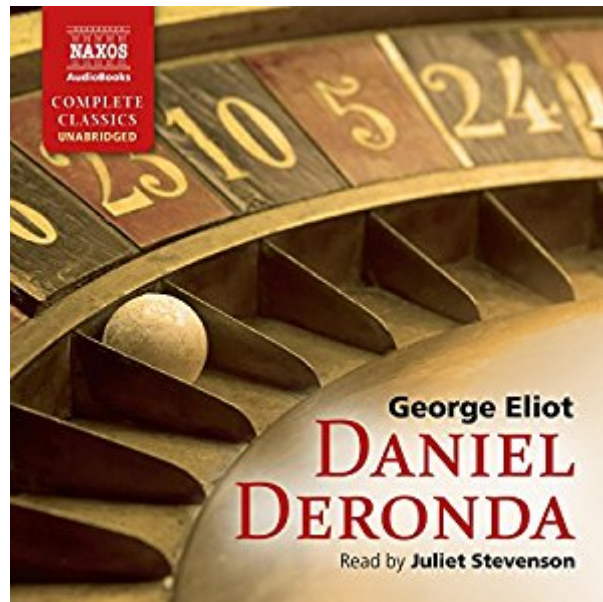


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Daniel Deronda



Synopsis

Meeting by chance at a gambling hall in Europe, the separate lives of Daniel Deronda and Gwendolen Harleth are immediately intertwined. Daniel, an Englishman of uncertain parentage, becomes Gwendolyn's redeemer as she finds herself drawn to his spiritual and altruistic nature after a loveless marriage. But Daniel's path was already set when he rescued a young Jewess from suicide. Daniel Deronda, George Eliot's final novel, is a remarkable work, encompassing themes of religion, imperialism and gender within its broad and fascinating scope.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Daniel Deronda," the culmination of George Eliot's distinguished career, is a tale of two cultures which explores the themes of concealed heritage, bigotry, and marriages of convenience in a manner never done before or since. Like its predecessor "Middlemarch," it is a long novel of perfectly structured complexity and impressive intellectual exposition, built upon a cast of characters so sharply and meticulously defined that the plot is propelled solely by the power of their presence. This is the novel that Henry James wanted to write, and even he could never match Eliot's passion and linguistic effortlessness. The forward story in "Daniel Deronda" is that of Gwendolen Harleth, a coquettish, conceited, superficial girl -- in company she often affects a sophistication that is never quite convincing -- who could be called the heroine even though she lacks most heroic attributes. She is from an upper class family, but when misfortune strikes and she is faced with poverty, she consents to marry a man named Mallinger Grandcourt, heir to a large estate, rather than reduce herself to taking a job as a governess, and despite having received a warning from a mysterious

lady about Grandcourt's having fathered illegitimate children. The secondary story is that of Daniel Deronda, the title character, a young man who first sees Gwendolen in a casino in Leubronn at the beginning of the novel. Daniel, who happens to be the ward of Mallinger Grandcourt's uncle, Sir Hugo Mallinger, is inquisitive about his obscure parentage and unsure of his place in the world. One portentous day, he rescues a girl from drowning herself -- this is Mirah Lapidoth, a Jewish girl who has run away from her father in Prague and come to London to look for her long-lost mother and brother.

"Daniel Deronda" was the last novel George Eliot wrote, and it's an appropriate finale to her career -- a lushly-written, heartfelt story about a young man searching for his past (and clues to his future), as well as a vibrant strong-willed young lady who discovers that life doesn't always go your way. Even better, Eliot deftly avoided the clichés and caricatures of the Jewish people, portraying them with love and respect. Daniel Deronda is the ward (and rumored illegitimate son) of a nobleman, who is unsure of his past (particularly of his mother) catching a glimpse of pretty, reckless, arrogant Gwendolyn Harleth at a casino. Gwendolyn (who boasts that she gets everything she wants) is interested in Daniel, but when her family loses all their money, she marries a rich suitor, a relative of Daniel's -- knowing that his mistress and illegitimate children will be disinherited. But she soon finds that her new husband is a sadistic brute, and sees Daniel as her only help. Meanwhile, Daniel rescues the despairing Mirah Lapidoth from a suicide attempt in the river, and he helps the young Jewish singer find a home and friends to care for her. As he helps her find her family, he becomes passionately attached to the Jewish population and their plight, embodied by a dying young visionary and a kindly shopkeeping family. Then he receives an important message -- one that will illuminate his roots, and give him a course for the future. When Eliot published her final novel, it caused a massive stir -- not many novelists tackled the plight of the Jewish population, or how it compared to the gilded upper classes.

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