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“IF THAT DIAMOND RING DON’T SHINE”:  
MODELS OF CONSUMERISM, THE  
CULTURAL DIALECTIC, AND THE  
IMPERIALIST ECONOMY OF GEORGE  
ELIOT’S ENGLAND IN DANIEL DERONDA

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“IF THAT DIAMOND RING DON’T SHINE”: MODELS OF CONSUMERISM, THE  
CULTURAL DIALECTIC, AND THE IMPERIALIST ECONOMY OF GEORGE  
ELIOT’S ENGLAND IN *DANIEL DERONDA*

An Essay Submitted to the  
Office of Graduate Studies  
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for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

By  
Renee F. Berkheimer  
2015

The essay of Renee F. Berkheimer is hereby accepted:

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Date

The study of Victorian consumer culture has been gaining momentum in the past few decades. While various critics take different approaches to this scholarship, the study of material culture and object exchange is embedded in each of these analyses.

Narrowing this field of study further, Jean Arnold has focused on jewels as the most influential of commodities in Victorian material culture. Even more specifically, she writes that “[o]f the many types of jewelry that circulated through Victorian culture, diamonds were often among the most highly valued” (18). In her novels, George Eliot certainly took an interest in this Victorian commodity culture of exchange as a pervasive characteristic of her society, and she expressed concern over the morally suspect nature of the excessive English consumer. In her last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot recognizes the important part that jewelry, and especially diamond jewelry, plays in this English culture of consumerism, using two parallel diamond narratives to discuss this economic aspect of Victorian culture.

Most literary critics and historians will agree that the Great Exhibition of 1851 brought attention to the Victorian culture of commodities and consumerism. Thomas Richards, in his seminal study of Victorian advertising and spectacle, discusses the Great Exhibition as “a monument to consumption...a place where the combined mythologies of consumerism appeared in concentrated form” (3). And for Cristoph Lindner, who begins his historical account of fictional representations of commodity culture with the Victorians, “[t]he Great Exhibition...signaled the emergence of commodity culture in the most public and sensational of ways” (5). Both critics also locate the Great Exhibition within a global economy, as Lindner describes it as “a monument to industrial innovation on an international scale...[hosting] representatives of thirty-two nations from as far

afield as Africa” (4). Just as Lindner portrays the Great Exhibition as an affair of international consumption, so Richards emphasizes the imperial undertones of the international Exhibition: “the best way to sell people commodities was to sell them the ideology of England, from the national identity...to the imperial expansion taking place in Africa” (5). In other words, Victorians identified commodities not only with domestic consumption or production, but with the imperial nature of the English consumption of internationally produced goods.<sup>1</sup> Connecting this commodity culture of extensive imperial consumption with both the material culture of Victorian jewelry and the literary culture of nineteenth-century England, Arnold writes that “trade from around the world had supplied the Victorians with precious stones and new materials from which to make jewelry,” which “activated the circulation of jewels in Victorian...literature” (10).

Despite Arnold’s claim that international trade catalyzed the appearance of jewelry in Victorian literature, relating *Daniel Deronda* to global consumer culture through its diamond narratives may seem an unlikely undertaking. There is little direct discussion of the international capitalist economy in the novel, and the only instances of direct commodity exchange are at pawn shops, where the pawned commodities are heirloom jewels that have no direct connection to production in an industrialist economy. Furthermore, all commodities that are “sold” into this capitalist micro-economy are eventually redeemed and returned to the original owners, as Gwendolyn Harleth’s necklace is redeemed by Daniel Deronda and returned to her, and Daniel redeems his

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<sup>1</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah gives such examples of British imperialism and the consumption of foreign cultural goods in Africa in *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (101-35), assigning a sinister nature to this imperialistic consumption that is explored in my discussion of Gwendolyn’s and Daniel’s diamond narratives.

own pawned ring. So, where are the excessive, imperialistic English consumers? Where are the international commodities and how are they being exchanged?

Margueritte Murphy attempts to answer this riddle by assigning the exchange of jewelry in the novel to a gift economy instead of a commodity economy. In other words, Murphy attempts to redefine the national economy of England as a closed-circuit economy, one that has ties to pre-capitalist societies that independently cultivate a symbolic, rather than material, economy of exchange. While this is certainly an attractive interpretation of *Daniel Deronda*, and I agree that the economy portrayed in *Daniel Deronda* is largely (though not completely) symbolic, it fails to take into account the historical, sociological and anthropological problem of separating the capitalist and imperial England portrayed in the novel from a global commodity economy. Murphy is essentially exploiting England's ensiled status to connect it to other ensiled, more primitive societies that operate under this isolative model of symbolic gift-exchange economies, ignoring England's global connections and materialistic economy.<sup>2</sup> As anthropologist and historian Nicholas Thomas writes, "[t]he problem of such unitary conceptions of [gift] economies is that they suppress the entanglement with other systems such as capitalist trade" (4). Thomas here points out that gift economies are pre-capitalist economies, and as such, the novel cannot reasonably be read through a gift economy interpretation, because Victorian England was, decidedly, a capitalist society.<sup>3</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>2</sup> Murphy draws on the positivist theories of Marcel Mauss in her discussion of gift economies. Much of Mauss' work explores primitive societies that establish symbolic economies based on obligatory gift-giving, rather than material economies based on commodity-attaining. See Mauss, "The Gift and the Potlatch."

<sup>3</sup> Capitalism in Europe was drawing socially-critical and conceptually-theoretical attention throughout the nineteenth-century, perhaps most famously by Karl Marx. Marx insisted on viewing capitalism through a materialist dialectic, noting that distribution and exchange separated the producer and the consumer, thus disallowing the ability for self-repossession. See Marx, "Production, Consumption, Distribution, Exchange

Victorian England was involved in not only domestic capital exchange, but in imperial exchange; it was “entangled” with many other international capitalist economies, a social fact that Eliot does not ignore in *Daniel Deronda*. In a similar fashion, the material and symbolic economies of England are representatively entwined in the novel. All of this literary interweaving of the domestic and the international, and of the material and the symbolic, suggests Eliot’s attempts to create a sort of cultural dialectic in *Daniel Deronda*.<sup>4</sup> While the novel addresses the exchange of jewelry as a material commodity within English society, I argue that it is more importantly a discourse on the national or domestic consumption of international culture as a symbolic commodity.

This connection between commodity and culture in *Daniel Deronda* is brought about by the connections made between jewelry, particularly diamonds, and cultural identity. Arnold argues that “the gems catalyze individual emotion, action, and ultimately identity formation in many Victorian novels” (19). The diamonds in *Daniel Deronda*, then, actively contribute to forming the owners’ identities, blurring the line between object and subject. As the diamonds possess agency as things, this idea of object contribution to human identity can be taken even further. In examining the Victorian diamond narrative, John Plotz claims that “diamonds are everything but a perfectly detachable commodity” (341). He further explains that in Victorian novels, “there is a profusion of objects...into which characters’ personalities or histories are poured” (345). Plotz thus collapses the space between object and subject, diamond and possessor. In this

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(Circulation)” (253-4). As I will show throughout the essay, Eliot both embraces and resists Marxist theories of materialism in *Daniel Deronda*.

<sup>4</sup> See Oddvar Holmesland’s discussion of cultural dialectic in “Oroonoko.” Holmesland notes that Aphra Behn’s narrative “anticipate[s] a mode of cultural criticism also evident in later ages of transition, such as the nineteenth century” (57). I will return to this term throughout the essay in more detail.

way, diamonds not only contribute to the cultural identity of their owners, but are also attached to their owners and, consequently, the owners' cultural identities. According to Plotz's argument, then, subject and object, diamond and possessor, commodity and cultural identity, become a single entity. On a material level, this attachment between diamond and owner leads to the merging of people and commodities, but not initially in a self-possessing and self-fulfilling way that is necessary for the type of dialectical resolution that Lydia fails to achieve, and that Daniel finally achieves, by the end of the novel. On a cultural level, because of the inability to separate the diamonds in *Daniel Deronda* from the cultural identities of the rightful owners and possessors of the diamonds, these same owners become, for a time, objectified cultural commodities consumed by English imperialists in the novel. These objectified human commodities representing the international "Other" are denied cultural self-possession as they face culturally-alienating consumption by the English imperial characters in *Daniel Deronda*. While, in the end, Lydia is denied cultural self-possession by Eliot, trading her Africanized identity for an English one, Eliot resolves this cultural dialectic in Daniel as he embraces both his English upbringing and his newly-discovered Jewish identity, creating a hybrid culture of English and "Other."

Two diamond narratives exist in the novel: Gwendolyn's and Daniel's.<sup>5</sup> In Gwendolyn's narrative, the diamonds are originally attached to the rightful owner and symbolic producer, Lydia Glasher, whom I will establish as an Africanized cultural

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<sup>5</sup> Cynthia Chase argues that Daniel and Gwendolen are "rival protagonists" and that their narratives are in conflict with one another (215). She concludes that the narrator tells the reader of Daniel's "triumph" and Gwendolen's "defeat," and consequently the elevated ideal narrative "defeats" the base satiric narrative (216). I contend that the two narratives are in conversation, rather than in competition, with one another, another layer of the cultural dialectic that Eliot resolves within the novel.



commodity, while Gwendolyn only becomes briefly commoditized when she is in physical possession of these diamonds and, consequently, Lydia's cultural identity is transposed onto Gwendolyn, the ultimate owner of the gems. In Daniel's diamond narrative, Daniel's attachment to his diamond ring, at first his only connection to his true culture, transforms him into a Jewish cultural commodity. These human commodities are consumed by imperial English characters in the novel, particularly Grandcourt and Sir Hugo, respectively. While Gwendolyn and Lydia seem to represent material cultural commodities gained through colonization, Daniel's cultural commodification contains an aspect of spiritual consumption, as the line between culture and spirituality, Jewishness and Judaism, is traditionally indistinct, and his consumption includes denial of his right to cultural possession of his Jewishness. Indeed, both narratives seem to strive to exchange a material commodity economy for an idealized economy. Although Eliot concedes that this culture of global material consumerism in England is a permanent institution, as diamonds are a durable commodity of endless circulation, she nevertheless offers a plan to reform this corrupt empire of excessive material consumerism through dialectical resolution of the ideal and the material, resulting in a hybrid, moral economy. As Gwendolyn and Daniel's narratives become increasingly intertwined, the cultural and economic separations imposed by imperialist English consumers are resolved in the unification of producers of cultural commodities with self-possessing consumers.

Throughout the progress of the novel, Grandcourt and Sir Hugo must lose power as imperialistic consumers in order to effectuate the transmutation of human cultural commodities to self-possessing consumers. Gwendolyn's dialectical trajectory results in her transformation as a consumer, from her insatiable and destructive brand of English

consumerism at the beginning of her narrative to the unified end of her and Daniel's diamond narratives, where she has escaped Grandcourt's commoditizing power and the rupture of his consumption, and finally embraces Daniel's alternative model of constructive moral consumerism.<sup>6</sup> Daniel can provide this model for a morally conscious consumer because of his experience as a cultural commodity imperially consumed, who finally becomes a self-possessing consumer of his own culture. This cultural self-repossession, and the subsequent resolution of Eliot's cultural dialectic, also resolves the economic dialectic in the novel as Daniel's mode of consumerism is grounded in a new system of moral valuation inspired by Mordecai's spirituality, an integral part of Daniel's Jewish culture and a point of fusion for the ideal and the material aspects of economy in the novel.<sup>7</sup> Through Gwendolyn's successful rehabilitation as an English consumer, owing itself to Daniel's cultural resolution and resultant ability to provide her with moral counseling, Eliot anticipates the need for social change and attempts to rebrand the excessive and corrupt English consumer as a morally conscious and moderate English consumer.

Eliot presents Gwendolyn at the start of her diamond narrative as a decadent, excessive English consumer through the representation of her consumer appetite and her own perceptions of her consumer practices. She is seen gambling, a profligate activity

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<sup>6</sup> Critics such as Alex Woloch have argued that Gwendolyn does not undergo any "radical" character change within the novel (175). I wholeheartedly disagree with assertions such as these, and contend that Eliot's re-branding of Gwendolyn's consumerism is a profound change not only for Gwendolyn as an individual character, but for the conception of English national consumers as a whole.

<sup>7</sup> This idea of valuation within Eliot's writing is discussed by Emily Coit. She argues that in *Middlemarch's* exploration of the valuation of aesthetic commodities, Eliot advocates for consumption with "moral awareness" (216). While I apply this idea of moral consumption to Gwendolyn's and Daniel's diamond narratives in *Daniel Deronda*, I do so in terms of material and spiritual valuation rather than aesthetic valuation.

that does not “nullify the appetite, but [is] a well-fed leisure” (8). Gwendolyn’s voracious appetite is noticed by many who come into contact with her, and those who discover this unseemly appetite are not overcome with admiration, but “[look] at her with mingled fear and distrust, with a puzzled contemplation as of some wondrous and beautiful animal whose nature was a mystery, and who...might have an appetite for devouring all the small creatures” (65). Those who notice her excessive appetite also insinuate Gwendolyn’s association with a depraved brand of consumerism; her cousin Anna thinks of Gwendolyn’s capacity for consumption with “fear and distrust” (65), while Daniel Deronda associates Gwendolyn’s excessive consumerism with “evil” and the degenerate image of “tossing coppers on a ruined wall, with rags about her limbs” (7). Furthermore, Gwendolyn’s insatiable consumer appetite is decidedly part of the commodity economy, as she exhibits no naiveté in the material world of English society: “You thought of hiding things from her...and all the while she knew...that it was exactly five pounds ten you were sitting on” (95). Gwendolyn’s capitalist sophistication, coupled with her robust appetite for commodities, turns her into the epitome of the excessive English consumer.

Although she resists the idea of marriage for a short time in the novel, Gwendolyn’s consumerist appetite for material commodities fixates on commodities she can acquire through marriage. Even before she meets her prospective husband, Gwendolyn foresees the diamond she will acquire from him through matrimony: “I shall send him round the world to bring me back the wedding-ring of a happy woman” (95). This prediction is the first disclosure in the novel about the diamonds that Gwendolyn will eventually receive from Grandcourt, both her wedding ring and the heirloom diamond jewelry that she receives after her matrimonial ceremony. It is a dual revelation

about the international nature of the diamonds, as the ring is retrieved from “round the world,” as well as their rightful ownership and current possession by another woman, a “happy woman” prior to Gwendolyn’s marriage to Grandcourt, a woman whose happiness must stem not from her relation to the tyrannical Grandcourt, but from her possession of the diamonds and, subsequently, self-possession of her commoditized cultural identity.

This “happy” woman associated with the international is Grandcourt’s mistress and mother of his children. Lydia Glasher enters Gwendolyn’s narrative briefly before Grandcourt’s marriage offer to Gwendolyn. Lydia makes it clear to Gwendolyn that the right to marry Grandcourt, and subsequently the right to the marriage diamonds, belongs to her: “Mr. Grandcourt ought to marry me” (152). As Lydia asserts her right to Grandcourt and, more important, to the diamonds, Gwendolyn seems happy to oblige—until her own fortunes change. In fact, Gwendolyn’s flight could be seen as her escape from consumerism, but the inverted narrative has Gwendolyn running from the consumption of diamonds through marriage to the consumptive activity of gambling. When Gwendolyn returns from gambling in Leubronn, her greedy consumer appetite is shown to still be firmly in place: “It is one thing to hate stolen goods, and another thing to hate them the more because their being stolen hinders us from making use of them” (229). This angry thought from Gwendolyn reveals her intention to marry Grandcourt, as she is now viewing the marriage diamonds as “stolen goods.” Even though she laments her inability to use the stolen goods, she still describes them as in her possession, indicating her desire to consume these commodities. Moreover, the fact that Gwendolyn

realizes that the “goods” she wishes to possess are “stolen” further reveals that her excessive consumerism is morally wrong.

Gwendolyn is not able to alleviate her consumer appetite at this point in the narrative, so she consigns herself to marrying Grandcourt in order to possess the commodity she most wants: diamond jewelry. Grandcourt sends the wedding ring to Gwendolyn rather than giving it to her in person, revealing even further the entrenchment of the marriage in commodity consumerism rather than idealized romanticism. While Gwendolyn at first views the “splendid diamond ring” (312) with contempt and “let[s] the ring lie,” she “was drawn towards the marriage” (313). Gwendolyn has a strong desire to possess the diamond ring, and Grandcourt forces Gwendolyn to admit to her excessive consumer appetite by freely agreeing to marry him for material gain. He gives her one last chance to refuse the “stolen” diamond ring and the marriage; instead, Gwendolyn gives in to her licentious consumer appetite and “slip[s] the ring on her finger” (313). Gwendolyn’s immoderate consumerism is not without its consequences. In a study of consumerism and Victorian women, Lisa Coar asserts that women in Victorian society were unaware of “just how easy it was for the female consumer to be consumed” (54). As a consequence of her marriage based on self-indulgent consumerism, Gwendolyn, I will argue, not only becomes a guilty consumer of Lydia’s diamonds and Lydia as a cultural commodity, but she is also consumed by Grandcourt as a female commodity in her own right.

The role of consumed, or woman-commodity, in this narrative seems to be connected to possession of the Grandcourt diamonds, though this works differently for Lydia and Gwendolyn. While Lydia should be in control of the diamond wedding ring

and the Grandcourt diamonds as symbolic producer<sup>8</sup> and rightful owner, she is a cultural commodity available for consumption to Gwendolyn because of her detached relationship with the diamonds. From a Marxist point of view, Lydia's objectification and cultural consumption is actualized because of her forced separation from the diamonds.<sup>9</sup> As Daniel Miller explains, "In its estrangement from its own product, the subject loses an element of its humanity and itself becomes more of an object" (40). Lydia thus becomes objectified as she is dispossessed of her diamonds, a cultural commodity available for Gwendolyn to consume through possession of the diamonds. Alternatively, utilizing a Simmelian rather than Marxist view of objectification, Gwendolyn's possession of, rather than separation from, these diamonds renders her a commodity available for consumption by Grandcourt.<sup>10</sup> In explicating Georg Simmel's conception of objectification, D. Miller notes that when faced with "the sheer pleasure of immediate consumption of an object...we [consumers] merely 'lose ourselves' in the object" (70). Gwendolyn seems to have 'lost herself' in the pleasure of possessing the diamonds; she has not only agreed to marriage, an institution that she had previously resisted in the novel, but has also agreed to the morally-suspect consumption of Lydia's diamonds via Grandcourt. By losing

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<sup>8</sup> Lydia's role of symbolic producer is connected to her identification in the novel as an Africanized cultural commodity, which I will discuss in greater detail later in the essay (see Slauch-Sanford). The first African diamond mines subject to control by the British empire were discovered in Kimberley, a region in southern Africa, in 1867 (see Heidi Kaufman 518), nearly ten years before the publication of *Daniel Deronda*. At the time of writing this novel, then, British association of diamonds with Africa as the producing territory of these diamonds would have been strong. As a character symbolically connected to Africa, it is reasonable to conclude that Lydia is also connected to the diamonds in this narrative as a symbolic producer.

<sup>9</sup> Lydia is one representative of Eliot's acknowledgment of the relevancy of Marx's theories about materialism and consumption; Gwendolyn and Daniel follow more idealized theories about objectification, set in motion by Hegel (D. Miller 19-82).

<sup>10</sup> This difference between theoretical explanations of the objectification of Lydia and Gwendolyn is necessary because of their different roles in relation to the diamonds, as producer and consumer, respectively. While Marx's theories of objectification focus on the producer, Simmel orients his argument towards the objectified consumer.

herself in the pleasure of consumption, Gwendolyn has opened herself up to objectification, or commoditization. And, in true English commodity-fetish fashion, Grandcourt relishes the opportunity to consume this new object. He anticipates the commodification of Gwendolyn upon their marriage and the transfer of the diamonds, as he contemplates “his mastery” over Gwendolyn in marriage, “which he did not think himself likely to lose” (325). Grandcourt obtains this mastery over Gwendolyn once the diamonds are transferred from Lydia and placed into Gwendolyn’s physical possession. While her possession of the diamond marriage ring is a gateway to her commodification, the Grandcourt family diamonds open Gwendolyn to consumption by Grandcourt.

On her wedding day, Gwendolyn is oblivious to the fact of her inevitable transformation from consumer into consumed, and her consumer appetite is still entrenched in her being, as her misgivings about the marriage are erased by “ambitious vanity and desire for luxury within her which it would take a great deal of slow poisoning to kill” (354). In listing the commodities that she will obtain through her marriage as a consumer, Gwendolyn happily tells her mother, “and diamonds, I shall have diamonds” (356). Gwendolyn seems to place a special significance on her consumption of the diamonds, and even after her marriage she is still “glad of such an event as having her own diamonds to try on” (358). It is not until she is in physical possession of the diamonds that Gwendolyn’s commodification is complete, as she recognizes that “[t]ruly here were poisoned gems,” and the narrator tells the reader that “the poison had entered into this young creature” (359). Her association of “poison” with these diamonds, coupled with the narrator’s assertion that the “poison” affects her inner self, reveals Gwendolyn’s guilt over her consumption of Lydia as a cultural commodity. Moreover,

the “poisoned” diamonds also possess the ability to facilitate the commodification of Gwendolyn, as they “kill” her consumer appetite, or “desire for luxury,” completing her conversion from consumer to consumed. In consuming the diamonds as cultural commodity, and consequently Lydia as a cultural commodity, the cultural identity associated with Lydia and the diamonds is transferred to Gwendolyn. The “poison” that changes Gwendolyn from consumer to consumed is the cultural identity associated with the diamonds, and in possessing the diamonds, in “losing [her]self” in the object, Gwendolyn has become an imitative cultural commodity available for Grandcourt’s consumption.

Gwendolyn begins to become aware of her commodification when her husband exerts his power over her as an object and forces her to wear the diamonds that she thought “she would never wear” (426). As soon as Grandcourt “had fastened on the last earring” against Gwendolyn’s will, he treats Gwendolyn as a complete commodity, concerned with her “frozen” appearance as an object, and ordering, “[i]f you are to appear as a bride at all, appear decently” (428). Now that Gwendolyn’s commodification is complete, she recognizes that her “appetite had sickened” (430); she now knows that she is no longer a consumer, but a commodity to be consumed by Grandcourt for the duration of their marriage and her possession of the diamonds. And, with both Lydia and Gwendolyn objectified through separation from and possession of the diamonds, respectively, and Grandcourt firmly in the position of the English consumer of these objectified commodities, Eliot enforces the direct association of this English consumerism with imperialism.



Gwendolyn is fully aware that as soon as she acquired the diamonds, “her husband’s empire of fear” began (425). Later in the narrative, she further connects her knowledge of her consumption by Grandcourt to empire in her contemplation of her own material value in an international place: “She found herself, with the blue Mediterranean dividing her from the world, on the tiny plank-island of a yacht, the domain of the husband to whom she felt that she had sold herself, and had been paid the strict price—nay, paid more than she had dared to ask” (669). Grandcourt’s consumerism is recognized by Gwendolyn to be imperialistic in nature, as she relates her commodification to Grandcourt’s “Mediterranean...domain,” or his “tiny plank-island of a yacht.” Grandcourt consumes these women-commodities to maintain his “empire”; with both his wife and his mistress, he certainly acts as the “white-handed man...sent to govern a difficult colony” (594). Not only is Grandcourt a symbolic representation of English imperialism, he is also involved in real issues of imperialism in the novel; alluding to the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865, Deronda expresses sympathy for the plight of the colonized Jamaicans, while Grandcourt asserts his imperialistic belief in English superiority when he describes the “Jamaican negro [as] a beastly sort of baptist Caliban” (331).<sup>11</sup> Grandcourt subscribes to Victorian ideas of the right of English imperial control and thus supports the English empire, as an imperialist himself, in his expression of his beliefs.

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<sup>11</sup> In their polarized views, it would seem that Grandcourt supported the “atrocities committed by retaliating colonial troops and the mass executions [of Jamaican peasant rebels involved in the uprising] ordered in the wake of the rebellion [by Governor of Jamaica Edward John Eyre]” (Kenneth Bilby 41). On the other end of the spectrum, Deronda’s reaction seems to represent that of the “leading members of London’s intelligentsia,” who celebrated the resultant “censure and recall of the Governor of Jamaica, Edward John Eyre, as well as the liquidation of Jamaica’s House of Assembly,” which they deemed “Justice for the victims of Eyre’s heavy-handed tactics” (Bilby 41).

The correlation between Grandcourt's brand of English consumerism and empire is crucial in interpreting the commodification and consumption of Lydia Glasher. Because Lydia's commodification is connected to diamonds, and Grandcourt's consumption is connected to imperialism, it is not unwarranted to identify Lydia as bearing the sign of the foreign, who is doubly consumed as a cultural commodity by the colonizing Grandcourt and Gwendolyn, with her excessive English appetite. Kathleen R. Slauch-Sanford identifies this relationship between Lydia and the international, though her argument centers on problems of empire pertaining to miscegenation and thus focuses on Lydia as a colonized woman, bearing Grandcourt's mixed race children (413-414). While Slauch-Sanford is mainly concerned with racial indicators,<sup>12</sup> she convincingly points to the diamonds as one of Lydia's connections to African culture: "Lydia's possession of and curse upon the diamonds links her specifically with Africa" (412). Though Slauch-Sanford credibly argues for Lydia as a symbolic representation of a colonized African woman, she does not present an argument for Lydia as a cultural commodity and, furthermore, questions the true ownership of the diamonds, categorizing the Grandcourt-Gwendolyn-Lydia triangle through the "struggle for ownership over the diamonds" (413).

As a metaphorical representation of a foreign African culture, I contend that Lydia always asserts her right to possess the diamonds as the symbolic producer of this commodity. With the 1867 discovery of diamonds in Africa, Africa would forever be

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<sup>12</sup> Slauch-Sanford argues that "[Lydia's] dark features are constantly reinforced in an effort to associate her metaphorically with members of a non-white, particularly an African, race...Eliot purposely paints Lydia as a 'black' woman" (401-2). Examples provided include Lydia's description as a "fiery dark-eyed woman" with "crisp hair perfectly black, and her large anxious eyes also what we call black" (Eliot qtd. in Slauch-Sanford 404).

associated with the British trade in diamonds as the largest source of this commodity. Many Victorians witnessing this economic event, such as novelist H. Rider Haggard, would concede that rightful ownership of these diamonds belonged to Africans as a product of their own nation, while contradictorily supporting the imperial control and consumption of this commodity: “When Haggard imagines a line of white men in Africa claiming and stealing African diamonds, he attempts to legitimize imperial theft by suggesting that white men have a responsibility to take what they have discovered” (Kaufman 519). Similarly, although the diamonds may pass out of Lydia’s physical possession, “stolen” by the white, imperialist Grandcourt as Gwendolyn freely observes, Lydia never truly severs her symbolic, cultural connection to them.

Her connection to the diamonds is not an easily “detachable” bond; even Grandcourt recognizes that his order for her to transfer the diamonds to Gwendolyn is “like a...surgical operation” (348). The diamonds, symbolically attached here to Lydia’s physical person, are completely attached to her Africanized cultural identity. Grandcourt is so fully convinced of Lydia’s complete attachment to the diamonds that he admits, “[h]e could not shake her or touch her hostilely; and if he could, the process would not bring the diamonds” (350). Grandcourt’s statement indicates his acknowledgment that Lydia is the symbolic producer and rightful owner of this commodity and thus cannot be easily separated from it. Lydia is dispossessed of her cultural commodity not through brute force on the part of Grandcourt, but through her own action, allowing Grandcourt to claim and steal the diamonds. And though Lydia eventually “gives up” the diamonds to Gwendolyn, she only assigns a physical transfer of possession, never relinquishing her ownership of the diamonds or her role as symbolic producer of the diamonds (352). In the

letter she writes to Gwendolyn accompanying the “stolen” diamonds, she speaks of possession in a physical sense, but her words have “poisoned” the diamonds; her cultural identity is still infused in the diamonds, and they will never truly be Gwendolyn’s while they carry Lydia’s curse (358-359). Even when physically separated from the diamonds as a result of Gwendolyn’s greed, which effectuates her own objectification and cultural consumption by Gwendolyn through “estrangement from [her] own product” (D. Miller 40), Lydia maintains rightful ownership as symbolic producer of the diamonds within this narrative, cementing her identity as a foreign cultural commodity consumed by both Gwendolyn and Grandcourt.<sup>13</sup>

At the conclusion of this diamond narrative, the roles of these women-commodities are changed when Grandcourt’s empire falls with his death. Upon Grandcourt’s death, his property and possessions are almost exclusively bequeathed to Lydia’s son and, because of her son’s young age, this legacy transfers by proxy to Lydia’s immediate possession. This outcome has been Lydia’s desire from the beginning: “He ought to make that boy his heir” (152). Lydia’s desire for repossession is fulfilled upon Grandcourt’s death, but with it comes certain implications. The property that will be transferred to Lydia’s son is decidedly excessive, as it includes not only the Africanized diamonds to which Lydia has rightful claim as symbolic producer, but also property directly from Grandcourt’s English inheritance; Sir Hugo states that “there will be enough for two” (314). On hearing this, Gwendolyn assigns greed to Lydia’s desire for the property: “This made Mrs. Glasher appear quite unreasonable in demanding that her

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<sup>13</sup> Catherine Gallagher offers a convincing case about Lydia as rightful owner of the diamonds, asserting that they “are not legitimately Gwendolyn’s” (51).

boy should be sole heir” (314). When Lydia’s desire is realized, she ceases to be an objectified cultural commodity; she is released from the prison of Gadsmere,<sup>14</sup> and now possesses the “double property” of the Grandcourt heir (314). The material dialectic is not only resolved, but overcorrected; Lydia repossesses the diamond commodities “stolen” by Grandcourt, resolving the Marxist estrangement of producer from product, but in now possessing property that *did* rightfully belong to Grandcourt, she exceeds the role of self-possessing consumer of her own product and becomes, like Grandcourt, an estranging consumer herself. Perhaps because of this overcorrection of the material dialectic in the narrative, there also seems to be irresolution in the cultural dialectic associated with Lydia. Instead of merging her Africanized cultural associations with Grandcourt’s inheritance and the English cultural associations that it carries to create a hybridized identity, she has inverted her role from foreign cultural commodity to nationalistic excessive consumer.

Similarly, Gwendolyn ceases to be a commodity upon Grandcourt’s death and is once again forced into the role of consumer. Her excessive consumer appetite, however, has “sickened,” and she contemplates turning down the role of consumer; she considers whether “she ought to accept any of her husband’s money” (760). Grandcourt has been anything but kind to Gwendolyn in his will; he has given her Gadsmere and £2,000 a year (758). However, Gwendolyn does not relish the fact that she once again must become an English consumer to any extent; throughout the narrative she has become more interested in possessing morality than in possessing material commodities, largely in response to

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<sup>14</sup> Lydia’s residence in Gadsmere further assigns her an African cultural identity, as the coal mines of Gadsmere are reminiscent of the diamond mines in South Africa (Slaugh-Sanford 407), and coal is associated with the production of diamonds (Plotz 337).

her numerous interactions with Daniel. With guidance from Daniel Deronda, Gwendolyn refashions her role as consumer, proposing to take only enough to support her mother and “leave the rest” (768). While Gwendolyn is proposing to become a survivalist consumer, Deronda urges her to take what has been left to her and to become a beneficent consumer; by using her moderate consumerism--which values morality over materialism--to benefit others, Daniel tells Gwendolyn that she can be “among the best of women” (769). As she follows Daniel’s advice and decides to exchange her former role as excessive consumer for the new role of morally conscious consumer, Gwendolyn’s hands are emblematically “unladen of all rings except her wedding-ring” (767). This separation between Gwendolyn and material commodities is essential to her regaining her identity as a consumer, as “it is only through the creation of a distance between subject and object that consciousness may arise” (D. Miller 70). While it is clear that she has kept her wedding ring, perhaps as a cautionary reminder about the perils of excessive, immoral consumption, she has separated herself from unnecessary material commodities so that she might regain her agency as a consuming object and practice an idealized, or moralized, version of consumerism. It is uncertain in the novel what the fate of the Grandcourt family diamonds will be, but I reason that they are returned to Lydia as part of her son’s inheritance, as “[the] glorious jewel[s] cannot be separated from [their] pecuniary history” (Munich 38). Moreover, the diamonds must be consumed by Lydia, the new excessive consumer, and they must return to her as the rightful owner and symbolic producer. Lydia’s repossession of the diamonds is essential in resolving one dialectic, while Daniel’s narrative is essential to resolving the cultural dialectic in the novel.

As a symbolic representation of an African cultural commodity in this first diamond narrative, Lydia is connected to Daniel as a Jewish cultural commodity and is subsequently a bridge to the parallel diamond narrative in *Daniel Deronda*. Adrienne Munich makes this historical connection between South Africans and Jews, with “a linkage...between Africans whose only interest in diamonds is their exchange value and those Jews for whom the diamond represents a livelihood” (32). According to Munich, the diamond is the link between South Africans and Jews in the Victorian era, and in *Daniel Deronda*, it is the link between the two main cultural commodities in the novel, Lydia and Daniel.<sup>15</sup> While Lydia asserts her cultural right to her diamonds as a symbolic producer of them throughout Gwendolyn’s narrative, it is only near the end of the Daniel’s narrative that he learns of the cultural significance of his diamond ring, when he meets his mother for the first time. It is thus at this meeting that the cultural aspect of Daniel’s commodification and consumption by the English is revealed.

Daniel meets with his mother in Genoa and learns of the cultural significance of his diamond ring, which he has been attached to throughout the novel. In requesting the meeting, Daniel’s mother, Leonora, specifically requests Daniel to “[b]ring with [him] the diamond ring...I shall like to see it again” (617). Daniel not only brings this ring to the interview, but wears it to the meeting with his mother, just as he has often worn the ring throughout his narrative. This fact has specific significance in establishing Daniel as a commodity, as Arnold notes that “in response to industrial capitalism of the Victorian

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<sup>15</sup> Kaufman also makes this connection between Africans, Jews, and diamonds: “Many diamond adventurers, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, flooded southern Africa [after the 1867 discovery of diamonds in Kimberley] with hopes of making their fortunes in the diamond trade. Economic competition between Jewish and non-Jewish European financiers...instigated a flood of anti-Semitism in the [African] region” (518).

age, men had renounced the wearing of conspicuous jewels” (1). Daniel is perceived as feminine throughout the novel, and in this episode, his “appearance gave even the severe lines of an evening dress the credit of adornment” (624). Upon viewing him for the first time in decades, his mother exclaims, ““You are a beautiful creature!”” (625). It is unclear whether Daniel is associated with femininity only because he wears the diamond ring or also because his appearance is associated with an aesthetically pleasing female form. Regardless, his wearing of the diamond ring, coupled with his feminine attributes, both contribute to his commodification, with the ring contributing specifically to his cultural commodification, as I will explain in greater detail below.

His attachment to the diamond ring turns out to be his attachment to his Jewish culture as well. After his mother describes her own Jewish descent and her marriage to Daniel’s Jewish father, she asks to “look at [his] hand again. The hand with the ring on. It was [his] father’s ring” (633). His mother reveals that Daniel’s diamond ring is representative of his father’s sort of devout Judaism, as it previously belonged to *his* father. Thus, the diamond ring, which Daniel had been wearing even before his cultural identity is discovered, has contributed to Daniel’s identity as a cultural commodity throughout the narrative. As Munich aptly contends, “the affinity between Jews and diamonds appears...genetic” (36). In the case of Daniel Deronda, this attraction is literally hereditary. Although his mother believes that she has “secured” his identity as an “English gentleman” (627), his connection to the diamond ring has cemented his identity as a Jewish cultural commodity.

Leonora not only unwittingly connects him to his Jewish culture by passing the ring to her son, but she has also contributed to his cultural “estrangement,” and his



consequent commodification and consumption by Sir Hugo, who is connected to the excessive national consumer early in the novel when he is described as an “amiable baronet” who cannot “escape the effect of a strong desire for a particular possession” (410)—in this case Diplow, an English estate he wishes to buy outright from Grandcourt, exchanging current possession and money for the ability to bequeath the property to his unprotected heirs; without this trade, the property would become Grandcourt’s upon Sir Hugo’s death, leaving his wife, his children, and Daniel destitute. Similarly, Catherine Gallagher observes that “Daniel was literally traded for an artistic career” (53). I argue that this “trade” occurs in the narrative, much like Sir Hugo’s plans to purchase Diplow, as a capitalist exchange between Leonora and Sir Hugo, one that separates Daniel from his culture through commodification and consumption. Just as laborers part with their products to consumers, Leonora, as a figurative producer of her child through biological labor, “parted with [Daniel] willingly” (634). She asked Sir Hugo to “take [her] boy and bring him up as an Englishman, and let him never know anything about his parents” (634). While this exchange seems to have transpired because of Sir Hugo’s “love of [Leonora],” he made it clear that “he would pay money to have such a boy” (634). Sir Hugo monetized the exchange, placing economic value on Daniel, and thus commoditized Daniel, at the same time that Leonora objectified Daniel by isolating him from his Jewish culture. The conditions of the exchange, as dictated by Leonora, entail that Sir Hugo keep Daniel from the knowledge of his Jewish identity. In agreeing to deny Daniel access to his true cultural identity and instead impose his own culture of the English gentleman upon Daniel, Sir Hugo entrenches this commercial exchange not only in the realm of capitalism, but within the realm of cultural capitalism and imperialistic

consumption, though to a decidedly less malicious degree than Grandcourt's imperialism seen in Gwendolyn's parallel diamond narrative.

Indeed, even though Sir Hugo seems to have a sensitivity towards the cultural element of his consumerism that Grandcourt lacks, Sir Hugo's willingness to attempt to transform the Jewish Daniel into an "English gentleman" shows that Sir Hugo embraces the imperialistic idea of English superiority over other cultures. Kaufman notes that "the imperial agenda... was premised upon a belief in the innate superiority of white-skinned people" (525). However, during the diamond boom begun in 1867, the Jewish community "was increasingly seen by non-Jews for its racial degeneracy" (525). Grandcourt's imperialistic consumption of Gwendolyn, and of Lydia as an Africanized cultural commodity, represents consumerism for the sole purpose of use. This type of consumerism implicates Grandcourt's devaluation of cultural "Others" not only through his lack of interest in the cultural meaning or consequences of his consumption, but also through his imperialistic "belief in the innate superiority of white-skinned people," and thus his imperial right to this consumption. Sir Hugo, on the other hand, embraces the cultural-consumerist's idea of not only use, but of transmutation, attempting to change the "Other," in this case the Jewish Daniel, still white but viewed at this time by many Europeans and English imperialists as a "racial degener[ate]," into an Englishman. In agreeing to rob Daniel of his Jewish identity in order to make him an English gentleman, Sir Hugo admits to an imperialistic belief that English culture is superior to Jewish culture, devaluing the "Other" by implicating that all cultures should be subject to the

superior English culture.<sup>16</sup> What could have been a trade done “for love” within the realm of a moral economy, one that embraces cultural equality and Daniel’s right to cultural self-possession, becomes an exchange within a commodity economy entrenched in the English material culture of imperialist consumerism and nationalistic superiority that devalues the cultural “Other,” perhaps even more so than merely commoditizing it.

The possibility of escaping this alienating English consumer culture for a culture of morality that is based on the resolution of the English/ Other cultural dialectic is a problematic aspiration throughout Daniel’s diamond narrative. Perhaps the greatest example of this fraught hope is Daniel’s interactions with Mordecai and Mordecai as a character in his own right. Appropriately, Daniel’s connection to Mordecai is brought about by his connection with the diamond ring, further entwining the ring with Daniel’s Jewish cultural identity. Furthermore, Mordecai becomes the catalyst for Daniel’s repossession of his Jewish culture and thus facilitates the resolution of the cultural dialectic in this diamond narrative. Daniel first meets Mordecai as he is searching for Mirah’s family in a “part of London...inhabited by common Jews” (380). Daniel immediately associates Mordecai with Judaism, but in a more positive light than he has previously viewed Jewish culture; for Daniel, Mordecai is not “an ordinary tradesman,” but “a figure...startling in its unusualness” (385). Though Daniel cannot articulate the significance of Mordecai’s distinct appearance at this point in the narrative, he relates Mordecai to a figure that is separate from a commodity economy, and the novel begins to

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<sup>16</sup> Kaufman further elucidates this idea through a study of Cecil Rhodes, an English imperialist and African diamond adventurer in direct competition with Jewish diamond miner Barney Barnato: “Rhodes had great plans of spreading Englishness throughout the world. As he explained of his imperial designs, ‘...more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race more of the best the most human, most honorable race the world possesses’ (qtd. in Flint 31)” (526).

promote the concept of separation between culture and commodity. This encounter portrays Daniel's first notion that there is perhaps a different kind of economy at work in England other than a material economy of exchange and cultural commodification. Though Daniel can convey the idea that Mordecai is not a "tradesman" associated with the commodity economy he is working within at the second-hand bookstore, Daniel does not yet possess the vocabulary necessary to define Mordecai's "unusualness" as a result of his connection to a spiritual or moral economy.

In fact, Daniel's initial relationship with Mordecai is rooted in the material culture of consumerism. Daniel leaves Mordecai in the bookshop as a puzzling enigma and moves on to his true destination, the Cohen's pawn shop. In search of Mirah's family, Daniel asks to pawn "a fine diamond ring" at the Cohen's shop and returns later that same evening to do so (391). At this point in the diamond narrative, as Daniel is connected to his diamond ring and thus firmly entrenched in commodity culture, he assigns a monetary value to his diamond: "I believe it cost a hundred pounds" (396). While at the pawn shop, the ring continues to exist as merely a material commodity, as Ezra Cohen speaks only of its monetary value: "forty pound... I'll let you have forty on it" (399). However, the pawning of the diamond ring is also responsible for Daniel's continuing and growing relationship with Mordecai, and as that relationship grows, nurtured by the presence of the diamond, the value scale surrounding the diamond ring undergoes a conversion caused by Mordecai's influence.

Before the close relationship between Daniel and Mordecai comes to fruition, Mordecai is concerned with valuation connected to his culturally-driven spiritual ideals. Just as a commodity becomes cheapened if it is not ideal in form, Mordecai recognizes

that his “poverty and other physical disadvantages...cheapen[ed] his ideas” (473) in the eyes of the English and those Jews trying to assimilate into English culture. Because the English objectify culture in this novel, they conflate Mordecai’s physicality with his cultural ideas. Because Mordecai is, to the English, a cultural commodity, described by one Englishman in the novel, Hans Meyrick, as an “Israelitish garment...with an air of recent production” (644), his cultural, in this case spiritual, ideas take on a value that mirrors his own material, or physical, value. This material “cheapening” causes English consumer society, so concerned with commodities and the material, to view Mordecai’s high opinion of his spiritual ideals as “[a]n insane exaggeration of his own value” (475). Because Mordecai is physically deficient, his cultural ideas concerning Jewishness and Judaism are also viewed as deficient, both by the English and Jews that are attempting to separate themselves from their own culture in order to cast off identification with the “Other” and fully embrace English culture through cultural assimilation, or Anglicization.

Mordecai expresses anxiety about the commodification of his culture and spiritual ideals, especially by those Jews in England who are assimilating into the material English culture of consumerism. The Cohens, the family with whom Mordecai resides, are one such family that represents assimilated Jews in England, always striving to prove connection and loyalty to English culture rather than Jewish culture. During Sabbath dinner with the Cohens, Daniel notices that the “religious ceremony” was rather brief, and after “Cohen uttered...a Hebrew blessing...the meal went on without any peculiarity that interested Deronda” (396-7). The conversation hinges on “the Queen and the Royal Family,” and the Cohen children have been given assimilated names, or names that contain both a Jewish and an Anglican element: Adelaide Rebekah, Eugenie Esther, and

Jacob Alexander (397). While Jacob's Jewish name precedes his Anglicized name, the two Cohen daughters' Jewish names are overshadowed by their preceding Anglicized names. In speaking to Jacob Alexander Cohen, a child in this stereotypically assimilated Jewish family, particularly associated with commodity culture through ownership of a pawn shop, Mordecai warns, "A curse is on your generation, child. They will open the mountain and drag forth the golden wings and coin them into money" (478). Mordecai here expresses the problematic trajectory of cultural fracturing that is occurring and will continue to occur among the Jewish community as they continue to value assimilation into English culture. This community is trading the "golden wings" associated with the holy ark of the covenant, which contained the Ten Commandments extracted from the mountain by Moses, or the spiritual law that God provided to guide the Jews,<sup>17</sup> for English "money." This new generation of Anglicized Jews are "coin[ing]," or materializing, their own inherited spiritual culture through assimilation, and relinquishing their connection to God's law and spiritual guidance in the process.

Although Mordecai is concerned about English consumerism overtaking Jewish spirituality among assimilated Jews, he is not apprehensive about Daniel's association with commodities, as he recognizes that this is the mode through which he can maintain a

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<sup>17</sup> See Metzger, Coogan and LaSor: "The holiest place contained the ark of the covenant (1 Kings 6.19) and two winged figures (cherubim) of olive wood overlaid with gold (v. 23) that stretched from wall to wall" ("Temple"). See also, Metzger, Coogan and Knight: "this object [the ark of the covenant] became ever more venerated...The ark had a cover or lid...Martin Luther described it in his German Bible as the "mercy seat," because the Lord sat "enthroned" over it in mercy, invisibly present where the wingtips of two cherubim met above it, guarding the divine presence...and because it contained the Ten Commandments, it was a visible reminder that their life was to be lived in obedience to the expressed will of God" ("Ark"). See also, Coogan: "When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, and said to Moses, 'You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die.' Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin.' Then the people stood at a distance, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was" ("Exodus").

much desired connection to Daniel: “[he] knew that the nameless stranger was to come and redeem his ring...the wish to see him again was growing into a belief that he should see him” (480). While this may seem to be a contradiction, Mordecai seems to recognize that, although assimilated Jews were attempting to rid themselves of the cultural mark of the “Other” and adopt an English nationality, Daniel seems to be searching and open to unifying his materialist English identity with Jewish cultural ideals. Daniel Hack discusses this contradiction between Mordecai as representative of both the spiritual and the material, and asserts that “Mordecai does not embrace all aspects of a market economy, but...he can be sufficiently pragmatic to adopt its procedures” (167). It seems that, when embracing the material commodity culture will bring him closer to what he views as his spiritual protégé, Mordecai is more than willing to do so.

This paradox is not the only seemingly contrary correlation where Daniel and Mordecai’s relationship is associated particularly with this diamond commodity. Daniel also relates his desire for a closer relationship with Mordecai to his diamond ring: “Some further acquaintance with this remarkable inmate of the Cohens was particularly desired by Deronda as a preliminary to redeeming his ring” (491). Upon meeting again, Mordecai immediately detects Daniel’s ruse of pawning the ring, and subsequently dissociates the ring from the merely material: ““You did not need money on that diamond ring. You had some other motive for bringing it”” (504). As Hack notes, Mordecai “treats exchange value as only one possible form or measure of value, and hardly the most important one” (159). Through his interactions with Mordecai and Mordecai’s refusal to reduce commodities to only a material value, Daniel begins thinking differently about value. He conveys to Mordecai that he does not want to ““undervalue [his] toil and [his] suffering””

(503). Daniel is now thinking of value as changeable rather than fixed, and he is contracting some of Mordecai's anxiety about fair valuation. He also begins to associate valuation not only with material commodities, but with morality, as he recognizes "the moral stupidity of valuing lightly what had come close to him" (509). But he is still a cultural commodity under the consumptive control of Sir Hugo, so when Daniel begins to think of "the answer Sir Hugo would have given" regarding Mordecai's influence, he begins to question the "likelihood...that [Mordecai's] notions had the sort of value he ascribed to them" (510). Even more substantially, it is "Sir Hugo's demands" (516) on Daniel as a cultural commodity, or Daniel's preoccupation with his misinformed but understandable "belief that his father was an English gentleman [Sir Hugo]" (515), that delay Daniel from meeting with Mordecai and further developing the transformative relationship for four days (516).

When Daniel finally continues to pursue his relationship with Mordecai, he does so through the objective of redeeming his diamond, as Sir Hugo's influence has once again placed Daniel firmly within the English material consumer culture. However, a change has taken place regarding the valuation of the diamond that correlates with Daniel's growing knowledge about and acceptance of Jewish culture. Even Ezra Cohen realizes that "although the diamond ring, let alone a little longer, would have bred more money, he did not mind *that*--not a sixpence" (517). Ezra, like Daniel, lacks the vocabulary to articulate the valuation change of the diamond; while he still associates the diamond with a monetary value, the monetary value seems to have lost significance. This change in the value spectrum associated with commodities is connected to the spiritualized Jewish culture, as Daniel redeems his diamond ring and then accompanies



Mordecai to the “Hand and Banner,” where he observes Mordecai’s profound discussion about Judaism and Zionism with the other “Philosophers” (521), none of whom, Deronda notes, seem to possess “pure English blood” (523). The ring’s value seems now to be its status as a conduit for Daniel’s repossession of his Jewish culture through Mordecai.

After this episode, Daniel begins to subscribe to Mordecai’s ideas about valuation and spirituality or morality, as Mordecai preaches his aversion to English material consumerism and its dispossessing effect on the Jews: “the Hebrew made himself envied for his wealth and wisdom, and was bled of them to fill the bath of Gentile luxury...his dispersed race was a new Phoenicia working the mines of Greece and carrying their products to the world” (531-2). But, while Mordecai notes the material dispossession of the Jews by the “Gentiles,” he is mostly concerned with the dispossession of Jewish culture and spiritual belief: “the Gentile, who had said, ‘What is yours is ours, and no longer yours,’ was reading the letter of our law as a dark inscription, or was turning its parchments into sole shoes for an army rabid with lust and cruelty” (532). In lamenting the Gentile’s abuse of the spiritual “letter of our [Judaic] law...and parchments,” Mordecai reveals himself to be idealistically more concerned with the spiritual dispossession of the Jews than their economic dispossession. Mordecai becomes the very “energy that transform[s]” (531) Deronda’s view of consumer culture, with passionate sermonizing throughout the novel and most notably at the Hand and Banner, as it is here that Deronda begins to “take the side of [Mordecai]” in the idealistic argument for a new Israelite nation.

Mordecai’s ideals about Judaism, which hinge on the need for Jews to repossess their spiritual culture by repossessing a nation (534-6), have brought Daniel closer to his

Jewish culture and thus closer to self-repossession through the reconciliation of Daniel's English identity with his Jewish identity. Mordecai has helped Daniel prepare for escape from cultural commodification by propelling the resolution of the English/ "Other" cultural dialectic, which results in Daniel moving beyond both English materialism and Mordecai's idealism, landing on morality as the middle-ground model of consumerism promoted in the novel. While Mordecai has exemplified the stark contrast between the material and the ideal, elucidating the destructive consumerism of the Gentiles and its ties to excessive English imperial consumption as an oppositional force to the Jewish ideals of spiritual knowledge and law, he also wishes his imagined nation of Jews "to be a nationality whose members may still stretch to the ends of the earth, even as the sons of England and Germany" (536). While Mordecai would still separate Jews from other cultures as a parallel to England and Germany, which also contains the problematic implication that Mordecai wishes the new Israelites to participate in a form of spiritual imperialism, Deronda finds a way to envision the two cultures in harmony as they both exist in his innate and learned identity. Mordecai wishes to travel to the East to create an idealistic Jewish nation that smacks of the materialistic English imperialism that he so despises, whereas Daniel wishes to travel to the East because he "could not deny Ezra's wish that they should set out on the voyage forthwith" (810). Daniel's impetus for travelling to the East to create a new Judaic nation is not for idealistic or imperialistic reasons, but for the morally-sound reason of wanting to fulfill a dying man's last, and most fervent, wish.

Daniel can finally enact this new moral value spectrum in English consumer culture as a model and counselor when he abruptly transforms himself from a cultural

commodity into a consumer. This alteration takes place when he separates himself from his diamond ring as a material cultural commodity and can fully embrace his cultural hybridity and self-possession. In imagining himself pursuing the spiritual destiny that Mordecai has prophesied for him, Daniel states that he “will not wear...a heavy ring [in the East]” (789). Now that he is aware of his Jewish culture and feels a connection to it through his relationship with Mordecai, he begins to think of his ring “as a burthen” in Mordecai’s presence, and removes it (789). While Daniel’s ring was in pawn, he was still in the role of cultural commodity because of the promise of return of the diamond, which cemented his attachment to the ring and material consumer culture. When Daniel removes the diamond ring now, it “suddenly shone detached” (790). Like Gwendolyn, Daniel’s detachment from this material commodity results in his “consciousness” as a subject, rather than as a cultural object consumed by Sir Hugo. Perhaps more importantly, Daniel has achieved subjectivity as a consumer through the resolution of his cultural dialectic, or his ability to unify his English identity with his Jewish identity. According to D. Miller, “Awareness of the self is predicated on awareness of the ‘other’, and it is this process of...acknowledgment of the other which is the key to the achievement of self-awareness” (22). Because he is permanently detached from his material ring and has resolved his Englishness with his “Otherness” through “awareness” and acceptance of his Jewish cultural identity, Daniel has transformed himself from a commodity into a consumer, but a morally conscious consumer who rejects the model of excessive English consumption.

Daniel further establishes himself as a consumer and differentiates his moral consumerism from Sir Hugo’s imperialistic, material consumerism when he assertively

breaks from Sir Hugo's control. While Sir Hugo once kept Daniel from Mordecai through "demand," Daniel now distances himself from Sir Hugo in order to maintain his proximity to Mordecai and his Jewish culture. He tells Sir Hugo of his engagement to the Jewish Mirah, and symbolically of his freedom from consumption by Sir Hugo, through a letter. Daniel does this to avoid a "verbal collision," but also to evade a cultural conflict between Sir Hugo as an imperialistic, excessive consumer and himself as a beneficent, morally conscious consumer. Indeed, Sir Hugo is "thoroughly vexed" by the fact that Daniel has asserted himself and has left Sir Hugo for Jewish siblings, and because he has lost such a valuable cultural commodity (794); however, he does not sever ties with Daniel, but rather gives him a material memento that will allow Deronda to keep in touch with his English identity: "Sir Hugo and Lady Mallinger had taken trouble to provide... a precious locket containing an inscription- *'To the bride of our dear Daniel Deronda all blessings.-H&L.M.'*" (810). While Daniel still has some connection to his forced English identity through his relationship with Sir Hugo and Gwendolyn, and even values this connection in viewing Gwendolyn's last letter to him, sent "on the morning of his marriage" to Mirah, as "something more precious than gold and gems" (810), he has embraced his identity as a cultural "Other" in marrying the Jewish Mirah and has even successfully promoted his model of moral consumerism to the English Gwendolyn.

Associating Daniel's narrative with a commodity economy alleviates many readers' complaints about the overt idealism apparent in the narrative. Additionally, this association allows what many have viewed as competing narratives to be in conversation with one another. Not only do these diamond narratives converse with each other in their corresponding representations of objectification and cultural commodification, but

Daniel's diamond narrative, or his model of consumerism, informs Gwendolyn's diamond narrative as it shapes her late brand of moralized consumerism. Moreover, the dialectical resolution in the novel as a whole depends upon the parallel existence and occasional unification of the two narratives, of the conversation and cooperation between Daniel and Gwendolyn both as objects and subjects, cultural commodities and consumers. While Gwendolyn's narrative represents an unsuccessfully resolved cultural dialectic in Lydia, who trades cultural commodification for excessive English consumerism, Daniel's successful self-repossession as a Jewish cultural commodity through his transformation to moralistic consumer carries over to the other narrative by way of Gwendolyn, giving a sense of resolution to both narratives. While material Marxists may argue that "objectification tends to obstruct, rather than promote, the subjects' development" (D. Miller 40), the resolution of the cultural dialectic running between the two narratives has in fact promoted the moral growth of both Daniel and Gwendolyn.

Both Daniel and Gwendolyn have embraced a moral consumerism that allows them to be people with higher quality judgment than they were at the start of their narratives, as Gwendolyn proclaims in her final appearance in the novel that she "shall be better" as a result of knowing and learning from Daniel (807). The essential core of this model of constructive consumerism is a recalculation of the scale of valuation used in the English capitalist economy; even though material commodities may be more valuable based on the labor expended to produce them, or because they are made from beautiful materials like internationally acquired gems, greater value will be had from spending morally, as Daniel counsels Gwendolyn in spending her inheritance from Grandcourt to

“make [beneficent] use of her monetary independence” (768). Instead of spending money on commodities and practicing material consumerism, this brand of consumerism focuses on spending for a moral purpose, not necessarily on acquiring commodities. For Eliot, “attention to material culture stagnates the mind” (A. Miller 189), and opens the consumer to morally reprehensible practices of commodity consumption. Though this material English culture of consumerism is inescapable, and is allowed to endure in Sir Hugo and Lydia, Eliot indicates in *Daniel Deronda* that it is possible to develop a moral awareness about spending, and to curb the “keen” appetite for commodity consumption.

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