ruin, the narrator mentions that Gwendolen is wearing "her gray travelling dress" and a "felt hat," as it was essential to wear the right kind of dress for the time of day (Eliot 12). We also see Gwendolen wearing a riding dress at different points in the book, as she loves to hunt and ride her horse. The narrator even remarks that Gwendolen "always [feels] the more daring for being in her riding-dress" during the day instead of wearing the appropriate morning or afternoon attire (Eliot 278). She uses her clothing to show that she does not always want to follow the rules, but do what makes her feel best instead. When out of doors, Gwendolen is frequently seen wearing a burnous, which was a sort of woolen cloak that was fashionable. Another particular outfit that was necessary for a specific event is the archery dress, of which, the narrator describes, Gwendolen wears a "white cashmere with its border of pale green," a jacket to cover the shoulders and arms, and "a thin line of gold round her neck" (Eliot 96).

Gwendolen wears green not only to the archery meeting, but frequently throughout the novel. The first time we see Gwendolen at the gambling house, a spectator is comparing her to a serpent, "all green and silver, [winding] her neck about a little more than usual" (Eliot 7). The onlooker remarks that "woman was tempted by a serpent: why not man?" (7). This is an allusion to the Biblical story of The Fall, when Eve was tempted by the serpent form of Satan to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil that the Lord told her not to eat of. She then convinced her husband Adam to sin as well, thus dooming the rest of humanity to be born sinful creatures. The comparison of Gwendolen to the archetype of the

"temptress" Eve explains how fashion is often used as a statement to other people rather than an expression of the person wearing the clothing, and what people wore during the Victorian Age closely correlated with getting a partner or a marriage proposal. Gwendolen continues to catch the eye of tempted men in her stunning green at evening parties as well as daytime events. When Gwendolen first meets Mirah, she dons "pale green velvet and [the] poisoned diamonds" of her husband's ex-lover (375). Snake imagery and poisonous venom are connected to Gwendolen throughout the novel as a representation of not just what she resembles, but who she is, often acting selfish and sneaky to get her way.

When Gwendolen is not wearing green, she almost exclusively wears black. Fashion writer Allison Lurie explains that black, "like white,… is associated with the supernatural, but with the powers of darkness rather than those of light" (187). Black has for a long time been "the traditional hue of mourning," and is associated with sorrow (Lurie 187). The daytime dresses Gwendolen wears at home are often "black silk, cut square about the round white pillar of her throat" with a "square-cut bodice," possibly to connect her with the deep seriousness that the color black recalls (65, 214). Gwendolen explains that "black is the only wear when one is going to refuse an offer," using her clothing to portray her haughty personality (251). Gwendolen believes that clothing can be used to convey how the wearer feels or thinks, or to get a point across without having to say it. Professor and author Elizabeth Wilson explains that because of the uprising of uniforms worn in factories and other "forms of classification that burgeoned with the triumph of industrial culture,… dress became the vehicle for the display of the unique individual

personality" (155). Men and women's dress were strictly different, although each gender used dress "as display *or* mask—or both" (Wilson 156). Gwendolen often uses her clothing as an example of how she is feeling, or to convey a message about how she is supposed to feel.

Daniel Deronda looks at the part that fashion plays in the Victorian marriage market and in making one marketable, and connects to fashion writer Allison Lurie's idea that clothing is the first thing one learns about a person and is its own language. Professor and author Catherine England comments on the Victorian marriage plot, explaining that for our heroines depicted in Victorian novels, "a damaged reputation may be worth more… than a pristine one" (109). By this, England comments on "flirtation, which always jeopardizes a nineteenth-century woman's reputation" (109). Once again, the temptress Eve is recalled when we see being too flirty or coquettish a constant concern for Gwendolen, and Daniel Deronda himself often thinks she is acting the coquette. While on a trip with the Grandcourts, Daniel Deronda remarks that he is "always uneasily dubious about his opinion of her," although the narrator assures the reader that "there [is] not the faintest touch of coquetry in the attitude of her mind towards him," despite her obsession with talking to him about her feelings (Eliot 355). To justify Gwendolen's actions, Daniel says to himself, "perhaps she is a coquette" (Eliot 354). Gwendolen does not want to be viewed as a tempter of men, or one that enjoys male attention. England continues to explain how the Victorian marriage plot tells the story of a woman who is saved "*after* being socially damaged," as opposed to the traditional story of the salvation of a damsel in distress before she gets hurt (110). Therefore, "it is not the threat of

harm but an actual social taint that triggers a rescuing project," a story told through Gwendolen's financial ruin being the trigger for her marriage to Grandcourt (England 110).

It looks as if Gwendolen has been saved from the worst nightmare imaginable for the upper class—financial ruin, and thus, the ruin of one's social status—by marrying Grandcourt, but as we see in the progression of the novel, her independent spirit and self-seeking attitude prevent her from submitting to her husband like he wants. She refers to marriage as "bondage," and, as Meredith Miller says, "Eliot poses her critique of the economic subjugation of European women and their lack of personal liberty through a problematic metaphorical conflation of white women with colonial slaves" (88). In Daniel's one conversation with his mother narrated in the novel, she explains to him, "You are not a woman. You may try—but 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" (Eliot 541). Eliot additionally uses Gwendolen's marriage to highlight "the reality of sexual exploitation and abuse," writing of Grandcourt's power over Gwendolen as disguised sexual abuse (Miller 91). After Grandcourt forces Gwendolen to meet with his friend whom Gwendolen strongly dislikes, Mr. Lush, the narrator tells us, "'She is in a desperate rage,' thought he. But the rage was silent, and therefore not disagreeable to him" (Eliot 510). Grandcourt acknowledges that it's not offensive for Gwendolen to be angry and indignant as long as it doesn't affect him. In fact, it is almost agreeable for her to be angry with him, and silent. Grandcourt then "[turns] her chin and [kisses] her, while she [keeps] her eyelids down, and she [does] not move them until he was on the other side of

the door" (Eliot 511). This encounter tells the reader that Gwendolen is forced to commit sexual acts with Grandcourt, and she does so silently and aggrievedly, but this resentment builds up inside her.

Gwendolen is used to getting her way, and being forced to share in this abusive relationship that feels like "bondage" to her causes her to crumble. When Grandcourt and Gwendolen arrive at one of their vacation homes in the Ryelands the night of their wedding, Gwendolen receives a package that contains diamonds as a gift from Grandcourt, and a letter from their previous wearer. Grandcourt's ex-lover, Lydia Glasher, sent them to Gwendolen at Grandcourt's request, but she includes a note that tells Gwendolen how "the man [she] married has a withered heart" because his love still belongs to Lydia, and the diamonds she will don once belonged to her (Eliot 303). The narrator explains how Gwendolen is "spell-bound" after reading this letter, and she lets the "poisoned gems" fall to the ground, recalling of the poisonous apple from *Snow White* and the ruining of an innocent princess (303). When Grandcourt knocks and enters the room "dressed for dinner,… Gwendolen [screams] again and again with hysterical violence,… shrieking as it seemed with terror" (303). This very alarming scene explains the effect this sinful history of Grandcourt's has on her, and explains Gwendolen's referral to the diamonds as "poisoned" and her refusal to wear them.

Gwendolen reaches for any sort of power she can exert over her husband, and when he tightens his grip on her and she can no longer act on her own accord, she controls the one thing she can grasp at- her mind. As we have seen through Catherine and Bertha, when headstrong women in the Victorian Era try to be

conquered, they sometimes use hysteria as a strategy for getting people to do their bidding. While Gwendolen keeps up appearances and attends grand parties and the yachting trip with Grandcourt, the narrator details her hateful thoughts towards her husband and herself. She acknowledges that "any romantic illusions she had in marrying this man had turned on her power of using him as she liked. He was using her as he liked" (Eliot 511). Gwendolen thinks of running away, telling herself, "I will insist on being separated from him,… then, I will leave him, whether he consents or not" (515). Ultimately, Gwendolen stays married to Grandcourt, but harbors ill feelings towards him. She instead tries to be happy in her miserable situation, hiding the misery of her marriage from her mother and going to Daniel Deronda for advice on how to be a better person, the "lesson" most Victorian women had to learn in order to achieve becoming "'the angel of the house." Gwendolen calls on Daniel asking for a visit to her home, where she tells him, "I have always been thinking of your advice, but is it any use...? I am afraid of getting wicked. Tell me what to do" (521). We learn later that by "wicked," Gwendolen was referencing her desire to either leave her husband, or to hurt him.

On a yachting trip that Grandcourt forces Gwendolen to accompany him, they are involved in a boating accident that pushes Grandcourt into the water, and drowns him! Luckily, Daniel happens to be on the shore when the boat comes in, and he meets Gwendolen, dripping and wide-eyed, as she comes off the boat. When he visits her in her room, Daniel finds Gwendolen "seated with a white shawl wrapped round her," a Victorian symbol for being in bad mental and/or physical health, extremely reminiscent of Catherine Earnshaw in her "brain fever" state (Eliot 590).

She explains to Deronda that she had a hand in the death of her husband; a gust of wind knocked Grandcourt into the water, and he called for Gwendolen to throw him the rope, but, as her "heart gave a leap as if it were going out of [her]," she stood there with the rope stationary in her hand (596). Daniel assures her that it was shock that kept her from moving, and the fact that she jumped in after her husband shows that she did care for him and is not guilty for his death, but Gwendolen asks him, "do you think a woman who cried, and prayed, and struggled to be saved from herself, could be a murderess?" (591). Despite Daniel's assurance, Gwendolen can't help but think that her crying and praying to be delivered from the misery of her marriage played a part in causing Grandcourt to die. These thoughts torture her and bring on a madness that separates her from the rest of the story.

The novel instead focuses more on Daniel and his second female interest in the novel, Mirah. Mirah is a young "Jewess" whom Daniel saves one night from drowning herself in the river; she ran away from her controlling and money foolish father who tried to force her to sleep with someone for money, and she is on a journey to find her mother and brother who her father took her from. Daniel puts Mirah in the care of the Meyerick family, who take her in and support her interest in music while learning to overlook the fact that she is Jewish.

Members of religions other than Anglican, such as Jewish people, did not receive the same opportunities as the members of the Church of England. As author Sally Mitchell explains in her book *Daily Life in Victorian England,* "a man was required to assent to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Faith in order to sit in Parliament, enter a university, or become a military officer" (241). Mitchell also explains that the

"Jewish population was extremely small" in Victorian England, and Jewish people did not receive the same rights as members of the Anglican Church, such as could not being allowed to attend university (244). In the 1870's when *Daniel Deronda* took place, surges of Jewish immigrants arrived in England, which forced Victorians to change their ideas about Jews.

The narrator of *Daniel Deronda* explains the cultural dislike and distrust of the Jewish people in society through the way people talk about and interact with Mirah. In her first conversation with Daniel, she explains that she "know[s] many Jews are bad," alluding to the stereotypes of the Jewish people at this time (Eliot 164). Mirah gives some insight into these stereotypes by explaining the "cunning in the men and beauty in the women" (Eliot 183). In talking about Mirah, one of the members of Gwendolen and Daniel's social circle, Klesmer, corrects Mrs. Meyerick after saying Mirah is an angel; he says, "no… she is a pretty Jewess: the angels must not get the credit of her. But I think she has found a guardian angel" (Eliot 416). Klesmer essentially explains that Mirah cannot be an angel because she's a Jew, but he's sure she has someone else watching over her to bring her good fortune. Daniel himself explains how he "could not escape (who can?) knowing ugly stories of Jewish characteristics and occupations," but through his connection with Mirah, his opinions of Jewish people change (176).

Daniel cares for Mirah because of her strength in overcoming her past misfortunes and for her "goodness;" because "whatever reverence could be shown a woman, he was bent on showing this girl" (Eliot 192). In many ways, Mirah is described similarly to Jane Eyre in her innocent piousness; however, Mirah is

devoted to her Jewish faith, and Jane to her Anglican. Daniel, in being so attracted to Mirah's goodness, tries to find Mirah's brother named Ezra and her mother, and eventually, Daniel comes across a Jewish pawnshop owner named Ezra Cohen and his family. Through Daniel's relationship with the Cohen's while trying to figure out if they were Mirah's family, Daniel's entire view of Jewish people change. The narrator explains that Daniel sees "every common Jew and Jewess in light of comparison with [Mirah]," and when Daniel, who grew up never knowing his real parents, receives an invitation from his mother to meet with her and finds out that he is actually Jewish, he is very excited (Eliot 322). Daniel does find Mirah's brother, a sick man who goes by the name of Mordecai and lives with the Cohen family, and Daniel unites the siblings, while learning all about the religion and the Hebrew language from Mordecai. Mordecai explains the connection that the Jewish religion creates for them, as "[their] souls know each other" because "the life of Israel is in [their] veins" (489). This connection creates a bond between Daniel and Mirah as well, because Mirah has always said she would only marry a Jew, and now Daniel and Mirah's feelings for each other can come out in the open.

In the novel, Mirah is described as extremely kind, simple, and childlike; or, in Victorian terms, the ideal woman to marry. She is very graceful and slow to anger, except when she is defending her faith. But notably, in comparison with Gwendolen, Mirah works for the upper class to earn her wages. When Daniel finds Mirah about to drown herself, he hears her story of being forced to work as an actress by her father for money. But when she is given this second chance at life, Mirah decides that she wants to be a singer, which was not a very highly viewed profession as it

was viewed as essentially selling one's body; but, through Daniel's connections, Mirah is able to sing and perform at the high-class parties Gwendolen and Daniel attend. For her first private concert, Mirah insists that she doesn't "want anything better than this black merino, some white gloves, and some new bottines" (417). Much to the Meyerick sisters' chagrin, Mirah would rather wear a plain black woolen dress that she wears all the time and some new slippers to her first concert than buy a fancy new outfit. However, the Meyericks eventually convince Mirah to let them buy her "a black silk dress such as ladies wear," because that is what Daniel would like for her, and, as she says, "I wish to do what Mr. Deronda would like me to do" (Eliot 419). This scene is even more recalling of Jane in her aversion to being adorned with jewelry and rich fabrics by Rochester. But ultimately, Mirah succumbs to the frivolous outfits because it is what the men in her life would prefer— Hans and Daniel.

Mirah is described as wearing common clothes for an English lady, but her outfits are nothing like the extravagance of Gwendolen's. The fashion of these two women set them apart; Gwendolen is rich and used to getting what she wants, as shown through her colorful and ornamented clothes, while Mirah works for her wages, and is very quiet and kind, even in the clothes she decides to wear to not attract attention. In this way, clothing is a representation of morality; Mirah is conservative and traditional in both dress and religious values, while Gwnedolen's frivolity and ornamentation place her in a morally tainted marriage. After Mr. Grandcourt dies and Gwendolen is left a widow, those in her social circle assume that Daniel will propose to her and they will get married. Gwendolen seems to

assume the same, or at least that Daniel will always be there for her to talk with her and make her feel better; the narrator says of Gwendolen that "her imagination had not been turned to a future union with Deronda by any other than the spiritual tie which had been continually strengthening; but also it had not been turned towards a future separation from him " (660). The narrator makes it clear that Daniel never really views Gwendolen with any romance, much to the shock of Victorian readers. Daniel acknowledges that, much like he rescued Mirah from killing herself, Gwendolen "too need[s] a rescue," but "a rescue for which he himself [feels] helpless" (Eliot 478). And ultimately, Daniel realizes that he feels personal love for Mirah and only "self-martyring pity" for Gwendolen (637).

The socially preferred marriage between the two wealthy members of the upper class is thrown away in favor of a marriage between an upper class Jew and a middle class, working Jewess. Although Mirah is not viewed as the marriageable girl within the context of the novel because of her Jewish faith and working class status, Daniel chooses her over anyone else. Gwendolen, although her whole adolescence she spoke of marriage as a bondage that takes away one's freedoms, crumbles without a husband and without Daniel. When Daniel tells her he is going to get married and move away to pursue the Jewish faith, she claims that she has been "forsaken" by Daniel because she is a "cruel woman," and once more makes everything about her (Eliot 690). Gwendolen "[bursts] out hysterically" in fits of crying and passion after Daniel leaves her, but by Daniel's wedding day, she makes amends through a letter to him, claiming that she is only better because of him and stating over and over again, "I shall live!" (691, 692). Gwendolen could never have

been an option for a marriage to Daniel because she has been ruined by the death of her first husband and the loss of her wealth. She was never a suitable candidate for wife after her first marriage because she has become hysterical over her misfortune, and instead, the novel concludes with a happy ending for the unmarriageable Jewess, Mirah.

Gwendolen, in many ways, is representative of what is to come in Victorian culture—the New Woman. She felt fiercely independent and did not want to succumb to a traditional marriage that would strip her of her freedoms. The "New Woman" that emerged in the late 1880's and early '90's challenged the traditional gender roles that were prominent in Victorian culture. The New Woman fought for "emancipation from the Victorian cult of true womanhood" by stepping out of the domestic sphere and protesting female gender roles (Ardis 2). This consisted of the suffragette movement, women moving into the workplace, and women who "defied the Victorian social code by speaking out in public" over issues like animal rights and better conditions for prostitutes (Ardis 15). In regard to marriage, ideas started circulating that gave women more agency over themselves in an institution that was previously all about serving someone else—your husband. This movement allowed "the 'pure woman' [to be] transformed" and created room for women's sexuality (Ardis 60). Authors during this period in Victorian history "expose the contradiction of romantic love as they question the plausibilities of the marriage plot," and bridged the divide between the "pure" and the "fallen" woman (Ardis 61). However, in 1876 these ideas weren't outspoken in culture yet, and Gwendolen did not know how to handle her desire to upset cultural tradition by refusing marriage. She

instead fell into an unfulfilling and corruptive marriage to save herself from accepting low status. Meanwhile, ideas that would blossom into the emergence of the New Woman were floating around, and by the time Bram Stoker wrote of Mina's interest in female independence in *Dracula* in 1897, the idea of the New Woman was extremely popular and would change western gender roles forever.

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