

GEORGE ELIOT



DANIEL DERONDA

HISTORICAL NOVEL

George Eliot

Daniel Deronda

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Shane Fisher

(Historical Novel)

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Introduction

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Between the allure of self and the call of conscience, a young woman's ambition and a young man's search for purpose cross in a world demanding difficult choices. *Daniel Deronda* is a novel of intersecting destinies, where private desires collide with public responsibilities and the question of what we owe others reshapes what we think we owe ourselves. George Eliot presents the drama of moral awakening not as a sermon but as life observed with steady attention, unfolding in drawing rooms and city streets, at gaming tables and along riversides, wherever character is tested by circumstance and sympathy becomes an act of courage.

Written by George Eliot, the pen name of Mary Ann Evans, and published in 1876 near the end of her career, *Daniel Deronda* brings together two central figures whose stories interweave. One is a brilliant, self-possessed young woman confronting the limits imposed by society and by her own choices; the other is a generous, reflective young man of uncertain parentage, unsure of his vocation yet compelled toward ethical action. Set largely in Victorian England with pivotal episodes on the Continent, the narrative invites readers into salons, schools, and neighborhoods where identity is negotiated, tested, and sometimes transformed by unexpected encounters.

Daniel Deronda holds classic status because it enlarges what the nineteenth-century English novel could do. Eliot marries psychological subtlety with ethical imagination, giving readers a form of moral inquiry embedded in plot, character, and social detail. The book's architectural design

—two strands that mirror and challenge one another—allows outcomes to emerge from credible motives rather than contrived melodrama. Her prose, patient and exacting, builds a world where small gestures and chance meetings carry the weight of destiny. As with her best work, Eliot’s realism refuses easy judgments, insisting that compassion requires knowledge and that knowledge brings the burden of responsibility.

Among Victorian novels in English, *Daniel Deronda* was especially notable for its sustained, sympathetic engagement with Jewish life and culture. Eliot studied contemporary debates about nationhood, community, and belonging, and she wove those concerns into the story without reducing characters to symbols. At the time of publication, readers and reviewers were struck by this orientation; some welcomed its breadth, while others resisted it. The novel thus became a touchstone for discussions about representation and the scope of English fiction, expanding the imaginative territory of the novel beyond the narrow social circles that often dominated mid-nineteenth-century narratives.

Formally, the book showcases Eliot’s mastery of the omniscient narrator and free indirect style, tools that let her inhabit minds while maintaining a steady ethical perspective. The narrative voice clarifies motives and misperceptions without crushing ambiguity; readers see how people justify themselves and how limited knowledge distorts judgment. The interplay between the two plotlines creates rhythm and counterpoint: one strand examines the pressures of wealth, marriage, and reputation; the other explores the shaping power of ideals, heritage, and chosen commitments. This dual structure keeps the novel balanced between interior life and public consequence, between self-fashioning and social obligation.

Composed in the mid-1870s and published in parts in 1876 by William Blackwood and Sons, the novel belongs to a moment when British society grappled with industrial expansion, imperial reach, and new forms of social mobility. Eliot, already renowned for *Middlemarch*, brought to this late work the intellectual seriousness that marked her career, informed by wide reading in history, philosophy, and European literature. The settings—country houses, London streets, European resorts, and modest lodgings—reflect a society in motion, linked by money, travel, and ideas. Within that world, questions of education, gender, class, charity, and civic responsibility become narrative forces rather than background.

At its outset, *Daniel Deronda* sets two trajectories in motion. A gifted young woman, confident in her charm and nerve, confronts a turning point that exposes the costs of self-reliance in a competitive world. Meanwhile, a young man, raised with privilege yet uncertain of his origins, is drawn into the lives of those beyond his accustomed circle, beginning with an act of timely compassion for a stranger in distress. From then on, chance encounters open doors to communities, traditions, and obligations he had scarcely imagined, while she navigates choices that test her understanding of freedom, duty, and personal worth.

The novel's abiding concerns are moral growth and the search for a fitting life. Eliot examines freedom not as unlimited license but as the capacity to choose well in view of others' needs and our own emerging convictions. Identity is presented as both given and made: a matter of origin, education, temperament, and the commitments we adopt. The book explores what it means to belong—to a family, to a tradition, to a nation, or to the community of those who suffer. Sympathy operates as an instrument of discovery,

enabling characters to see connections where habit or prejudice would deny them.

Upon publication, *Daniel Deronda* provoked divided responses. Many readers admired the acute portrayal of a young woman's trials; others debated the breadth and emphasis of the parallel storyline. Over time, the novel has been reassessed as one of the boldest Victorian engagements with cultural and religious plurality. Its depiction of Jewish experience and its attention to questions of collective aspiration helped shape English-language discussions of identity and belonging well into the twentieth century. Scholars and novelists have returned to it for its audacity, its empathy, and its willingness to treat the ethical life as an adventure rather than a sermon.

Literarily, the book broadened the canvas available to later writers by demonstrating that the English novel could interweave domestic realism with cross-cultural inquiry. Its multi-strand architecture and analytic narration influenced approaches to the social novel, while its inclusion of minority perspectives cleared space for subsequent explorations of diaspora, assimilation, and national aspiration. Modern readers can trace lines from Eliot's experiment to twentieth-century fictions that place competing loyalties and layered identities at their core. Even where later authors differ in style or politics, they inherit from *Daniel Deronda* a sense that personal destiny and historical consciousness must speak to one another.

To read *Daniel Deronda* well is to attend to patterns of attention: who notices whom, which details attract or repel, how self-knowledge grows from embarrassment as much as triumph. The novel rewards patience, for its crises are prepared by the slow accumulation of small decisions and small evasions. Eliot invites readers to weigh motives

without rushing to verdict, to see how character forms under pressure, and to sense the gravity of choosing a vocation, partner, or cause. The language is plain yet exacting, inviting reflection rather than spectacle, and every scene contributes to the measured revelation of moral horizons.

Today, *Daniel Deronda* retains its power because it addresses dilemmas that remain urgent: how to balance ambition with responsibility, how to honor inherited ties while forging a chosen path, how to humanize the stranger and listen across difference. In an era of global movement and contested identities, Eliot's vision of sympathy as disciplined understanding feels newly necessary. The novel's classic status rests not only on craft but on courage—the readiness to imagine wider communities of concern. By tracing two intersecting quests for a meaningful life, it offers a lasting invitation to think, to feel, and to act with intelligent generosity.

Synopsis

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George Eliot opens the novel at a German spa and casino, where the young Gwendolen Harleth captivates attention at the roulette table while a stranger, Daniel Deronda, watches her with troubled curiosity. When misfortune strikes, Gwendolen privately pawns a treasured necklace; Deronda, moved by a sense of rightness, redeems it and has it returned anonymously. This initial crossing of paths introduces the work's dual focus: a brilliantly self-regarding heroine on the brink of adulthood, and a reflective young man whose upbringing as the ward of Sir Hugo Mallinger has left him socially privileged yet personally uncertain. Each carries an unformed moral trajectory.

Summoned home to England, Gwendolen finds her family's prospects imperiled and her own ambitions abruptly narrowed. The wealthy Henleigh Grandcourt, heir to a great estate, pursues her with calm persistence, offering the security she increasingly lacks. A desperate woman from his past, Lydia Glasher, confronts Gwendolen with pleas and warnings about promises already made, sharpening the moral stakes of any union. Gwendolen weighs independence against comfort, pride against compassion, and reputation against conscience. Eliot traces how social pressure, family need, and the allure of status converge to push a brilliant, self-willed nature toward choices that will define both her freedom and her happiness.

Daniel Deronda's story proceeds along a contrasting line. Raised by Sir Hugo and unsure of his parentage, he mistrusts easy satisfactions and looks for a vocation that would justify his advantages. In London, he prevents a

young Jewish woman, Mirah Lapidoth, from taking her life and places her under the protection of the kind Meyrick family. Deronda becomes devoted to helping Mirah recover dignity and hope, assisting in a search for her lost relatives. His impulse to serve others deepens his inner inquiry, as he senses that discovering how to do good will require facing questions about his own identity and loyalties.

Through Mirah, Deronda encounters Jewish life in the city and begins to learn about traditions and histories long excluded from his education. Eliot presents Mirah not simply as a figure to be rescued but as a principled, gifted woman shaped by hardship and fidelity to her people. Deronda's efforts to locate her family lead him from genteel drawing rooms to modest neighborhoods, revealing a spectrum of social experience. The novel explores how understanding takes root in attentive friendship and honest listening, as Deronda broadens his sympathies while remaining unsure what personal course, if any, might emerge from the compassion he is cultivating.

Meanwhile, Gwendolen accepts Grandcourt's courtship and enters a marriage defined by reticence, calculation, and a slowly revealed will to dominate. The glittering privileges of her new station expose, rather than resolve, her immaturity and fear. Eliot's narration follows Gwendolen's private struggle to reconcile her desire for mastery with the claims of duty and pity, a struggle sharpened by the memory of what she chose to ignore. Chance meetings with Deronda, who treats her with grave candor, give Gwendolen a moral mirror she cannot easily dismiss. She begins to seek his counsel, not for romance, but for steadiness in the face of increasing inner turmoil.

Deronda's widening circle brings him to a frail, impassioned thinker known as Mordecai, living above a pawnbroker's

shop kept by the Cohen family. In conversations dense with philosophy and hope, Mordecai articulates a vision of Jewish renewal that challenges both prejudice and complacency, linking personal dignity to the restoration of a people's future. Deronda, moved yet cautious, allows these ideas to test his own assumptions about belonging and purpose. As he continues helping Mirah, the intellectual and the practical strands of his life begin to intersect, suggesting that service to individuals and responsibility to a larger community may not be separable.

Eliot counterpoints these developments with a broad social canvas: aristocratic estates governed by inheritance and display, artistic households like the Meyricks' where affection tempers scarcity, and bustling urban shops where everyday bargaining coexists with spiritual aspiration. The narrative alternates viewpoints to show how customs and expectations mold character, particularly in matters of marriage, money, and reputation. Gwendolen confronts the education of consequence—learning what it costs to have acted for appearances. Deronda undergoes the education of sympathy—learning how attention to others can convert unease into duty. The juxtaposition sets the stage for crises in which private choices acquire public and ethical dimensions.

Late in the novel, both arcs reach decisive passages. Gwendolen, facing a situation that exposes the starkest implications of her marriage, must reckon with fear, remorse, and the possibility of moral change. Deronda, drawn into encounters that illuminate his origins, confronts truths that give his compassion a sharper outline and a direction beyond benevolence alone. Without resolving the narrative's central tensions, Eliot intensifies the connection between the two protagonists: her need for guidance and self-command, his search for identity and rightful action.

The story approaches its outcomes by testing how character responds when accident and revelation demand a reordering of life.

The enduring force of the novel lies in how it links inner growth to the claims of others, insisting that personal deliverance requires accurate seeing and generous regard. Through Gwendolen's trial and Deronda's awakening, Eliot investigates the limits of self-reliance, the responsibilities of privilege, and the meaning of belonging—whether to a household, a nation, or an ethical tradition. The book's conclusion, while not disclosed here, affirms that choices made under pressure can open new horizons of duty and hope. Its broader message is that sympathy, disciplined by truth, can transform both individual fortunes and the social worlds they inhabit.

Historical Context

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Daniel Deronda is framed by the late Victorian world, roughly the 1860s–1870s, with London, English country houses, and fashionable Continental resorts supplying its social stage. Britain's dominant institutions—the Anglican establishment, the landed aristocracy, public schools and Oxbridge, gentlemen's clubs, the imperial civil and military services—shape the characters' expectations and constraints. The novel, published in 1876, observes a society whose elite still claims cultural authority while traveling widely across Europe for leisure and health. Against this backdrop, formal manners, strict codes of respectability, and a pervasive hierarchy organize marriage, money, and reputation, setting the terms for how ambition and moral choice are judged within the narrative's world.

The landed aristocracy and gentry, sustained by rents and strict settlements, remain central to status. Primogeniture and entails channel property through male lines, while marriage alliances distribute dowries and social capital. In practice, complex settlements could tie up estates and limit liquidity, contributing to financial strains as agricultural prices began to falter in the mid-1870s. Country-house life—hunting, racing, season visits—remained a currency of belonging. The book reflects this structure by exploring how lineage, inheritance, and advantageous matches sustain or imperil family fortunes. It also registers the anxiety of a class facing subtle displacement by money made in commerce and finance rather than in land.

Industrial and financial modernity form the era's counterweight to hereditary privilege. Railways, telegraphy,

and joint-stock enterprise had woven Britain into global markets by the 1870s. The City of London coordinated international credit, with banking houses—famously including the Rothschilds—symbolizing both opportunity and unease about speculation. The 1866 collapse of Overend, Gurney and Company exposed systemic risk, making caution a public virtue even as fortune-hunting continued. The novel's attention to investment, debt, and the pressures of living beyond one's means mirrors a society where capital flows and reputational credit could determine personal fate as decisively as birthright.

Continental spa and gaming culture drew British elites throughout the mid-nineteenth century. Resorts such as Baden-Baden and Homburg combined medical treatment, concerts, and casinos, becoming international social theaters. While the German Empire banned public gaming in 1872, these sites had already influenced elite habits and narratives about chance, character, and ruin. British law, notably the Gaming Act of 1845, made gaming contracts unenforceable and discouraged domestic casinos, further channeling gambling abroad. The novel's early scenes in a spa setting reflect this transnational leisure economy, using gaming tables to test self-control, expose social vulnerabilities, and dramatize the moral stakes of risk and dependency.

Victorian marriage law and custom constrained women's choices. Under coverture, a wife's legal identity merged with her husband's, although reforms began to chip away at this regime. The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 shifted divorce from ecclesiastical to civil courts but preserved gender asymmetries. The Married Women's Property Act of 1870 allowed wives to own earnings and certain property, though comprehensive protection came only with the 1882 Act. Middle- and upper-class women were steered toward

marriage rather than paid work; alternative careers in the stage or professional music carried social stigma. The novel probes these confines, depicting ambition squeezed by law, custom, and the marriage market.

Education structured status and aspiration. Elite men circulated through public schools and Oxbridge, institutions reformed over the mid-century to align with meritocratic ideals while preserving privilege. Religious barriers eroded with the University Tests Act of 1871, which opened degrees to non-Anglicans. For women, opportunities expanded unevenly: Girton College (1869) and Newnham (1871) signaled institutional change, but formal degrees lagged and respectable employment options remained narrow. Private tutorships, foreign travel, and language study formed a cultural polish prized by high society. The novel reflects this environment, weighing the claims of cultivation and moral education against the pressure to convert talent into status or security.

Religion, doubt, and reform pervaded the period. The Church of England contended with Evangelical zeal, Broad Church latitudinarianism, and challenges from Dissent and Roman Catholicism. Scientific debates, especially after Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), and German higher criticism unsettled traditional belief. George Eliot herself translated David Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (1846) and Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* (1854), emblematic of her engagement with historical-criticism and secular ethics. The novel's ethical seriousness and openness to religious identity, including Judaism, belong to a climate in which faith is interrogated, not merely inherited, and moral authority is sought beyond ecclesiastical sanction.

The legal emancipation of Britain's Jews advanced across the century, though social prejudice persisted. The Jewish

Relief Act of 1858 enabled Jews to sit in Parliament after Lionel de Rothschild's long campaign, a milestone in civic inclusion. Offices and universities became increasingly accessible, yet some clubs and informal networks remained exclusionary. The period also saw prominent figures of Jewish origin in public life, notably Benjamin Disraeli, prime minister in 1868 and 1874–80, who had been baptized in childhood but was routinely discussed in relation to Jewishness. The novel registers both formal emancipation and lingering stereotypes, offering a complex portrait of Anglo-Jewish presence and aspiration.

Across Europe, Jewish emancipation proceeded unevenly. France granted citizenship in 1791; various German states liberalized over the nineteenth century, with the 1871 German Empire guaranteeing civil rights, albeit with local frictions. In the Habsburg lands, the 1867 December Constitution established equality before the law. By contrast, the Russian Empire confined most Jews to the Pale of Settlement, restricted occupations, and enforced burdensome regulations. The Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) had promoted secular education and integration since the late eighteenth century. The novel's attention to Jewish intellectual life and communal bonds reflects these crosscurrents, as Western inclusion coexisted with Eastern European constraint and vulnerability.

Proto-Zionist ideas circulated prior to organized political Zionism. Thinkers such as Rabbi Judah Alkalai and Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer advocated Jewish return and agricultural renewal in Palestine from the mid-nineteenth century. Moses Hess's *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862) articulated a modern national vision that linked Jewish regeneration to a homeland. In Britain, some evangelical Protestants, including Anthony Ashley-Cooper, the 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, supported Jewish restoration on biblical

grounds and backed the 1841 Anglican bishopric in Jerusalem. The novel echoes this intellectual milieu by presenting Jewish nationality as a cultural-moral project grounded in history rather than as a purely confessional identity.

The “Eastern Question” sharpened British attention to the Ottoman Empire’s fate and the Eastern Mediterranean. Strategic anxiety about routes to India intensified after the Suez Canal opened in 1869, fostering public interest in Near Eastern politics and peoples. Philanthropic and educational efforts, such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle (founded 1860), established schools across Ottoman lands; Jewish charitable missions—supported by figures like Sir Moses Montefiore—responded to crises and promoted community welfare, including in Jerusalem. The novel’s sympathetic outlook toward Jewish collective renewal intersects with this ferment of diplomacy, philanthropy, and journalism that made the Levant a subject of ordinary British reading and debate.

Music and the arts offered an alternative hierarchy built on training and virtuosity. Nineteenth-century conservatories—in Leipzig, Paris, and elsewhere—professionalized musical education, while London’s opera houses staged international repertoires. By the 1870s, German music held special prestige; Richard Wagner opened the Bayreuth Festspielhaus in 1876, symbolizing ambitious artistic nationalism. Jewish musicians were visible on European stages, complicating stereotypes about Jewish capacity for high culture. The novel draws on this world through its portrait of professional artistry, setting talent and discipline against the prejudices and patronage structures that determined who could convert aptitude into a recognized public vocation.

Victorian science and emerging social theories recast debates about peoplehood. Anthropological and ethnological societies in London, which merged in 1871 into the Anthropological Institute, popularized competing notions of race, culture, and heredity. Ideas later dubbed social Darwinism circulated, sometimes deployed to essentialize Jews as an immutable “race,” sometimes to assimilate them into national narratives of progress. The novel resists reductionist accounts by stressing ethical formation, historical memory, and collective aspiration as the grounds of identity. In doing so, it mirrors contemporary scholarly controversies while privileging cultural continuity and moral choice over biological determinism.

Transport and communication technologies reshaped daily life. By the 1870s, Britain’s rail network knit together country houses and metropolitan seasons, enabling rapid movement for hunting, Parliament, and the theater. Steamships and well-established packet routes took travelers to the Continent; the submarine telegraph linked London to European capitals and, by 1866, to North America. Newspapers and weeklies multiplied, amplifying debates on reform, empire, education, and minority rights. The novel’s characters inhabit this accelerated world of news, rumor, and mobility, where a letter’s timing or a journey’s ease can alter social appearances and moral decisions.

Publishing practices also leave their mark. *Daniel Deronda* appeared in serial form in 1876 with William Blackwood and Sons, reaching a broad middle-class audience through circulating libraries such as Mudie’s. The three-decker and part-issue formats encouraged sustained public conversation, with reviewers and readers debating the novel’s dual attention to English high society and Jewish life. Victorian realism aimed to present intricate moral and social

causality; Eliot's method situates individual choices within powerful institutions and ideas. Contemporary reception registered admiration for psychological depth alongside discomfort with the novel's unapologetic engagement with Jewish history and national feeling.

George Eliot's biography illuminates her sensitivity to social exclusion and intellectual conscience. Born Mary Ann Evans, she adopted a male pen name to be taken seriously and lived openly with the critic George Henry Lewes from the 1850s until his death, challenging conventional respectability. Her translations of German theological criticism and lifelong engagement with European thought placed her at the center of debates on faith and ethics. These experiences inform the novel's probing of women's constrained lives and of stigmatized identities, as it seeks a moral vision grounded in sympathy, self-scrutiny, and the responsibilities of choice rather than in inherited prestige.

The political atmosphere of reform and consolidation frames the story's English world. The Second Reform Act (1867) and the Ballot Act (1872) extended and reshaped electoral practice, even as deference politics endured in rural counties. Education policy—the Elementary Education Act of 1870—began to systematize schooling for the poor, reflecting rising expectations of citizenship. At the same time, the conservative revival under Disraeli after 1874 coexisted with liberal currents in culture and science. The novel reflects this transitional mood: institutions hold, yet arguments about merit, conscience, and national belonging press at their boundaries, inviting readers to weigh continuity against change in public and private life.

Author Biography

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George Eliot, the pen name of Mary Ann Evans (1819-1880), was a central figure of Victorian literature and a pioneering voice in English realism. Her novels are noted for psychological insight, ethical complexity, and a capacious, sympathetic view of provincial life. Writing in an era marked by industrial expansion, religious questioning, and scientific advance, she explored how private motives intersect with social duty and historical change. Eliot broadened the scope of the English novel by integrating philosophy, social observation, and narrative experiment. She achieved both popular success and sustained critical esteem, and her work continues to shape discussions of narrative perspective, moral agency, and the possibilities of realistic fiction.

Her education combined formal schooling with rigorous self-directed study. She read widely in history, science, and literature, and became proficient in German, which enabled major translations that shaped her thinking. She produced an English version of D. F. Strauss's *The Life of Jesus* (1846) and translated Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* (1854), engaging deeply with higher criticism and philosophy. She studied Spinoza and Auguste Comte, among others, and gradually moved away from orthodox belief toward a secular, ethically grounded outlook. A longstanding partnership with the critic George Henry Lewes connected her to London intellectual networks and supported her editorial, translational, and critical endeavors.

In the early 1850s she worked in a leading editorial capacity at the *Westminster Review*, contributing essays and reviews that displayed sharp critical judgment. Notable pieces

include *Silly Novels by Lady Novelists* (1856), which argued for higher artistic standards. Turning to fiction in the later 1850s, she adopted the pen name George Eliot to separate her new work from earlier journalism and to seek an impartial reception. *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857-58), published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, introduced her humane realism and intimate knowledge of provincial communities. Readers and reviewers quickly recognized a distinctive voice that treated ordinary experience with seriousness and moral nuance.

Her first novel, *Adam Bede* (1859), brought immediate acclaim for its vivid rural setting, careful plotting, and sympathetic treatment of ethical conflict. *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) deepened her exploration of family, desire, and constraint, while *Silas Marner* (1861) offered a compact study of isolation, community, and renewal. With *Romola* (1862-63), a historical novel set in Renaissance Florence, she demonstrated formidable research and an interest in how ideas shape public life. Although responses to *Romola* were mixed, critics consistently acknowledged her intellectual ambition and command of character. Across these books, Eliot refined a method that fused narrative breadth with psychological precision.

Felix Holt, the Radical (1866) examined political reform and class tensions in a provincial setting, continuing her interest in the ethics of public action. *Middlemarch* (1871-72), often regarded as her masterpiece, interwove multiple histories of aspiration, marriage, medicine, and reform to portray a community in flux. Its panoramic structure and interior analysis influenced subsequent conceptions of the realist novel. *Daniel Deronda* (1876) further expanded her range, pairing an acute study of English society with a serious engagement with Jewish identity and national aspiration. The book prompted lively debate yet secured her reputation

as a writer willing to test the novel's scope and responsibilities.

Eliot also wrote poetry and essays that illuminate her ideas about art and ethics. *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868), a dramatic narrative poem, and *The Legend of Jubal and Other Poems* (1874) extend her interest in fate, duty, and creativity. *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879) gathers fictional-essay portraits that consider habit, intellect, and social change. Alongside her published translations of Strauss and Feuerbach, she completed an English translation of Spinoza's *Ethics* that remained unpublished in her lifetime. Across genres, she advocated rigorous truthfulness, the discipline of sympathy, and attention to consequences, shaping a body of work that links imaginative literature to moral and social inquiry.

By the late 1870s Eliot was a widely read and debated author whose books had entered public conversation about character, reform, and the responsibilities of art. She died in 1880, leaving a compact but influential oeuvre that has remained central to English studies. Later writers, including Henry James and Virginia Woolf, praised her psychological insight and structural daring, and modern criticism continues to find new bearings in her work. Her influence can be traced in the development of interior narration, the sociological novel, and debates about empathy in fiction. Eliot's achievement endures through ongoing readership, scholarship, and adaptation across media.

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153 This phrase derives from the Latin *sub rosa* (“under the rose”) and was used in Victorian English to indicate secrecy or confidential matters. In the passage it means a hidden or unacknowledged family—Lush is suggesting Mrs. Grandcourt may have known about Grandcourt’s concealed relationship and children (the affair with Mrs. Glasher), which bears on why the will was made as it was.

154 Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667) was an English Anglican cleric and writer known for eloquent devotional works and sermons; many of his aphorisms and homilies were widely quoted in later English literature. Eliot’s use of a Taylor epigraph would signal to Victorian readers a moral or religious tone and appeal to a recognized theological authority.

155 Guido Guinicelli (more commonly spelled Guinizelli) was a 13th-century Italian poet associated with the *Dolce Stil Novo* movement; his work influenced later Italian poets including Dante. The mention of “Rossetti’s Translation” refers to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the 19th-century English poet and Pre-Raphaelite who translated and popularized medieval Italian lyric poetry for Victorian readers.

156 “Lascia ch’io pianga” is a famous lament aria from George Frideric Handel’s opera *Rinaldo* (first performed 1711), often associated with themes of sorrow and pleading. Mirah’s singing of this piece signals a plaintive, emotionally charged mood and would have been recognizable to contemporary readers as a musical expression of grief or longing.

157 In the text, ‘Babli’ is an affectionate diminutive for the Babylonian Talmud, the central compendium of rabbinic discussion and law compiled and redacted roughly between the 3rd and 6th centuries CE. Eliot uses this term to evoke

the voice of traditional Jewish learning and authority that Mordecai echoes in his reflection.

158 The French word 'portemonnaie' means a small purse or wallet and was commonly used in 19th-century English to refer to a lady's coin-purse. Here Mirah's portemonnaie contains not only money but a Hebrew-inscribed keepsake with family dates and a prayer, so handing it over emphasizes both her financial sacrifice and the personal significance of what is lost.

159 Heine refers to Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), a German poet and essayist whose works blended literary criticism, lyric poetry, and political commentary. The epigraph is from his *Geständnisse* ("Confessions"), and its image of Moses as an artist frames the chapter's themes of creative nationhood and Deronda's emerging identification with Jewish history.

160 Karaites are a Jewish movement that arose roughly in the early medieval period (around the 8th–9th centuries) which rejects the Rabbinic Oral Law (the Talmud) and relies primarily on a literal reading of the Hebrew Bible. Mordecai's contrast between 'Rabbanites and Karaites' invokes historical religious divisions within Judaism and underscores his hope for an earlier, unifying form of Jewish fellowship.

161 Refers to the second canticle of Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* (commonly called Purgatory), where souls undergo purification before reaching Paradise. Eliot's epigraph evokes moral ascent and suffering, paralleling Gwendolen's inward struggle and the idea of punishment that becomes part of her emotional landscape.

162 Refers to the mid-19th-century conflict usually dated 1853–1856 between Russia and an alliance including Britain,

France and the Ottoman Empire. Sir Hugo's offhand remark about soldiers ensuring provision for widows alludes to Victorian concerns about honour, duty and protecting families after wartime deaths.

163 Refers to John Milton (1608–1674), the major English poet. The epigraphed lines personify Faith and Hope and come from Milton's early masque *Comus* (performed c.1634, published 1637), invoking moral and spiritual themes that echo the chapter's focus on conscience and redemption.

164 An Italian phrase meaning "For pity's sake, do not say goodbye to me." In the scene it is a line of song delivered by Mirah at the musical party; the Italianate aria underscores the emotional appeal that ties characters together and would have been recognized by Victorian readers as operatic sentimentality.

165 The chuppa (also spelled chuppah) is the traditional Jewish wedding canopy under which the marriage ceremony takes place, symbolizing the couple's new home together. Lapidoth's reference to putting a ring on Mirah's mother's finger "under the Chuppa" indicates a formal Jewish marriage and explains Mirah's appeal to her mother's possible forgiveness.

166 The French phrase *bric-à-brac* refers to small decorative objects or curios, and a *bric-à-brac* man would be a dealer in such items. In Victorian London this term often implies a petty shopkeeper or dealer in second-hand ornaments, so Hans' 'quarrel with a *bric-à-brac* man' signals a minor, everyday dispute consistent with an artist's bohemian lifestyle rather than a serious personal crisis.

167 Opium (and preparations like laudanum) was widely available and sometimes used recreationally or medicinally

in 19th-century Britain, especially among artists and writers. Hans' experiment with 'smoking opium' indicates he sought altered sensation or escape; the text's account that it 'disagrees with my constitution' reflects the drug's capacity to produce unpleasant effects, dependency, or disorientation.

168 The word derives from Sybaris, an ancient Greek city (6th–5th century BCE) famed in classical and later tradition for luxury and sensual pleasure, and in 19th-century English meant a person devoted to comfort and refinement. Deronda's self-description as a 'Sybarite' signals his fastidiousness about dress and comfort—explaining his habit of taking off the ring and cravat as burdensome rather than coarse affectation.

169 William Wordsworth was an English Romantic poet, and *The Prelude* is his long autobiographical poem about poetic development, memory, and nature. Quoting it here invokes themes of historical continuity and the remnants of vanished nations, which resonate with the chapter's concerns about identity and the past's hold on present lives.

170 Sutte (also spelled sati) refers to the historical practice in parts of South Asia in which a widow was expected or compelled to immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre; the British colonial administration formally outlawed the practice in India in 1829. Hans uses the term metaphorically to mock the idea of a widow remaining in perpetual mourning, employing an extreme image of self-sacrifice to make a point about social expectations.

171 This phrase states Deronda's declared aim to re-establish a national center and political identity for the Jewish people, an early fictional articulation of ideas about