

THE SYMBOLIC GARMENT OF  
ENGLISH NATIONAL IDENTITY IN IVANHOE, DANIEL DERONDA, AND THE  
FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN

By

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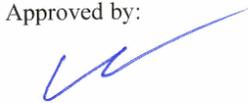
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## Abstract

This paper explores the evolving notion of English national identity in three nineteenth century novels. The self-presentation and clothing choices of characters in Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, and John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* indicate whether or not the characters embrace or reject the notion of a fixed, prescribed national character. Although the heroes of all three novels begin their journeys as fashionably dressed gentlemen who exemplify the prescribed characteristics of English gentility, each encounters elements of the foreign other that cause him to reevaluate the notion of a rigid English national character.

According to Michael McKeon, one of the functions of the English novel is “to engage the social and ethical problems the established literary fictions [can] no longer mediate” (133). To that end, Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda*, and John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* are novels that explore the constantly evolving concept of English national identity. Conceptualizing the novel as “a palimpsest in which present recreates past” (Costa 4), Eliot’s work is influenced by Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, and *Daniel Deronda*, in turn inspires Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*. These novels feature protagonists who are “engaged in their own acts of selection and shaping and who seem to drive themselves toward the most sensitive regions of their culture[s] . . . to embody [their] dominant satisfactions and anxieties” (Greenblatt 6-7). Through each protagonist’s exploration of his place in the social world, as well as the conventions that govern his behavior, these three works allegorically define the concept of what it is to be English.

In his seminal work, *National Identity*, Anthony Smith defines his titular term as “a measure of common culture and a civic ideology, a set of common understandings and aspirations, sentiments and ideals that bind the population together in their homeland” (Smith 11). Interestingly, the English exhibit “a high degree of national consciousness without having much in the way of an ideology or doctrine of the nation” (72). The lack of an established doctrine of national consciousness allows the perception of what defines an Englishman (essentially English national identity) to vary greatly depending on the conditions in which the notion is evoked. A sense of the rigidity of the established English national character is one of the pivotal differences between these three novels. In *Ivanhoe*, the idea of a cohesive British culture is nascent, and the resolution of the novel represents the beginning of a combined Anglo-Norman identity that will eventually become English national identity. In *Daniel Deronda*, this

courtly and restrictive national identity has become an uncomfortable garment that Eliot's characters must choose to either embrace or willfully alter in light of an expanding intellectual consciousness. The complex, theory-driven ideological environment of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* creates a social world where class divisions and established orders of being are blurred and obsolete, causing the notion of a prescribed national character to appear as a superfluous fossil.

These three novels function as bildungsromans of culture building. In these works, the tensions between an established national character and the desire for personal freedom and enlightenment are expressed through the embrace or subversion of popular dictates of dress and self-presentation. As members of the upper class, the protagonists of these novels are “socially required . . . to be in fashion” (McKendrick 40). The notion of a prescribed manner of dress, combined with the “powerful Victorian convention that outward appearance reflect[s] inner qualities” (Shannon 148), suggests that men who dress correctly (according to the dictates of their individual societies) must also embody the social conventions of correctness. The strict, cohesive dictates of male dress in these novels indicate the “plain, quasi-military masculinity” (Colley 191) and the “bluff, forthright, rational, [and] down-to-earth” (257) character of an archetypal English gentleman. Wilfred of Ivanhoe, Daniel Deronda, and Charles Smithson are all models of the popular, prescribed masculinities of their time periods.

According to Brent Shannon, “menswear—epitomized by the development and the endurance of the men's three-piece business suit—has long been regarded by fashion historians as both uniform and a uniform, reflecting men's desires to adopt a standardized, fixed, and practical costume” (5). Thus, the suit (either a man's three-piece suit or a knight's suit of armor) becomes a symbol for the tenants of English national identity, especially the identity of a

normative gentleman. These symbols “are the most potent and durable aspects of nationalism. They embody its basic concepts, making them visible and distinct for every member [of the culture], communicating the benefits of an abstract ideology in palpable, concrete terms” (Smith 77). While *Ivanhoe*, *Deronda*, and *Charles* all wear clothing that symbolizes a characteristically English ideology, their comfort in these garments (and thus in their prescribed social roles) varies.

Wilfred of *Ivanhoe* first appears in *Ivanhoe* disguised in the “usual weeds of a pilgrim” with “a cloak or mantle of coarse black serge envelop[ing] his whole body” (Scott 56). As soon as possible, *Ivanhoe* throws off this foreign disguise and conceals his identity in the rigidly armored, Norman influenced persona of the Disinherited Knight. Bernard Semmel observes: “*Ivanhoe* is a Saxon, a member of a despised subject race known by its Norman masters for laziness and gluttony” (122). *Ivanhoe*’s armor is “formed of steel, richly inlaid with gold, and the device on his shield [is] a young oak-tree pulled up by the roots, with the Spanish word *Desdichado*, signifying Disinherited” (Scott 106). This armor appears to represent *Ivanhoe*’s rejection of his Saxon heritage; however, he dedicates his victory on the first day of the tournament “to all true English hearts, and to the confusion of foreign tyrants” (109) indicating his allegiance to the Saxon cause. *Ivanhoe* exemplifies the “warlike distinction or glory” (OED ‘chivalry’) that characterizes an “English heart.” He is an example of the “gentleman as an organic ideal, rooted above all in an innate, physiological sensibility” (Adams 152). His status as an Englishman, not to mention a gentleman, “derives from, and is made visible in, his body” (Adams 152). By forsaking the body-concealing disguise of a pilgrim in favor of the martial costume of a knight, *Ivanhoe* is able to reclaim his status as an Englishman through his embrace of the symbolic uniform of a defender of truth and justice.

Henry James asks of Daniel Deronda: “Why is he always grasping his coat collar, as if he wished to hang himself up?” (James100). In *Daniel Deronda*, Daniel treats his suit coat as an ideological yoke indicative of the social and moral conventions of an English gentleman, similar to the forged armor worn by Ivanhoe. Deronda tells his guardian, Sir Hugo Mallinger: “I want to be an Englishman, but I want to understand other points of view” (Eliot 155). What Daniel is truly searching for, however, is an alternative sense of national identity, or “a means of defining and locating [his] individual sel[f] in the world, through the prism of the collective personality and its distinctive culture” (Smith 17). Daniel’s coat, an example of “superbly cut but essentially subdued and understated London tailoring” (Colley 191), functions as an anchor to his identity as an Englishman while he explores different cultures. After his exposure to foreign customs and peoples, as well as his emotional and ideological connection with the Jewish philosopher Mordecai, Daniel concludes: “British insularity makes for meagerness of national culture, not its enrichment” (Beer 187). This knowledge causes the garment of Daniel’s English identity, literally his suit coat, to sit more and more uncomfortably on his newly enlightened frame. Sir Hugo tells Deronda, “I have nothing to say against your doffing some of our national prejudices . . . but for God’s sake, keep an English cut” (Eliot 156). According to Julian Wolfreys, this pressure creates in Daniel “a desire to maintain a cultural connection, and a simultaneous questioning and distancing from the identity which that same culture has provided” (137).

In *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, Fowles’s protagonist, Charles Smithson, seeks freedom from his inherited identity as an English gentleman. Charles professes to disdain the tenets of Englishness: “he [finds] English society too hidebound, English solemnity too solemn, English thought too moralistic, English religion too bigoted” (129-30). Ironically, Charles’s outward appearance betrays him as a paragon of English fashion and gentlemanly manners. He is

first described as dressed “impeccably in a light gray, with his top hat held in his free hand, [having] severely reduced his dundrearies, which the arbiters of the best English male fashion had declared a shade vulgar” (5). An amateur archaeologist and a budding Darwinist, Charles uses his connections to science to maintain a sense of superior ideological distance from the people around him. However, Charles is more of a “conventional rebel” (Lynch 52) than an iconoclast: he is engaged to the insipid Ernestina Freeman, and aspires to inherit his elderly uncle’s estate. While “Charles likes to see himself as different,” his outsider persona is entirely artificial—“he wears his Darwinism as comfortably as Ernestina wears the latest fashions” (56).

Stephen Greenblatt contends: “self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile. This threatening other—heretic, savage, witch, adulteress, traitor, Antichrist—must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked and destroyed” (9). Ivanhoe, Daniel, and Charles encounter examples of mysterious and sometimes threatening others during the course of their journeys. However, rather than making the other an object of enmity, these heroes feel an affiliation with representations of the outcast, which leads them to the acquisition of a deeper level of self-knowledge. This phenomenon can be explained by the assertion that “any identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss” (9). All three of these men realize that fashioning an identity in relation to something else, rather than from an internal source, results in an identity that quickly grows anachronistic. These three heroes begin their journeys embracing the nineteenth century idea that “perhaps there is something admirable in this dissociation between what is most comfortable and what is most recommended” (Fowles 47). They attempt to thrive in the uniformly prescribed role of the English gentleman. However, as Charles notes in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, “the enormous apparatus rank required a gentleman to erect around himself [is] like the massive

armor that had been the death warrant of so many ancient saurian species” (290), leading to the question of whether or not each hero will cast off the restrictions of his society in order to thrive, or seek to retool his notion of national identity to incorporate new realizations.

Scott’s *Ivanhoe* is a romance, set in the imaginative past. As Chris Vanden Bossche explains, “it is most useful to regard *Ivanhoe* . . . as an attempt to elaborate how a historical shift from one cultural code to another might take place” (47). Scott’s allegorical documentation in the novel is of the shift from a French-influenced (Norman in the world of *Ivanhoe*) to a purely nationalist British culture following the Napoleonic wars. Scott uses changes in the personal appearances and costuming of his characters to illustrate these shifts. In the case of the Normans and the Saxons, the union is characterized by “some degree of accommodation between the dominant and peripheral ethnic cultures within the parameters set by the power of the dominant core” (Smith 55). A central ideological conflict of *Ivanhoe* is which culture will be the dominant influence and which will be absorbed. The socio-political world of the novel is informed by the troubled intersection of Saxon and Norman cultures. The supposedly courtly Norman nobles are violent, morally corrupt, and antisocial while the warlike Saxons are politically impotent. The admirable characters in the novel adopt the culturally neutral code of chivalry in order to form a hybrid concept of Englishness. These heroes and heroines suggest that, according to Scott, the true English citizen is a combination of a yeoman and a courtly knight, possessing “moral superiority or dignity” (OED ‘noble’), as well as a connection to the land (OED ‘yeoman’). Scott’s characters exhibit English temperance and recognition of an individual’s duty to maintain social order.

In Scott’s novel, the clothing of the characters is the surest indication of their national allegiances. Saxon serfs like Gurth and Wamba wear “a brass ring, resembling a dog's collar”

(29) to indicate their status as landless servants. This collar reflects the reality that the serf's condition of powerlessness is as inescapable as the metal soldered around his neck. Interestingly, Gurth and Wamba's master, Cedric the Saxon, wears "bracelets of gold upon his arms, and a broad collar of the same precious metal around his neck" (49). Cedric's jewelry, which is ostensibly a marker of his wealth, imitates the Saxon symbol of bondage. This similarity in adornment indicates his ideological unity with his people—Cedric is all but a slave himself to the Norman conquerors. This idea is furthered by other aspects of Cedric's costume: "a tunic of forest green, furred at the throat and cuffs with ... the skin of the grey squirrel ... sandals of the same fashion with the peasants, but of finer materials" (49). Cedric's dress does not divide him from his people; it serves instead to mark him as their leader. As a member of the "acquisitive part of society," Cedric's possession of rich furs and gold jewelry "serve[s] important social and political functions" (McKendrick 2) of "displaying [pecuniary] strength, and thereby retaining or enhancing [his] social standing" (52) relative to both his subjects and the Norman conquerors. By dressing as the rich version of a yeoman, Cedric is reinforcing the legitimacy and ability of the simple Saxons to govern the land.

Throughout *Ivanhoe*, the stalwart Saxons are combating Norman influence and customs. The Saxon yeomanly affiliation with the land is echoed in the earthy colors and materials that compose their clothing. Gurth is described as wearing a "primeval vestment," "composed of the tanned skin of some animal" (28). His clothes imitate the hides of the swine that he herds. Similarly, the yeomen in Locksley's gang wear uniforms of Lincoln green that match the forests they inhabit. In contrast, the vestments of the Normans are described as unnatural and uncomfortable to the Saxon body. While disguised as Ivanhoe's squire, Gurth is called "a clownish-looking man;" the addition of "a cloak of dark-coloured felt" and "a Norman bonnet

made of black fur,” makes it unclear if he is a true courtly “squire—or rather [a] yeoman” (121). Putting on Norman clothes does not allow Gurth to assume a Norman persona; instead they create an ideological tension within his character. As Chris Vanden Bossche observes, “while Saxon costume is ‘convenient,’ protecting the wearer from the elements, Norman dress is ornamental” (50). The function of this ornamental dress is to “distinguish men’s place” in the “established hierarchies, which prevented or severely restricted vertical social mobility” (McKendrick 36). While the Saxon costume Gurth favors promulgates the “character and boundaries of the nation” (Smith 39) and ideologically unites the populace, Norman dress functions to maintain a stratification of people.

In *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, developments in mass-production and consumer practices change the way that dress is used as a signifier of social class. Brent Shannon explains: “The late Victorian era was a time of rising class tensions and the blurring of clear-cut borders of social identity” (163). Unlike the restrictive and prescribed clothing practices of the world of *Ivanhoe*, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* features fewer overt, symbolic signifiers of rank and ideology. This era results in “a quite new form of dandy . . . the new young prosperous artisans and would-be superior domestics . . . had gone into competition sartorially” (Fowles 42) with wealthy gentlemen. Charles’s manservant, Sam, “ape[s] the gentleman in his clothes and manners” (329), and is described as having “a very sharp sense of clothes style . . . and [spending] most of his wages on keeping in fashion” (42). Unlike the liveried squires of *Ivanhoe*, the servants in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* wear clothes that resemble those of their masters. Sam’s love interest, Mary, is described as “a servant with only 3 dresses to her name—and not one of which she really liked, even though the best of them she could really dislike only because it had been handed down by the young princess from the capital” (76). While Sam’s

clothes and gestures imitate those of Charles, Mary actually inherits the cast-off possessions of Ernestina. Neil McKendrick explains that “fashion was the key used by many commentators to explain the forces of social imitation, social emulation, class competition, and emulative spending” (52) that were occurring since the mid-eighteenth century. In the world of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, this practice is indicative of the development of a more cohesive and similar national character.

In male fashion, these “would be dandies . . . fixed on the more physical, visible aspects of dandyism . . . and these were the aspects most easily reconfigured into purchasable commodities” (Shannon 135). Unlike the traditional English servant, Sam is unhappy with his inherited lot in life and wishes instead to go into trade: “His ambition was very simple: he wanted to be a haberdasher” (Fowles 132). Later in life, as an employee at a department store, Sam is the progenitor of the slogan: “Freeman’s for Choice” (Fowles 422). Although Sam’s aphorism indicates a literal choice in fashion, because Freeman’s features a wide variety of ready-made garments, the more philosophical notion of a choice in self-fashioning is also applicable. Sam’s choice to abandon his role as a manservant in favor of a life in trade indicates that his subversion of rigid social conventions gives him “the power to impose a shape upon [him]self . . . the power to control [his] identity” (Greenblat 1). A bold rejection of convention is easier for a servant like Sam because “family, state, and religious institutions impose a more rigid and far-reaching discipline upon . . . aristocratic subjects” (1) such as Charles, Daniel, and Ivanhoe.

Like Ivanhoe, Daniel Deronda has “something of the knight-errant in his disposition” (Eliot 274). Both men value the chivalric ideals of “altruism, self-sacrifice, duty or manliness” (Johnston 122). Daniel knows “a great deal of what it [is] to be a gentleman by inheritance”

(Eliot 143). His economic status as a gentleman is guaranteed; he is also familiar with the “chivalrous instincts and fine feelings” (OED “gentleman”) that accompany this social position. However, Daniel possesses an inherent sense of “not belonging to the place in which [he] is found” (OED ‘foreign’). A character in *Daniel Deronda* observes: “one would guess, without being told, that there was foreign blood in [Deronda’s] veins” (Eliot 281); and “if he had been heir, it would have been regretted that his face was not as unmistakably English as Sir Hugo’s” (379).

Although Daniel’s parentage is a mystery, he finds sentimental kinship with the Jewish philosopher Mordecai. This relationship is reinforced by Daniel’s discovery later in the novel that his parents were Jewish. Much like *Ivanhoe*’s associations with both the Saxons and the Normans, Daniel’s involvement with Jewish culture does not change his national identity. As Gillian Beer mentions, “Daniel, whose ‘breeding’ makes him an English gentleman . . . discovers his true inheritance through his Jewish past . . . but he does not cease to be an Englishman” (187-8). Daniel’s dual consciousness reflects a “non-western or ethnic concept” of national identity, in which he “remain[s] ineluctably, organically, a member of the community of [his] birth and [is] forever stamped by it” (Smith 11). Ironically, in *Daniel Deronda*, this concept is reversed—Daniel is eternally marked as an Englishman, despite being born in a Jewish community. This reversal imbues Daniel with the ability to be seen as “‘authentic’—pure, true, pristine, originary . . . rooted in the soil of the homeland . . . Irrespective of [his] pedigree, [Deronda] . . . embod[ies] the popular will, the virtues, and the true interests of the [English] nation” (Smith ‘Chosen Peoples’ 41), but he can also comment on English culture from the perspective of an outsider.

In his essay regarding *Daniel Deronda*, Henry James asserts that Daniel “is not a man at all,” but rather is merely a “picture” (100). Although Eliot assigns Daniel the human, reflexive mannerism of clutching his coat-collar, it “doesn’t make [a] real figure of [him]” (100). Daniel is

seen grasping his collar during incidences where his inherited code of English gentility clashes with his personal desires. He grips his collar during an emotionally revealing conversation with the beautiful but troubled Gwendolen Grandcourt, after which Sir Hugo warns: "I hope you are not playing with fire, Dan" (Eliot 389). Later, Daniel "clutch[es] his coat-collar as if he were keeping himself above water by it" (537), as his mother relates the reasons why she abandoned her son and her Jewish heritage. He also "clasp[s] his coat-collar" (394) when he confronts Hans Meyrick about the unseemliness of painting Mirah as Bernice. In all of these incidences, Daniel's discomfort with the rigid, courtly identity of an English aristocratic gentleman is clear.

Throughout *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot returns to clothing as a representation of the moral and social ideologies of her characters: the rigid costumes of the sheltered aristocrats reflect the "hackneyed . . . anachronistic, self-referential and self-enclosing clichés" (Wolfreys 136) of late nineteenth century England. Daniel's preoccupation with his coat confirms the notion that "one's manly reserve extended to all elements of dress" (Shannon 27). By constantly pulling at his collar and reminding himself of the restrictive garment he is wearing, Daniel is never far from "the ideals of self control and sobriety . . . [which] manifested themselves in the popular promotion of a discreet 'natural' elegance that became the very ethic of 19<sup>th</sup> century costume" (27).

Henleigh Mallinger Grandcourt is an artful representation of the "acquisitive, materialist, and hierarchical" (Hardy 167) model of an aristocrat. The narrator of *Daniel Deronda* observes: "The strong point of the English gentleman pure is the easy style of his figure and clothing; he objects to marked ins and outs in his costume, and he also objects to looking inspired" (Eliot 86). Grandcourt is distinguished by his "perfection of costume" as well as the "well-cut impassibility" of his facial expressions (348). James Eli Adams asserts that, "like the Hegelian

master, the Victorian gentleman . . . depends on forms of recognition that he professes to disdain” (Adams 10). Ironically, Grandcourt’s status as a paragon of wealth and taste depends on others recognizing his stylish and expensive clothing, yet “the sense of understatement, subtlety, and effortlessness—of displaying oneself as if *not* on display . . . was perhaps best expressed as an overarching indifference to personal appearance” (Shannon 31).

Grandcourt embraces the restrictive conventions of Englishness criticized by Eliot throughout *Daniel Deronda*. When he takes the spirited beauty Gwendolen Harleth as his wife, he also bestows upon her his family diamonds. Gwendolen knows that the jewels were first given to Grandcourt’s lover, Lydia Glasher. By marrying Grandcourt in spite of his past indiscretions, Gwendolen intends to subvert the ideal feminine character of “submission, and yielding to the control of others” (Adams 9). The heavy diamond necklace represents the rigid expectations placed on Gwendolen by her husband; when Grandcourt sees her wearing them for the first time, he observes that she at last “answered to the rein” (Eliot 366). While Gwendolen feels rightfully uncomfortable with the constraints of her position as a subordinate, the amount that she physically complements Grandcourt is echoed by the effect of his jewels on her person: “the words of the bad dream crawled about the diamonds, but only for her: to others they were brilliants that suited her perfectly” (366).

Unlike Gurth’s rejection of his Norman costume in *Ivanhoe*, the effects of Grandcourt’s jewels easily transform Gwendolen. Daniel observes that the diamond-clad Gwendolen possesses a “proud cold quietude and a superficial smile,” and that “there seemed to be at work within her the same demonic force that had possessed her when she . . . turned away a loser from the gaming-table” (348). Gwendolen’s necklace functions as “the fatal badge of servitude” (Scott 285) worn by Gurth and Wamba—it represents the failure of her gamble to gain autonomy. By

conforming to a prescribed role, Gwendolen becomes the embodiment of a frigid aristocrat. She is half of a “handsome, fair-skinned English couple, manifesting the usual eccentricity of their nation, both of them proud, pale, and calm” (Eliot 583). Sam’s gamble to fool Charles into rejecting Ernestina is also represented by a piece of jewelry—“a tiny oval mosaic of a spray of flowers, bordered by alternate pearls and fragments of coral set in gold” (336), that was intended as a present for Ernestina that Sam gives instead to Mary. Mary wears this badge of her husband’s daring “between her breasts,” and only when she is at home. She “always took [it] off when she went out, in case some thief garroted her for it” (Fowles 424). The male insistence on having his wife wear jewels to represent a positive change in his fortune indicates that “women were becoming increasingly responsible for performing class status through clothing and other possessions whose representational value was more culturally relevant than their use value” (Shannon 41), while men still played the part of reserved and uniform consumers.

The marriage between the English heiress Catherine Arrowpoint and the musician Julius Klesmer is the ideological foil to the union of Gwendolen and Grandcourt. Mr. Arrowpoint warns Catherine: “Klesmer is not the man for you ... He won't do as the head of estates. He has a deuced foreign look” (Eliot 210). The greatest encumbrance to Klesmer is not his artistic vocation or his lack of wealth—it is his physical appearance. According to Mr. Arrowpoint, Klesmer’s exotic appearance reflects an ideology incompatible with the English aristocracy. Klesmer’s apparent lack of dogmatic concord is matched by the clothing he wears. At the archery gathering he is “clad in a way which, not being strictly English, was all the worse for its apparent emphasis of intention” (86). Klesmer uses fashion as “a highly visual means by which to subvert the rigid and confining dictates that defined popular masculine behavior” (Shannon 54). In other words, the musician does not want to look English or aristocratic. However,

Klesmer willingly plays the role of the English courtly lover. He tells Catherine, “you are to me the chief woman in the world—the throned lady whose colors I carry between my heart and my armor” (Eliot 208). Although he rejects the physical tenets of Englishness represented by a uniformity of dress, Klesmer’s use of courtly imagery draws on an English “culture community, whose members were united, if not made homogenous, by common historical memories, myths, symbols, and traditions” (Smith 11). This choice suggests that Klesmer is able to straddle two different national consciousnesses in order to win the heart of his more socially hidebound conquest.

The union of Catherine Arrowpoint and Klesmer is a union of foreign looks and English sensibilities, which is portrayed as more vital than the union of Gwendolen and Grandcourt. Interestingly, the resulting marriage is not perceived as normatively English by the other characters. Hans Meyrick tells Deronda, “The Klesmers . . . behaved magnificently, shining forth as might be expected from the planets of genius and fortune in conjunction. Mirah is rich with their *oriental* gifts” (553, emphasis added). According to Hans, the “union of genius and fortune” is not English, but Eastern. This observation is in accordance with Gillian Beer’s comments about *Daniel Deronda*: “the emphasis throughout the book is on stultification, on the failure of the British to perceive their connections with other races and cultures” (187). Klesmer’s choice to subvert dictates of dress, yet acknowledge shared cultural symbols shows that his union with Catherine offers a solution to the stagnation of the English national character, but it is not one that can be instantly emulated by Daniel.

Naturally, incidences of courtly attachment also occur in the chivalric world of Scott’s *Ivanhoe*. The beautiful Jewess Rebecca of York saves Ivanhoe’s life after he is badly injured in a courtly tournament. The narrator of *Ivanhoe* remarks that: “The figure of Rebecca might indeed

have compared with the proudest beauties of England” (Scott 93). However, Rebecca prefers “Eastern dress, which she [wears] according to the fashion of the females of her nation” (93). In other words, Rebecca intentionally isolates herself from the women around her. In contrast to Rowena, Ivanhoe’s beloved Saxon princess, “Rebecca of York has those superabundant qualities of passion and sensuality located by Scott in Palestine” (Berman 61). However, Rebecca possesses knight-like bravery and noble morality, the qualities that Scott attributes to an ideal citizen of England. Thus, Rebecca exemplifies the idea that “not merely the nobleness of a nation but the nobleness of each individual citizen depend[s] on . . . national consciousness” (Semmel 130). Rebecca’s national consciousness is with the Jewish race, not the Norman or Saxon people, making her an unsuitable candidate for marriage to Ivanhoe. Although “the great-souled Rebecca and the nobly inclined Ivanhoe both lay their lives on the line for passionate, not self-satisfied, moderation, for vital and dangerous, not comfortable, tolerance . . . they do not attain each other, nor is it right, says Scott the moralist, or necessary, says Scott the artist, that they should” (Wilt 466). Ivanhoe reciprocates Rebecca’s kindness by preventing her from being burned as a witch by the Templars, but consummating their mutual sexual attraction would not benefit Ivanhoe in his quest to blend Norman and Saxon ideologies into a cohesive national character.

Prior to the revelation of Deronda’s Jewish ancestry, the possibility (not to mention the allegorical necessity) of a union between Daniel Deronda and the Jewess Mirah Lapidoth seems as remote as it was for Rebecca and Ivanhoe. Daniel first encounters Mirah while “rowing on the Thames in a very ordinary equipment for a young Englishman at leisure,” wearing a “dark-blue shirt and skull-cap . . . not seraphic any longer: thoroughly terrestrial and manly” (157). This is one of the few times where Daniel is characterized as appearing explicitly and normatively masculine. His rescue of Mirah is an example of “a ‘proper’ masculine performance” (Shannon

156), and is achieved without the restrictive garment his suit coat. The absence of the symbolic suit coat of English social convention in this scene allows Daniel and Mirah's relationship to develop in a less confined ideological environment.

Daniel rescues Mirah as she attempts "to wrap [her] wet cloak round her as a drowning shroud" (Eliot 161). The cloak is a traveling garment, something that marks her as a "poorly-dressed, melancholy wo[man]" (159), as well as an indication of her status as an outsider to English society, even though she is English-born. Interestingly, Mirah's apparent commonness can be thrown off in the same manner as her sodden cloak. Once she adopts genteel English style of dress and appearance, Mirah is almost unrecognizable as the woman Daniel found by the river. When she encounters her father later in the novel, "her beauty set off by the quiet, careful dress of an English lady, made a strange pendant to this shabby, foreign-looking, eager, and gesticulating man" (632). While Daniel chooses to eventually rework the conventions of English dress and self-presentation and embrace his Jewish heritage, Mirah becomes outwardly more English. The ideological equalization of this pair represents "a reworking of the debate which arose from *Ivanhoe's* conclusion. Sociologically, the marriage of *Ivanhoe* and Rowena ... will help to restore political stability to England. Eliot demands a wider kind of unity in which nations and faiths will learn to tolerate and understand one another" (Johnston 175). Daniel and Mirah's courtship is a microcosm of this desired blend of tolerance and understanding, and can only occur once Daniel shrugs off his restrictive suit coat.

The women in both *Ivanhoe* and *Daniel Deronda* are described in language that relates to wealth. Rebecca is presented as a collection of treasures with "her teeth as white as pearl" and "a diamond necklace, with pendants of inestimable value" (Scott 94). Her body is identified as a spoil of victory when she is seized to be the concubine of the corrupt templar Brian de Bois-

Guilbert. Mirah is described as “just a pearl; the mud has only washed her” by Mrs. Meyrick (Eliot 190). Daniel rankles when Mirah is treated as “imported commodity disdainfully paid for by the fashionable public, and he winced the more because Mordecai, he knew, would feel that the name ‘Jewess’ was taken as a sort of stamp like the lettering of Chinese silk” (477). The preciousness of Rebecca and Mirah is related to their physical fragility, as well as their foreignness. Mirah tells Daniel: “I am English-born. But I am a Jewess” (164). Similarly, Rebecca tells Ivanhoe: “I am of England, Sir Knight, and speak the English tongue, although my dress and my lineage belong to another climate” (Scott 298). Both women have a dual national consciousness—they are simultaneously Jewish and English. The association with this consciousness and the spoils of wealth indicates that this double association is intellectually fruitful.

Unlike the savvy Jewish women who are able to successfully manipulate their dual-consciousness, Fowles describes his heroine Sarah Woodruff as “the perfect victim of a caste society.” A farmer’s daughter by birth, Sarah is educated to a higher level than her peers. This decision “forced her out of her own class, but could not raise her to the next” (Fowles 53), making her an outsider. Although she is known as the ‘French Lieutenant’s woman,’ the language used to describe Sarah is not often feminine. In contrast, Charles’s fiancée, Ernestina Freeman, is defined by her “elaborate clothes, all designed to show a total inadequacy outside the domestic interior” (Fowles 262). In the first scene of the novel, she is “dressed in the height of fashion . . . a magenta skirt of an almost daring narrowness—and shortness . . . [with] one of the impertinent little flat ‘pork pie’ hats” (Fowles 5). Unlike the aristocratic Charles, Ernestina’s wealth comes from trade; her grandfather “died a very rich draper” (Fowles 79). Her fashionable dress is a reflection of her status as the daughter of a middle class man hoping to break into the

ranks of upper class society. Unlike men, who were expected to present themselves uniformly, “women were becoming increasingly responsible for performing class status through clothing” (Shannon 41). Ernestina herself has more value as a symbol, “a sugar Aphrodite” (Fowles 261) or a fashion plate who is expected to have “few rivals in the taste and luxury of her clothes” (Fowles 127), than as a partner for Charles. Much like the proposed union of Deronda and Gwendolen, Fowles asserts in the first ending of the novel that “Charles and Ernestina [would] not live happily ever after” (337), presumably because their marriage represents a further intellectual stagnation of the English national character.

In direct contrast to Ernestina’s elaborate sartorial choices, Sarah wears an “indigo dress, unrelieved in its calico severity except by a small white collar at the throat” (70). She is also known by her coat, which gives her “a touch of the air of a girl coachman, a female soldier—a touch only, and which [her] hair effortlessly contradicted” (167). Interestingly, Charles feels that “shabby clothes did not detract from her, in some way even suited her, and more than finer clothes might have done” (167). Sarah’s unconventionality, demonstrated by her masculine clothing choices, “may represent a kind of social freedom” (Lynch 52) for Charles. Richard Lynch describes social freedom as “the opportunity to choose between alternative social ‘realities’ or support groups, which confirm and strengthen one’s identity” (51). By forsaking his prescribed role as a gentleman in order to marry Sarah (who has both a damaged reputation and hails from an unacceptably low social stratum), Charles would confirm his idealized identity as a social outsider. Although she is a country born Englishwoman, something about Sarah’s appearance evokes a connection to the attractively foreign in Charles: “Echoes, that one flashed glance from those dark eyes . . . were not English ones. He associated such faces with foreign

women . . . with foreign beds” (Fowles 119). By choosing Sarah over Ernestina, Charles is able to abandon his prescribed social role and unite himself a partner who is attractively foreign.

When faced with the unpleasant task of revealing his relationship with Sarah to Ernestina, “Charles . . . set[s] his lapels,” (375) in a *Deronda*-esque gesture. Much like Daniel’s grasping of his coat collars, Charles sets his lapels to reinforce his identity as a respectable gentleman with inescapable obligations that are associated with his social role. After Charles reveals to Ernestina that he has become involved with Sarah, she faints. He tells Mary to “loosen her dress” (384), as if he recognizes that Ernestina’s aristocratic clothing is just as constricting as his suit coat. Ernestina’s fainting is indication of her discomfort in having her social ambitions thwarted by Charles’s unpredictable emotional connection with Sarah. In contrast to Ernestina’s luxurious femininity, Sarah presents herself as utilitarian and masculine. She “is given to built-in concealments, hiding places, and false legends” (Costa 7); she manipulates the way she is perceived by others to her own advantage. Sarah is no stranger to a type of self-fashioning that “suggests hypocrisy or deception” instead of the subtle, dress related self-fashioning of the other characters, she is also given to “a representation of [her] nature or intention in speech or actions” (Greenblat 3). Sarah intends to remain a social outsider, and bends the lines of gender normative behavior to instinctively turn away observers.

Some of Jewish characters in *Daniel Deronda* also practice self-imposed isolation. According to Bernard Semmel, “the Jews, for Eliot . . . were a model, not of a rootless cosmopolitanism . . . but of a sound regard for the preservation of their inherited national tradition” (129). Mordecai says of the Jewish nation: “Behold our people still! Their skirts spread afar; they are torn and soiled and trodden on; but there is a jeweled breastplate” (Eliot 456). The concept of the strength of their faith as a breastplate not only recalls the weighty chivalric image

of English national identity, but it also connects Mordecai's conception of Jewish national identity with the images of wealth associated with Rebecca and Mirah. The faith of the Jewish people in both *Ivanhoe* and *Daniel Deronda* is as immutable and protective as a piece of armor. Rebecca tells Rowena: "I will not change the faith of my fathers like a garment unsuited to the climate in which I seek to dwell" (Scott 501). Mirah expresses similar views about her faith. Gillian Beer mentions the Jewish people are "genetically exclusive [and] bear a culture intact through vicissitudes . . . ideally represent the concept of a stable racial group" (189), even though they lack a physical homeland.

The strong sense of nation as "a cohesive whole" (OED 'national identity') sought by both *Deronda* and *Ivanhoe* is represented by the faith and steadfastness of a woman in both novels. Judith Johnston asserts: "Mirah is the passive heroine of medieval romance, whose eventual marriage to the hero rewards him for completing his set tasks" (170). Mirah marries Daniel after he discovers his heritage and disentangles himself from the tribulations of Gwendolen. Thus, Mirah represents "a kingdom and wealth . . . the kingdom she offers is Daniel's newly found Jewish heritage, the wealth her unquestioning love and steadfastness in support of all he will attempt" (Johnston 174).

The Saxon noblewoman Rowena is a manifestation of *Ivanhoe*'s ideological reward. *Ivanhoe*'s marriage to Rowena represents the culmination of his blending of the best parts of Norman and Saxon cultures to create a new national consciousness under King Richard. Rowena is called "a rose of loveliness, and a jewel of wealth; the fairest among a thousand, a bundle of myrrh, and a cluster of camphire" (Scott 153-4) by the Norman Prior Aymer. Gwendolen and Rowena are described similarly. In her first appearance in *Ivanhoe*, Rowena is depicted in "an under-gown and kirtle of pale sea-green silk" with "profuse hair, of a colour betwixt brown and

flaxen . . . braided with gems” (59-60). When Gwendolen first appears in *Daniel Deronda*, she is called “the Nereid in sea-green robes and silver ornaments, with a pale sea-green feather fastened in silver falling backward over her green hat and light brown hair” (Eliot 7). The undeniable physical parallel between these two women unites them in their roles as representations of the archetypal English woman. According to one of Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* notebooks, “Gwen is considered as the British Venus” (Irwin 446). She is called “a perfect Diana” (136) by Sir Hugo, and is worshipped as “a goddess of luck” (6) by her cortege in Leubronn. While Ivanhoe marries his incarnation of Britannia, the relationship of Daniel and Gwendolen is sexually unproductive. According to Johnston’s chivalric explanation: “for Daniel, marriage to Gwendolen . . . would only lead to a perpetuation of that wasteland, where the old order remains static, both morally and spiritually” (126). In other words, marrying Gwendolen would cement Deronda in his former place in the irrelevant, crumbling social order of the novel’s aristocratic class. Through his union with Mirah, Daniel is able to shed the constricting coat of archetypal English gentility and become intellectually fruitful.

After being romantically rejected by both Ernestina and Sarah, Charles leaves England and travels the world, stopping for a time in America. His experiences in this familiar yet strange country allow Charles to philosophize directly about English national identity: “What the experience of America . . . had given him . . . was a kind of faith in freedom; the determination . . . to master a national destiny had a liberating rather than a depressing effect” (Fowles 435). Charles finally realizes that his refusal to acknowledge the tensions between his personal desires and the tenets of the prescribed national character are what make him so uncomfortable in England. Only after realizing his errors in perception is Charles able to locate Sarah, who has

become a Pre-Raphaelite muse. When Charles reencounters Sarah, her dress is “so different that he thought for a moment she was someone else. He had always seen her in his mind in the former clothes . . . But this was someone in the full uniform of the New Woman, flagrantly rejecting all formal contemporary notions of female fashion” (443). Interestingly, Sarah is described as moving from one uniform to another. Unlike the other characters in these novels, “Sarah has a bit of white goddess, earth mother, suffragette siren about her, but her one consistency is her elusiveness” (Costa 7). Sarah’s choice in clothes does not reflect a change in her personal ideals. In contrast to the Bohemian Pre-Raphaelites, Charles is like “the man who appears at a formal soiree under the impression it was to be a fancy dress ball” (Fowles 446). His fashion is completely out of place, and he is confronted with his own uselessness. This uncomfortable situation is what finally leads to Charles fully abandon his inherited reservations and choose to become free.

*The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, *Daniel Deronda*, and *Ivanhoe* are novels of self-discoveries. The symbols of clothing in each work recall “the paramount importance of custom, hierarchy, and inherited rank” (Colley 149) that organizes English society. *Ivanhoe* begins his story as culturally disinherited; Daniel and Charles willfully impose similar exiles on themselves. Through his victory in the tournament, subsequent rescue of Rebecca, and marriage to Rowena, Wilfred of *Ivanhoe* is able to reconcile Saxon values with Norman culture, creating an English national identity rooted in a yeomanly connection with nature and a noble, moral disposition. In *Deronda*’s story, set centuries later, the national character negotiated by *Ivanhoe* has calcified. Daniel’s choice to break from English gentility to become a socially mobile and intellectually influential hybrid of an Englishman and a Jewish man suggests that a prevailing English national character is always subject to revision. Following in *Deronda*’s ideological footsteps, Charles

fully forsakes his Englishness, causing him to “stumble downward towards the twentieth century, liberated at last from the straightjacket of privilege but a cripple nonetheless” (Costa 7).

Although the men in these works struggle with the question of autonomy in choosing an identity, Greenblatt asserts that “fashioning oneself and being fashioned by cultural institutions—family, religion, state—[are] inseparably intertwined” (256). In his discussion of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Richard Costa claims: “there is no better way to lacquer the has-happened than to allow it to lie like a palimpsest on the present and comment on it” (2). Through an examination of the changing customs and attitudes of national identity (as expressed through costume and self-presentation) in these three novels that span the entire nineteenth century, the notion of being English is shown to be in constant flux and revision. This uniquely malleable national consciousness is one of the many elements that keep the English novel interesting and worthy of scholarly interpretation.

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