

Victorian Realism And European Philosophy:

**George Eliot, Mary Ward And Translating
Ideas Into Fiction**

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the impact of translating as experience, metaphor and influence for the two writers featured in this study, George Eliot and Mary (Mrs Humphry) Ward. I argue that the emotional and intellectual requirements for translation, sympathetic identification and critical judgement, are significant and under-investigated influences on their creative practice.

Although it is well known that both writers translated works which challenged prevailing religious understandings, I emphasise that their approach to their translations was itself one of hermeneutic and stylistic fidelity, and explore the process of translation conceived as a series of human relationships. I argue that both women explored the capacity of the ideas and language of their translations to provide conceptualisations of human relationship as the fulcrum and guarantor of emotional value in a Godless world. The considerable critical interest in Feuerbach's influence on Eliot has focused mainly on subjectivity and the duty of understanding others, but I consider her emphasis on human relationships as acts of faith. Critical interest in Spinoza has been far more limited, and this thesis champions the importance of this relationship for Eliot's writing in relation to the process of psychological change, the role of intuitive knowledge, and the subjectivity of ethical understanding. The influence of Amiel's portrayal of the intellectual and psychological experience of losing faith on Ward's fiction has been largely unexplored in criticism, an oversight this thesis is intended to correct.

Chapter 1 contextualizes Ward and Eliot in relation to Victorian conceptualisations of translation more widely, and stresses the context of nineteenth-century translation conceived as a search for fidelity, (in distinction from more recent critical models imposing currents of conflict and mastery). Chapter 2 examines the impact of Eliot's translation of Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* on ideas around the sacred nature of human relationships, and in particular the influence of Feuerbach's metaphor of translation on Eliot's narration. Chapter 3 considers Eliot's translation of Spinoza's *Ethics*, arguing that Spinoza's ideas about processes of psychological change and the subjectivity of good and evil are more fully integrated into Eliot's fiction than has traditionally been thought. Chapter 4 considers Mary Ward's translation of Amiel's *Journal Intime* in relation to her most famous novel, *Robert Elsmere*, tracing how Amiel's sense of multiple psychologies and his own analyses of other philosophers contribute to Ward's delineation of the loss of faith. Chapter 5 considers his influence on *Helbeck of Bannisdale* and *Eleanor*, and how those novels use metaphors related to translation to consider the gaps between the languages of individuals, and between emotion and its recognition. Ward's role as translator is examined with reference to hitherto unpublished letters to her father during the final editing of *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, along with the significance for *Eleanor* of Ward's introduction to Joubert's *Pensées* and her collaboration with Katharine Lyttelton on its translation.

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Abbreviations

George Eliot's Letters

GEL.I – VI *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. by Gordon S Haight, Volumes I - VI, (London: Oxford University Press, 1954 - 1956).

(Letters in footnotes are from George Eliot unless another author is specifically stated.)

Mary Ward's Letters

MWL.Els Papers of Mrs Humphry Ward, TN 12589 Elsmere 1, Special Collections and Archives, Honnold/Mudd Library, Claremont University, California.

MWL.Hel Papers of Mrs Humphry Ward, TN 12591 Helbeck, Special Collections and Archives, Honnold/Mudd Library, Claremont University, California.

Novels

GE AB George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, ed. by Carol A Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

GE M George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, ed. by David Carroll (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

GE DD George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*, ed. by Graham Handley, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

MW RE Mrs Humphry (Mary) Ward, *Robert Elsmere*, ed. by Rosemary Ashton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, World's Classics, 1987).

MW HB Mrs Humphry (Mary) Ward, *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, ed. by Brian Worthington (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1983).

MW El Mrs Humphry (Mary) Ward, *Eleanor*, (London: MacMillan and Co., 1900).

Translations

HFA JI Henri-Frédéric Amiel, *Amiel's Journal: The Journal Intime of Henri-Frédéric Amiel*, translated by Mrs Humphry (Mary) Ward, with preface and introduction by Mary Ward (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1906).

LF EC Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot, (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1989).

- JJ ST Joseph Joubert, *Joubert: A Selection from his Thoughts*, trans. Katharine Lyttelton, preface by Mrs Humphry Ward (London: Duckworth and Co, 1898).
- BdeS Eth Benedict (Baruch) de Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. George Eliot, ed. Thomas Deegan (Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, A-5020 Salzburg, Austria, 1981).

Essays

- GE TT George Eliot, 'Translations and Translators' in *Selected Essays, Poems and other Writings*, ed. A S Byatt and Nicholas Warren (London: Penguin Classics, 1990).
- MA Am Matthew Arnold, 'Amiel' in *Vol 11: The Last Word* in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R H Super (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1977).

Autobiography

- MW Rec Mrs Humphry (Mary) Ward, *A Writer's Recollections (1856-1900)* (London, Collins Sons & Co., 1918).

It is a universal translator that neatly crosses the language divide between any species. The Babel fish could not possibly have developed naturally, and therefore it both proves and disproves the existence of God.

Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

Introduction

Also, in a perverse way, I just enjoy translating, it's like opening one's mouth and hearing someone else's voice emerge.¹

In his apologia for his profession, Jake Donoghue, Iris Murdoch's fictional translator in *Under the Net* (1954), suggests how translation demands an almost visceral identification with the author of the original text at the same time as an equally visceral awareness of difference. His words are a metaphor for the Janus-like experiences of empathy and judgment essential to the act of translation. Edith Grossman, a contemporary translator of Spanish and South American literature, describes the interaction between translator and translated text as an interaction between 'deep involvement' and 'penetrating' criticism:

[...] the translator is the most penetrating reader and critic a work can have. The very nature of what we do requires that type of deep involvement in the text. Our efforts to translate both denotation and connotation, to transfer significance as well as context, means that we must [...] bring to bear everything we know, feel, and intuit about the two languages and their literatures.²

For Grossman, the act of translation demands, as well as linguistic and contextual knowledge, a consciousness of style, and an identification of the text's appeal to a much more complex and shifting cultural significance beyond its limits. No wonder that Jake Donoghue exclaims, on being made to think more exactly about the process of translation, that:

The activity of translating, which had seemed the plainest thing in the world, turned out to be an act so complex and extraordinary that it was puzzling to see how any human being could perform it.³

The excitement and difficulties of entry into the ideas of another human mind, a mind defined by a different culture and language from the translator's, and bringing them 'over' into the translator's culture, are also described by Grossman:

[...], at a certain point in the translation of a book, [...], I can begin to imagine that the author and I have started to speak together – never in unison, certainly, but in a

¹ Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net* (Bungay: Richard Clay & Co., 1955), p.22.

² Edith Grossman, *Why Translation Matters* (London: Yale University Press, 2010), p.73.

³ Murdoch, pp.65, 66.

kind of satisfying harmony. [...]. The experience is exhilarating, symbiotic, certainly metaphorical, and absolutely crucial if I am to do what I am supposed to do – somehow get into the author’s head and behind the author’s eyes and recreate in English the writer’s linguistic perceptions of the world.⁴

Her emphasis on empathy, and the indefinable, subjective nature of the process when successful, gives rise to the many synonyms for translation used by translators. Translate, render, bring over, transpose, transfuse, rewrite, transfer meaning between, transmute, transform – the list of alternative definitions of the activity is extensive in itself, showing how difficult it is to convey with any precision that mixture of receptivity and creativity which must inform the action of transferring meaning and impact from one language to another.

In this thesis, I examine how two Victorian novelists, George Eliot (Mary Ann/Marian Evans), and Mary (Mrs Humphry) Ward, both conceptualized and engaged in the ‘complex and extraordinary’⁵ act of translation, with its combination of involvement and criticism, identification and judgement; and how they transformed this thinking into motifs, currents, and methodology within their own fictional writings. Eliot’s initial, but abandoned, translation project, begun in 1842, was of Vinet’s *Liberté des Cultes*.⁶ She later completed translations of David Strauss’s *Leben Jesu* (1846), Ludwig Feuerbach’s *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1854), and Benedict de Spinoza’s *Ethica* (1856). A translation of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is also mentioned in her letters⁷, although her translations of Spinoza remained unpublished. Ward translated Frédéric Amiel’s *Journal Intime* (1885), and later collaborated with Katharine Lyttelton on a translation of Joseph Joubert’s *Pensées* (1898). What Eliot and Ward shared (and why they are the twin subjects of this thesis) was a hope that their translations of European philosophy would reveal to a British public, much of it unaware of significant scholarly and religio-philosophic developments in Europe, a sense of how the foundations of religious thought and belief were being altered by such philosophy, and by the historicist analysis and anthropological and psychological deconstructions found within it. Both writers’ novels rise to the challenge posed by their translations, the urgent need to work out alternatives to traditional dogmatic religion, and to understand the significance of human relationship in a re-orientated human moral universe. Both writers

⁴ Grossman, pp.82, 83.

⁵ Murdoch, pp.65, 66.

⁶ Ruby Redinger, *George Eliot: The Emergent Self* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1975), p.130.

⁷ GEL.I, to Mr and Mrs Charles Bray, 4 December 1849, p.321.

probe the relationship between external authority and the process of internal understanding, and both explicitly engage in a search for a fluent, convincing language for the ideas emerging from the intellectual religious revolution of the nineteenth century.

In *The Victorians*, Philip Davis analyses the processes at work within Victorian society and the literature of the period as it struggled to find a new type of language to express underlying spiritual and psychological realities:

Initially the new order has not had time to become the expression of anything more than the logic that banishes its predecessor. Emotional experience that found expression within the old symbols now seems silenced. The new way seems to offer less meaning than before, because it has not yet worked its way into becoming conceivable to the general mind as a form of life. Thus, the old ways have to linger, and have to be banished, alternately, until a new language of symbols and associations can serve as a replacement.⁸

Davis also quotes the analogy with translation used by Karl Marx for the replacement of old ideas and their symbolic expression by a new system of ideas and symbols:

Just so does the beginner, having learnt a new language, always retranslate it into his mother-tongue; he has not assimilated the spirit of the new language, nor learnt to manipulate it freely, until he uses it without reference to the old and forgets his native language in using the new one.⁹

The task of developing satisfactory new languages and new translations for what Ward called the enduring ‘needs of the soul’¹⁰ proved challenging. There was also a lingering sense that some significant concepts were endangered. In her introduction to the translation of Joubert’s *Pensées*, Ward had written of the intellectual climate in France following the revolution:

[...] that new and stormy life of Europe which was none the less conscious of all that it had conquered because it returned so passionately, so remorsefully, to much that it had overthrown; [...].¹¹

⁸ Philip Davis, *The Victorians*, in *The Oxford English Literary History, Vol.8* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.126.

⁹ Davis, p.129, referring to *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, by Karl Marx.

¹⁰ MW HB, V. 1. p.333.

¹¹ JJ ST, ‘Introduction’ by Mary Ward, p.xii.

The revolutionary and post-revolutionary sequence of passion and remorse, of the destruction of the old by the irresistible new, was what interested Ward, and it is a defining note in the writings of both women; iconoclastic, radical, but simultaneously full of yearning towards the emotional and moral consciousness of their former beliefs. Cara Bray, Eliot's friend, wrote of Eliot's 'Strauss-sickness' while 'dissecting' Strauss's analysis of the 'beautiful story of the crucifixion',¹² and her need, while engaged on it, for the reassurance she drew from a cast of Thorwaldsen's statue of the risen Christ, which she kept in front of her as she worked. The mitigation of an act of intellectual deconstruction by one of artistic reaffirmation epitomises the ways in which the grief caused by tenacious intellectual rigour in relation to matters of former faith had to reverse its destruction and dissection through attempts to detain, re-examine and re-explore the underlying ideas and emotions, the symbols, the metaphors, the images, and the language of the lost faith.

In this thesis, this process of intellectual overthrow, the internal drama of disillusionment, and the subsequent longing for what has been lost, will be examined through both writers' letters, autobiographical writings, and fiction. Eliot's attacks on Christianity's intellectual foundations softened, as she said in a letter of 1859, into a gentler acceptance of 'any faith in which human sorrow and human longing for purity have expressed themselves'.¹³ Ward's historicist rejection of Christian dogma was complicated by her longing for a community which combined the ideas of new scholarship with the symbolic forms, language, and emotion of the old faith.

Ward and Eliot stand together in the nineteenth century as female translators of European male philosophers, who also combined what they saw as the making of 'faithful' translations with writing fictions. In this, they contrast with Harriet Martineau (who is not substantively examined in this thesis), who had successfully translated Auguste Comte's *Cours Philosophie Positive* (1853). Despite the success of earlier novels such as *Deerbrook* (1839), and fictions such as *The Illustrations of Political Economy*, she dismissed her 'small imaginative and suggestive powers',¹⁴ and fiercely rejected the connection between fiction and philosophy, arguing that popularizing ideas through 'story', would 'smother'¹⁵ their clarity. Martineau had taken a characteristically incisive editorial stance towards the

¹² GEL.I, Mrs Bray's letter to Sara Hennell, 14 February 1846, p.206.

¹³ GEL.III, Letter to Francois d'Albert Durade, 6 December 1859, pp.230, 231.

¹⁴ Harriet Martineau, 'Self-Estimate', from *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography*, ed. by Maria Weston Chapman, 3 vols (London: Smith Elder and Co., 1877), III, p.469.

¹⁵ Harriet Martineau, *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography*, ed. by Maria Weston Chapman, I, 3rd Period, Section III, p.138.

translation of Comte's *Cours*, which she called a condensation, reducing it to a quarter of its original length. In contrast, Ward's and Eliot's intention to provide close and faithful textual translations of works of European philosophy or theology is uniquely combined with their secondary translation of those ideas into fiction, dramatising the human impact of the radical ideas which had been addressed in their translated works. The translator's subjective involvement with, and objective criticism of, the ideas they translated, and their experience of being a mouthpiece for another person's ideas, became the novelist's secondary, additional, translation of those ideas through the process of fictional dramatization in the realist mode. Moreover, translation as a metaphor for gaining understanding, for communication, and for decoding other characters' languages is a major preoccupation of both novelists.

In 1849, seven years before completing a translation of Spinoza's *Ethics*, Eliot had already considered that a secondary or additional translation would be necessary to render the meaning contained within its format of geometric analysis:

After one has rendered his Latin faithfully into English, one feels that there is another yet more difficult process of translation for the reader to effect, and that the only mode of making Spinoza accessible to a larger number is to study his books, then shut them, and give an analysis.¹⁶

There is a recognition here that a 'faithful' translation was not enough to secure understanding, and that another stage might be needed – a stage which became, for both Eliot and Ward, the writing of fiction. By taking analysis a step further and imaginatively inhabiting human characters and situations, alternative ideas about how to live might be examined. Eliot was adamant that her novels were 'experiments in life' and that no 'formulae', a word she used consistently to imply any empirical theorisation, were valid unless evolving from and tested against human experience.

If Eliot attends explicitly to the process of gaining understanding, Ward focuses on the 'human and emotional crisis'¹⁷ resulting from intellectual processes. Her *Writer's Recollections* record that it was 'the shock of indignation' caused by John Wordsworth's 'grotesque account' of the correlation between 'unbelief' and 'sin', applied to the lives of people she revered and loved, such as Matthew Arnold, Benjamin Jowett, and T H Green, which 'led directly – though after seven intervening years' to writing *Robert Elsmere*, an

¹⁶ GEL.I, to Mr and Mrs Charles Bray, 4 December 1849, p.321.

¹⁷ MW Rec, Ch.XII, p.231.

exploration of the loss of religious faith without any loss of ethical endeavour.¹⁸ Elsewhere in the *Recollections*, she explained that she had determined to deal with the subject through a novel, ‘in order to reach the public’.¹⁹ The emotional significance of loss of faith or changes in faith was personal: she had lost her own faith to historical and historicist analysis, and had experienced the destructive impact of her father’s changing beliefs on her parents’ marriage.

This thesis will demonstrate in more detail than has hitherto been the case how Eliot’s own philosophy developed and defined itself as she embarked on the work of translating Strauss, Feuerbach and Spinoza, and how she addressed not only the implications of the ideas she was translating, but the process of engagement itself. For Ward, reading and translating Amiel’s *Journal Intime* provided her with a day by day account of fighting for and losing a religious faith. Ward’s debt to Amiel has received little attention critically.

The Relationship of Ward’s and Eliot’s Writing

Eliot’s and Ward’s lives and writing careers were separated by thirty years: Eliot a writer of the mid-nineteenth century and Ward of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Nevertheless, Ward’s concerns were close to Eliot’s, so close in fact that she was accused by Oscar Wilde in the early 1890s of addressing the theological controversies of twenty to thirty years’ earlier:

It [*Robert Elsmere*] is simply Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* [1873] with the literature left out. It is as much behind the age as Paley's *Evidences* [1859], or Colenso's method of Biblical exegesis [1862-79].²⁰

However, the public success of her work demonstrated that these controversies were still intensely relevant. Eliot had made key works of German Higher Criticism accessible in the English speaking world, and the disputes of Ward’s youth in Oxford in the 1870s reflected the University’s unique role in crystallising the ensuing debate between religious tradition and liberalism:

¹⁸ MW Rec, Ch.IX, p.168.

¹⁹ MW Rec, Ch.XII, p.229.

²⁰ Oscar Wilde, ‘The Decay of Lying – An Observation’, in *Intentions*, ed. by Percival Pollard (New York: Brentano's, 1905), p.16. BiblioBoard. Web.

[....]; we who were still within sight and hearing of the great fighting years of an earlier generation, and still scorched by their dying fires. Balliol, Christ Church, Lincoln: - the Liberal and utilitarian camp, the Church camp – with Science and the Museum hovering in the background, as the growing aggressive powers of the future seeking whom they might devour: [....].²¹

Both Ward's and Eliot's translatorly interests were initially conditioned by interest in scholarly historical and psychological analyses of religion and its function. As is well-known, by the time Eliot began to translate Strauss in 1844, she had already abandoned her belief in dogmatic Christianity. For Ward, the major issue (even post-Darwin) was essentially the same, and related to the evidential basis of Christianity, the changing profile of 'testimony' as she called it, and the implications of changing religious perspectives on moral action, and what she termed 'the needs of the soul'.²² Both women's early evangelicalism with its ascription of pre-eminent value to biblical text led to a painful loss of a faith in their twenties associated with challenge to that textual authority. The impact of textual criticism and how that criticism impacted on the moral and emotional consciousness of traditional Christianity became their major concern. Their textual awareness was clearly formed in their experiences as translators of texts centrally concerned with the validity and impact of textuality on religious belief.

Ward and Eliot also shared professional and personal trajectories. Both women expanded the normal repertoire of the languages taught to middle-class girls to become expert linguists, not only in other modern European languages but in classical languages too – challenging an area considered to belong exclusively to male expertise. As a young woman, Eliot had acquired expertise in French, German, Italian, Spanish, Latin, and classical Greek. She learnt Hebrew later in life from her friend, Emanuel Deutsch.²³ Ward originally learnt German, Latin and French at school, and added to these an ability to read early mediaeval and renaissance Latin, Spanish and mediaeval Spanish, and modern Italian.²⁴ Eliot wrote for and edited *The Westminster Review*, and wrote for *The Leader*: Ward wrote for *The Times* and *Macmillan's Magazine*. They both translated works by philosophers or theologians before, or just as, they were considering embarking on careers writing fiction. At thirty-seven, just as

²¹ MW Rec, Ch.VII, p.131.

²² MW HB, V. 1. p.333.

²³ John Walter Cross, *George Eliot's Life as related in her Letters and Journals* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1902), pp.14, 17, 33; and Oscar Browning, *Life of George Eliot* (London: Walter Scott, 1890), pp.28, 96. Bibliolabs (Biblioboard core)

²⁴ MW Rec, Ch.IX, p.163.

she completed her unpublished translation of Spinoza's *Ethics*, Eliot wrote her first fiction, *Scenes from Clerical Life*. The genesis of Ward's second and most successful novel, *Robert Elsmere*, (also published when the author was thirty-seven), was intertwined with her experience of translating Amiel's *Journal Intime*. Some of the parallel aspects of their careers, 'the magnitude of the achievement and the nature of the spiritual and intellectual struggles depicted',²⁵ were debated by some Victorian critics.²⁶ There are other more personal parallels too; the importance of their relationship with their fathers despite profound religious differences with them, and their 'qualified feminism'²⁷ which has brought both of them criticism in recent years.

In terms of their treatment of intellectual and religious issues, they focused on very different aspects of the transformations of faith. With the exception of *Romola*, Eliot rarely foregrounds the experience of loss of faith explicitly. Her characters for the most part experience positive transformations of understanding, and the sympathy to transcend difference. What divides them or causes them pain are failures in understanding and sympathy, and pain is a stage in the process of gaining a more just and embracing understanding of other people. Relationship fills the space vacated by the sacred. However, as well as her emphasis on self-discovery through relationships, Eliot also considered the impact of cataclysmic social change on the small conceptions of individuals, the 'terrible moment [...] when the great movements of the world [...] enter like an earthquake into [...] lives.'²⁸ This was also the moment which Ward identified as her prime interest, the drama of the impact of new ideas on the individual:

It is in these conflicts between old and the new, [...] that we moderns find our best example of compelling fate, - and the weakness of the personal life in the grip of great forces that regard it not, or seem to regard it not, [...].²⁹

Ward's novels depict a world where ideas are charged with a destructive necessity and relationship is their victim. For her, differences in belief and self-recognition bring painful

²⁵ MAH, 'Mrs Humphry Ward' in *Oxford Reader's Companion to George Eliot*, ed. by John Rignall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Oxford Reference online.

²⁶ Eg. Charles Townsend Copeland, 'George Eliot and Mrs Humphry Ward', (*The North American Review* 1892, 154(425)). pp. 1-3. Bibliolabs.

²⁷ MAH, 'Mrs Humphry Ward'.

²⁸ GE DD, VIII. 69. pp. 747, 748.

²⁹ Janet Penrose Trevelyan, *The Life of Mrs Humphry Ward*, letter to C E Maurice (London: Constable & Co., 1923), p.150.

adjustments to relationships or destroy them. The emotional experience of loss of faith is a major concern in both *Robert Elsmere* and *Eleanor*, and Ward's novels tend far more than Eliot's to show the diminution and even destruction of relationship resulting from the irreconcilability of ideas. Nevertheless, the structural dynamic of idea and life, of text and context, remains the same.

The two writers' social interaction was limited. Mary Ward met George Eliot only once in Oxford in 1870, according to her *Recollections*, where she recorded Eliot's kindness to her as a young woman in awe of the established novelist, and recalled Eliot's conversation with her about Spain which created an 'impression' which was like 'the best of her work'.³⁰ Ward, who had written perceptive introductions to Charlotte Brontë's novels, declined to write anything about Eliot when invited to do so by William Blackwood, saying that she did 'not feel naturally drawn to it, great as my admiration for her is'.³¹ William Peterson identifies some of Ward's reservations about Eliot, accepting them at face value. Her 'Introduction' to *Amiel's Journal* compares Amiel's poetry with Eliot's in its absence of 'plastic power' and 'incommunicable magic'.³² A letter to George Smith described finding *Adam Bede* boring and the hero a prig.³³ And yet Ward's ambiguity about Eliot is also clear from the comparisons she invoked and elicited. James Knowles told Gladstone that Ward reminded him of George Eliot: '[...] she gives me the impression of wishing to be Elisha to Geo. Eliot's Elijah - & I cannot see why she may not become so'.³⁴ Her reticence about Eliot, given their similar ethical and religious interests and similar formal choices, is indicative of intriguing personal creative issues at the very least.

The Critical Context for Eliot and Ward

When Ward eventually published her first novel, *Robert Elsmere*, in 1888, similarities between the two authors were noted by reviewers. The French critic, Taine, thought it the best English novel since George Eliot's death.³⁵ One of the earliest reviews, from *The Scotsman*,³⁶ compared *Robert Elsmere* with the novels of George Eliot: *The Pall Mall*

³⁰ MW Rec, Ch.VI, p.108.

³¹ William S Peterson, *Victorian Heretic: Mrs Humphry Ward's Robert Elsmere* (Leicester University Press, 1976), p.102.

³² HFA JI, 'Introduction' by Mary Ward, p.xxxiii.

³³ Peterson, p.102.

³⁴ Peterson, p.103.

³⁵ Peterson, p.162.

³⁶ Peterson, p.170, refers to 'New Novels' in *The Scotsman*, 5 March, 1888.

Gazette noted the frequency of such critical comparisons but dismissed them.³⁷ But such comparisons between the two writers continued to be made during Ward's creative lifetime: Frederic Harrison wrote that one of Ward's later novels, *The Case of Richard Meynell*, (1911) was 'as fine as anything since *Adam Bede*'.³⁸ Prefiguring later critical attention, Charles Townsend Copeland, one of the nineteenth century reviewers to link Ward and Eliot, concluded that they were linked as moralists rather than novelists:

George Eliot began writing fiction as a novelist, and ended as a moralist: Mrs Ward began as a moralist, and has she yet become a novelist?³⁹

A limited number of more recent critics have addressed similarities between the oeuvres of Ward and Eliot. U. C. Knoepfelmacher has persuasively argued that, in *Robert Elsmere*, Ward was consciously emulating Eliot's later novels, as well being influenced by the ideas of Matthew Arnold.⁴⁰ MAH, in the entry relating to Ward in *The Oxford Reader's Companion to George Eliot*, identifies parallels between the work of the two women in the 'ethical and marital' dilemmas faced by their heroines.⁴¹ Peter Collister, in an essay for *English Studies* on the linkages between Eliot's and Ward's depictions of women's moral choices, and of the ways in which both writers used realism, also argues that Eliot's influence on Ward is perceptible in their female characters and suggests that:

In the aesthetic outline rather than the specifically moral impulse, that is, Mary Ward owed much to George Eliot [...]. The correspondence extends beyond this shared basis of interest into the practical problems of giving dramatic and narrative form to crises arising from an identifiably similar range of moral uncertainties and convictions.⁴²

Little else appears to have been written about Eliot and Ward and the overlapping interest and achievement of both women. A number of critics have explored the congruent or contrasting interests and experiences of Victorian intellectual women writers, and, while Eliot often features in these studies, Ward does not. Rosemary Ashton's *The German Idea: Four English*

³⁷ Peterson, p.171, refers to 'A Romance of the New Religion', *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 April, 1888.

³⁸ Peterson, p.203.

³⁹ Copeland, p.1.

⁴⁰ U C Knoepfelmacher, *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel: George Eliot, Walter Pater and Samuel Butler* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), p.12.

⁴¹ MAH, 'Mrs Humphry Ward'.

⁴² Peter Collister, 'Portraits of Audacious Youth: George Eliot and Mrs Humphry Ward', *English Studies*, August 1983, vol. 64, issue 4, p.317.

Writers and the Reception of German Thought 1800-1869 (1980)⁴³; Deirdre David's *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot* (1987)⁴⁴; Lesa Scholl's *Translation, Authorship and the Victorian Professional Woman: Charlotte Brontë, Harriet Martineau and George Eliot* (2011)⁴⁵ (which I will discuss in some more depth later) each recognise Eliot's achievements as an intellectual and as a creative writer, but omit consideration of Ward. Lesser known Victorian women translators and travel writers are considered in Judith Johnston's *Victorian Women and the Economies of Travel, Translation and Culture 1830-1870* (2013),⁴⁶ covering the work of Sarah Austin, Mary Busk, Anna Jameson, Charlotte Guest, Jane Sinnett and Mary Howitt.

The critical literature on Ward remains limited, and convinced of the lasting value of her achievement only in relation to the light it casts on the crises of faith in late Victorian England. Too successful, too involved with the anti-suffrage movement, too earnest, too moral: these seem to encapsulate critical misgivings about Ward which still survive. In 1970, Knoepfelmacher concluded that *Robert Elsmere's* 'historic significance exceeded by far its intrinsic merits.'⁴⁷ John Sutherland's 1990 literary biography of Ward attempts to steer a course between objective accounts of contemporaneous critical and popular reception of her work and acceptance of the justice of critical relegation of some of her work, suggesting that:

Most critics who allow Mrs Humphry Ward any literary achievement at all assume that it is confined between the years 1888 to 1898 and that she falls off as a novelist after *Helbeck*.⁴⁸

Earlier literary appreciations by Enid Huws Jones⁴⁹ and Stephen Gwynn suggest that, in books such as *Robert Elsmere*, '[...] even with developing artistic power she has never learnt to subordinate thoroughly the accidental to the essential interests of her craft.'⁵⁰

⁴³ Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought 1800-1869*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁴⁴ Deirdre David, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1987).

⁴⁵ Lesa Scholl, *Translation, Authorship and the Victorian Professional Woman: Charlotte Brontë, Harriet Martineau and George Eliot* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

⁴⁶ Judith Johnston, *Victorian Women and the Economies of Travel, Translation and Culture, 1830-1870*, (Dawsonera e-book).

⁴⁷ Knoepfelmacher, p.4.

⁴⁸ John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian, Pre-eminent Edwardian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p.158.

⁴⁹ Enid Huws Jones, *Mrs Humphry Ward*, (London: Heinemann, 1973).

⁵⁰ Stephen Gwynn, *Mrs Humphry Ward* (London: Nisbet & Co., 1917), p.9.

William Peterson's *Mrs Humphry Ward: Victorian Heretic* (1976) amends the damning emphasis on respectability and popularity, and probably provides one of the most generous and perceptive judgements of Ward's daring, and the intellectual honesty in conflict with 'the bittersweet quality of Victorian religious nostalgia'⁵¹ which her novels present, arguing that:

[...] in her best novels – particularly *Robert Elsmere* and *Helbeck of Bannisdale* – she brilliantly captures the pain of spiritual loss so characteristic of the century.⁵²

Peterson's book emphasises *Robert Elsmere*'s role as a deeply authentic account of that crisis of religious belief, the story of 'both an individual and an age'.⁵³ His judgements have been supported more recently by Davis (2004), who regards *Robert Elsmere* as 'the great, culminating, recapitulatory novel of the [nineteenth] century's religious experience'.⁵⁴

The impact of Ward's translation of *Amiel's Journal*, a portrait of a lifetime's agonising metamorphosis and disintegration of faith, on the development of her fiction is touched on only in the context of biography. However, the impact of Amiel's work on Ward was, I argue, profound. It gave her the expression of a sensibility and experience she saw as symptomatic of her age, and it influenced aspects of her work extending beyond the creation which she confessed to, the character of Langham in *Robert Elsmere*. The links between Ward's novels and her translation of Amiel have not been examined in depth before.

Eliot's fictional achievement has, in contrast, been the subject of considerable critical interest in relation to her translations of Strauss and Feuerbach, and, to a more limited extent, in relation to her translation of Spinoza. There are studies of her role as an intellectual and of her European context (Valerie Dodd⁵⁵, John Rignall⁵⁶). There have been interventions by philosophers (Martha Nussbaum,⁵⁷ James Arnott,⁵⁸ Moira Gatens⁵⁹) in relation to the function

⁵¹ Peterson, p.12.

⁵² Peterson, p.11.

⁵³ Peterson, p.16.

⁵⁴ Davis, p.130.

⁵⁵ Valerie Dodd, *George Eliot: An Intellectual Life* (Houndmills: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1990).

⁵⁶ John Rignall, *George Eliot, European Novelist* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2012); and *George Eliot and Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1997).

⁵⁷ Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁵⁸ James Arnott, 'Daniel Deronda, Professor of Spinoza,' *Victorian Literature and Culture*. Dec2016, Volume 44, Issue 4, pp. 833-854 <DOI: 10.1017/S106015031600019X.>, Database: Humanities International Complete [accessed 11 June 2017].

⁵⁹ Moira Gatens, 'Cloud-Borne Angels, Prophets and the Old Woman's Flower-Pot: Reading George Eliot's Realism alongside Spinoza's 'Beings of the Imagination'', *Australian Literary Studies*. 2013, Vol. 28, Issue 3, p1-14, Database: Humanities International Complete [accessed 19 May 2017] p.14.

of the realist novel as an alternative mode of philosophic exploration of nuanced moral response to ethical issues arising out of ‘the complex particularities of a situation’.⁶⁰

Eliot’s engagement with the ideas of Feuerbach and Strauss has received significant attention. Her endorsement of Feuerbach’s interpretation of the human religious impulse (‘[...] with the ideas of Feuerbach I everywhere agree’⁶¹) was both self-defining and influential. Particular interest has focused on such aspects as Feuerbach’s emphasis on Christianity’s capacity to endorse the significance of feeling (Knoepfmacher, E S Shaffer⁶²), while Shaffer also notes Feuerbach’s identification of theology with pathology. The narrator’s persona or personas and their relationship with a Feuerbachian ‘consciousness of the species’ or an apparent immanence has been analysed by J Hillis Miller,⁶³ and the narrator’s use of free indirect speech and its relationship with Feuerbachian sympathy explored by Suzy Anger.⁶⁴ Eliot’s use of Straussian and Judaeo-Christian mythical resonance in novels such as *Daniel Deronda* has been considered by Barry Qualls,⁶⁵ Shaffer has written about *Daniel Deronda*’s reflection of Feuerbach’s and Strauss’s emphasis on the ‘oriental’ origins of European and Christian thought, and both Shaffer and Anger have considered how Eliot’s novels deal with subjective knowledge and intuition in the light of Feuerbach’s identification of Christian myth and dogma as a reflection or projection of human needs. Eliot’s interest in the limits of subjectivity and the need to transcend it in the effort to gain less unreliable knowledge, and the relationship of this to Feuerbach’s views of the function of internal dialogue (the ‘I/thou’ genesis of thought) to the definition of self and non-self is an area of critical debate (Hillis Miller⁶⁶, Anger⁶⁷). A further related area of critical interest focuses on the nature of Eliot’s understanding of sympathy or empathy and its relationship

⁶⁰ Suzy Anger, *Victorian Interpretation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), p.111.

⁶¹ GEL.II, to Sara Hennell, 29 April 1854, p.153.

⁶² E S Shaffer, ‘Daniel Deronda and the Conventions of Fiction’, in *Kubla Khan and the Fall of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

⁶³ J Hillis Miller, *The Form of Victorian Fiction* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp.83, 84.

⁶⁴ Anger, p.117.

⁶⁵ Barry V Qualls, ‘George Eliot and Religion’ in *The Cambridge Companion To George Eliot*, ed. by George Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.122. Cambridge Companions Online; and *The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction: The Novel as a Book of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

⁶⁶ J. Hillis Miller, “Optic and Semiotic in Middlemarch”, in *The Worlds of Victorian Fiction*, Harvard English Studies 6 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p.143.

⁶⁷ Anger, *Victorian Interpretation*; also ‘George Eliot and Philosophy’ in *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, ed. George Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Cambridge Companions Online.

with judgement, which many critics (Davis⁶⁸, Armstrong⁶⁹, Ermarth, Anger⁷⁰, Gatens⁷¹) identify as crucial, Anger arguing that Eliot ‘learnt’ from Feuerbach ‘two hermeneutic modes, the sympathetic and the critical’.⁷²

Qualls has drawn attention to the importance of visionary moments in *Daniel Deronda*.⁷³ Areas where there is still ongoing debate are on the theories of knowledge relating to the limits of subjectivity for Feuerbach and to the hierarchy of cognition proposed by Spinoza culminating in intuitive cognition, and of the way in which Eliot interprets and critiques Spinoza’s views of the functions of imagination and intuition in *Ethics*.⁷⁴ In addition, Dorothy Atkins considered aspects of Spinoza’s theory of cognition, and his concepts of human bondage and freedom in relation to *Adam Bede*,⁷⁵ and Isobel Armstrong has written about Spinoza’s analysis of the emotions in Part III of the *Ethics*, arguing that his analysis provides ‘a structural and organizing principle’ of both *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.⁷⁶

Critical discussion of Eliot’s views of translation covers both Ermarth’s identification of the way in which multiple languages identify a ‘multiplicity of systems within a social network’⁷⁷ to Susan Hill’s⁷⁸ more detailed study of translation as a metaphor for understanding others in *Middlemarch*, focusing on Eliot’s consideration of the translation of desire into the moral obligation of others. A sense of the significant personal impact of Eliot’s translations can also be detected in the importance for her of those moments identified by many critics, but not explicitly linked to her experience of translation, where characters endure a destabilisation (Caroline Levine⁷⁹), or removal of illusion (Barbara Hardy⁸⁰), or

⁶⁸ Davis, p.372.

⁶⁹ Isobel Armstrong, ‘Spinoza and the Emotions’ in *Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture : Companion to George Eliot*, ed. by Amanda Anderson and Harry Shaw (New York, USA: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), p.298. Proquest Ebook Central.

⁷⁰ Anger, *Victorian Interpretation*, pp.116, 117.

⁷¹ Gatens, ‘Cloud-Borne Angels’.

⁷² Anger, *Victorian Interpretation*, p.105.

⁷³ Qualls, *The Secular Pilgrims of Victorian Fiction*, p.172.

⁷⁴ Gatens, ‘Cloud-Borne Angels’.

⁷⁵ Dorothy J Atkins, (1977) ‘George Eliot And Spinoza’ (Order No. 7732112) (unpublished doctoral thesis, University Nebraska, 1977). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (302850517).

⁷⁶ Armstrong, p.295.

⁷⁷ Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, *The English Novel in History, 1840 – 1895* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.155. Proquest Ebook Central.

⁷⁸ Susan E Hill, ‘Translating Feuerbach, Constructing Morality: The Theological and Literary Significance of Translation for George Eliot’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 10/1/1997, vol. 65, issue 3; p. 635-653; <<http://www.jstor.org.liverpool.idm.oclc.org/stable/1465655>> [accessed 11 June 2017]

⁷⁹ Caroline Levine, ‘Surprising Realism’, in *Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture: Companion to George Eliot*, eds. Amanda Anderson and Harry Shaw (New York, NY, USA: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), p.63. Proquest Ebook Central.

collapse of their world view (David Carroll⁸¹). Eliot's experience of translating Strauss was a painful one as her letters reveal, and the emotional impact of the removal of illusion reverberates in her novels.

The parallels between the work of Ward and Eliot, though accepted by their contemporary critics, have been explored only to a very limited extent by more recent criticism. Ward's debt to Amiel remains to be explored further by this thesis. I intend to add to the debate about Feuerbach's influence on Eliot through relating it to her method of challenging the reader to think as well as to sympathise, and to the way in which she responded to the challenges of redrawing the space for understanding of the sacred. In relation to Spinoza's influence I shall be analysing his ethical theory, and his analyses of the will and of active and passive psychological states in relation to Eliot's later novels.

Modern Translation Theory

Some feminist translation theorists have argued that the conceptualisation of the translator's role as subservient originated in a patriarchal culture. According to this theory, women were permitted to be translators because that role was perceived as subordinate to the originating, frequently male, author. Her role was to nurture the male author's fame and international impact. For example, in *Gender and Translation*, Sherry Simon argues that:

Translators and women have historically been the weaker figures in their respective hierarchies: translators are handmaidens to authors, women inferior to men.⁸²

In her study of three Victorian women translators (Eliot, Brontë and Martineau), Lesa Scholl characterises the act of translation as part of a 'struggle' for 'mastery' with the power of the original author.⁸³ Some aspects of this analysis may be illuminating, but it simplifies the psychological nexus of Victorian translatorly attitudes. Eliot and Ward saw fidelity to the intentions of the source author as paramount, but were just as explicit in their contemporary letters or the introductions to translations about their judgement of the author and his text as

⁸⁰ Barbara Nathan Hardy, *The Novels of George Eliot: a Study in Form* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.198.

⁸¹ David Carroll, *George Eliot and the Conflict of Interpretations, a reading of the novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Cambridge Books Online.

⁸² Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.1.

⁸³ Scholl, p.61.

they were about their sympathy with aspects of his views. Nevertheless, the metaphors of mastery and subservience haunt discussion of the act of translation. Despite the ambiguous significations of ‘mastery’, the metaphorical outreach of the word is seen to imply the bivalency of the master-pupil or master-subordinate relationship. Simon’s use of the metaphor of translator as ‘handmaiden’ to a source author concentrates on an analysis of the anthropological role of a female translator. Scholl, working within the overarching metaphor of mastery and subservience, finds in the process of translation what she calls a ‘dialogical’⁸⁴ relationship which develops its own dynamic arc from initial intellectual subservience, through self-identification with the source, followed by criticism of it, to reach subsequent intellectual independence or ‘mastery’. In considering how the experience of translation developed for writers such as Eliot, she locates the mastery metaphor in the struggle for final authority between pupil and master:

This relationship [pupil and master] becomes a metaphor for the way the translator appropriates the authority of the original text before rewriting it as her own.⁸⁵

Scholl’s model of struggle for authority or ‘mastery’ evades arguments about whether it is inevitable that a source text is viewed as uniquely different from and inherently superior to any translation. But in interpreting translation for these writers as a struggle for mastery with the source text, and as an ‘intimate discourse with him [the author] often challenging and critiquing the ideas presented so they become nuanced by her translation’,⁸⁶ she nevertheless suggests the intensity of the engagement which has to take place to ensure what Eliot called fidelity to and interpretation of ‘another man’s mind’.⁸⁷

In contrast, I argue that the model of pupil – teacher struggle does not fully reflect the conceptualisation of the relationship by the women writers in my study. Eliot began to have reservations about Strauss’s work comparatively early on in the process of translating *Leben Jesu*, her views of the emotional limitations of Spinoza’s system are explored in *Daniel Deronda*, and her endorsement of Feuerbach’s ideas was combined with a critique of his expression of them, particularly in his Preface and Appendices, and a scepticism about the role of sympathy. Ward’s psychological analysis of Amiel in her introduction to his *Journal*

⁸⁴ Scholl, p.59.

⁸⁵ Scholl, p.7.

⁸⁶ Scholl, p.3.

⁸⁷ GE TT, p.342.

was just as complex and nuanced, but his personality provided her with a template for the exploration of the emotional experience of doubt, as well as of its intellectual sources.

Other recent theorists have portrayed translation both as a dialogic activity and an inherently creative act. Louis Kelly, for example, suggests that translation is in itself ‘a form of literary creation’, the offspring of a dialogue between author and translator.⁸⁸ There is a struggle to find wording which will describe, without denigration, an activity which theorists are reluctant to conceptualise as subordinate or derivative but which, equally reluctantly, they are unable to claim is as analytical, synthesising or creative as the original work. Lawrence Venuti focuses on alternative issues arising from a translation, those of the ‘domestication’ of a text, so that it is ‘no longer inscrutably foreign but made comprehensible in a distinctively domestic style.’⁸⁹ He argues that good translation should aim to:

[...] limit this ethnocentric negation: it stages “an opening, a dialogue, a cross-breeding, a decentering” and thereby forces the domestic language and culture to register the foreignness of the foreign text.⁹⁰

For him, ethnocentricity, ‘no matter how seemingly faithful, no matter how linguistically correct’⁹¹ a translation seems to be, makes fidelity problematic. Victorian assumptions about the fidelity required for translation and the cultural uniqueness of a source language oeuvre, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 1, continue to be debated and redefined by modern and postmodern translation theory, which, in attributing increasing ‘strategic choice’ to the translator’s reconciliation of the potential discontinuities between precise wording and cultural significance, could emphasise, in Scholl’s words, ‘the very real power the translator possesses to subvert the original author’s message’.⁹² Postmodern critics interrogate the claims to uniqueness or to origination by considering the value of all works as constructions not only of their contemporary culture at the time of origination but also of the trans-temporal culture influencing the minds, imaginations and available frames of reference of later readers. This rebalancing of the relationship between original text and translation in the more general

⁸⁸ Louis G. Kelly, *The True Interpreter: a History of Translation Theory and Practice in the West* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979), p.44.

⁸⁹ Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethic of Difference*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p.5. Proquest Ebook Central.

⁹⁰ Venuti, p.81.

⁹¹ Venuti, p.82.

⁹² Scholl, p.2.

rebalancing of textual authority and creative interpretation is exemplified in Susan Bassnett's summary of the arguments:

[...] Barthes sees the place of the literary work as that of making the reader not so much a consumer as a *producer* of the text, while Julia Kristeva sees the reader as realizing the expansion of the work's process of semiosis. The reader, then, *translates* or *decodes* the text according to a different set of systems and the idea of the one 'correct' reading is dissolved. At the same time, Kristeva's notion of *intertextuality*, that sees all texts linked to all other texts because no text can ever be completely free of those texts that precede and surround it, is also profoundly significant for the student of translation. As Paz suggests [...] all texts are translations of translations of translations and the lines cannot be drawn to separate Reader from Translator.⁹³

The assumptions here are radically different from Eliot's and from other Victorian translators. The perceived power relationship or 'mastery' of a language system resulting from 'subversion', 'decoding', 'expansion' or 'production' seems alien to Eliot's 'rigid fidelity [...] in interpreting another man's mind'.⁹⁴ In ethical terms, it seems to replace an obligation to understand others with a theoretical solipsism. The 'rigid fidelity' in itself was however nuanced by considerations dealt with more fully in Chapter 1, those of sensitivity to intention, style, and impact.

European Philosophy and its English Reception

In *The German Idea*, Rosemary Ashton charts the start of the British engagement with German philosophy in the nineteenth century, arguing that:

[...], it was Germany, with its pioneering methods in philosophy, history and aesthetics, which contributed most to English thinking in the later nineteenth century.⁹⁵

Ashton identifies Coleridge, Carlyle, Eliot and G H Lewes as the most influential thinkers who 'knew that in philosophy, aesthetics, and the higher criticism of the Bible, Germany had produced more original and important writers than any other country', and introduced those writers to the British public. In an 1865 essay, Eliot wrote:

⁹³ Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (London: Methuen, 1980), p.79.

⁹⁴ GE TT, p.342.

⁹⁵ Ashton, p.2.

Accordingly no one in this day really studies any subject without having recourse to German books, [...]; and the footnotes of every good French or English book that appears, whether in scholarship, history, or natural science, are filled with references to German authors.⁹⁶

Ashton assigns to Coleridge's influence the initial diffusion of German metaphysical and romantic ideas – and the first tentative engagement with the ideas of Spinoza – , and to Carlyle's influence the increasing significance of Goethe as both philosopher and novelist within English speaking cultures. Discussion of Kant's ideas was initiated by Coleridge and De Quincey in the 1820s,⁹⁷ with English translations of *The Critique of Pure Reason* appearing from 1838 onwards.⁹⁸ (Eliot reviewed J M D Meiklejohn's version in her essay on 'Translations and Translators' in 1855.) Among Eliot's acquaintance, John Sibree had translated Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* in 1849,⁹⁹ Lewes had written an article about Hegel's *Aesthetik* in 1841/2, but Ashton ascribes the major introduction of Hegelian thinking into Britain from the 1850s onwards to English Hegelians such as Jowett and T H Green.¹⁰⁰ Translation of the works of German Higher Criticism (Strauss and Feuerbach) was initiated by Eliot, and although unpublished, her translation of Spinoza's *Ethics* was the earliest to be completed.¹⁰¹

The audience for European philosophy and historicist criticism and its demand for translations is associated by Knoepfmacher with Unitarian and Deist thought. He argues that Charles Hennell's *Inquiry concerning the Origins of Christianity* reflected the views of 'a small Unitarian minority still leaning toward the deism of the eighteenth century',¹⁰² and such groups were in touch with radical European biblical scholars. In 1841, Eliot entered such a scholarly Unitarian circle with her move to Coventry and her friendship with the Bray and Hennell families. The Brays and the Hennells had invited her to work on the translation of Strauss, and continued, principally through Sara Hennell, to provide her with support during her work on Feuerbach, a translation initially commissioned by John Chapman, editor of the *Westminster Review*. But outside such like-minded circles, Eliot's 1846 translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus* and her 1854 translation of Feuerbach's analysis of the psychological

⁹⁶ George Eliot, 'A Word for the Germans' in *Selected Critical Writings*, ed. by Rosemary Ashton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp.335, 336.

⁹⁷ Ashton, p.29 et seq.

⁹⁸ Example in Liverpool University Library Special Collections (London: Pickering, 1838).

⁹⁹ Redinger, p.114.

¹⁰⁰ Ashton, p.211 and p.105.

¹⁰¹ The first published translations were in 1883, by R H M Elwes and William Hale White.

¹⁰² Knoepfmacher, p.45.

function of religion, *The Essence of Christianity*, proved controversial. Despite the work of writers such as Coleridge and Carlyle in transmitting German ideas, Hilary Fraser argues that it was Eliot's translation of Strauss, perhaps because of its iconoclasm, which initiated a much wider knowledge of German philosophy and biblical historical criticism within England. She concludes, in line with contemporary accepted critical orthodoxy, that it had 'a devastating effect on Victorian faith'.¹⁰³ Lord Shaftesbury, the philanthropist, demonstrated what was probably the typical reaction of the religiously conservative, when he called Eliot's translation of Strauss "the most pestilential book ever vomited out of the jaws of hell."¹⁰⁴ Charles Kingsley called her the 'the infidel *esprit fort*'¹⁰⁵ [strong spirit]. Her reputation as translator of such texts, combined with her decision to become Lewes' partner outside marriage, may have been among the pragmatic reasons for Marian Evans' transformation into the new persona of 'George Eliot' when she commenced her career as a novelist.

Eliot's interest in Spinoza was equally radical. Conventional seventeenth and eighteenth century views of Spinoza had seen him as a dangerous heretic, a view disseminated through Bayle's influential Dictionary (1697), which had characterised Spinoza as a 'perverse atheist', and criticised his doctrines of substance and determinism.¹⁰⁶ The limited recognition and dissemination of Spinoza's ideas in England during the century which followed the appearance of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670) and the *Ethics* (1677) stemmed mainly from his role as a natural philosopher and scientist, known to his immediate English contemporaries in the Royal Society.¹⁰⁷ Apart from Deist and subsequently Unitarian groups of thinkers, Valerie Dodd identifies Coleridge, through the *Biographia Literaria* of 1817, and Hallam, through *An Introduction to the Literature of Europe* of 1837-39,¹⁰⁸ as important gateways to Spinoza's ideas. Lewes had heard lectures on Spinoza's ideas in 1836, which had prompted him to begin his own uncompleted translation of the *Ethics*. His awareness that Spinoza's ideas were 'at this time hardly known in England'¹⁰⁹ led to an essay for the *Westminster Review* in 1843. This argued that Spinoza had anticipated German Higher

¹⁰³ Hilary Fraser, *Beauty and Belief: Aesthetics and Religion in Victorian Literatures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) p.165.

¹⁰⁴ Miranda Seymour, Chapter 5, *Noble Endeavours: The life of two countries, England and Germany, in many stories* (Simon & Schuster, 2013), p.1829. <https://books.google.co.uk/books> [accessed 16 June 2017].

¹⁰⁵ Knoepfelmacher, p.28, quoting Margaret Thorp Charles Kingsley (Princeton, 1933), p.93.

¹⁰⁶ Genevieve Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics* (London: Routledge Philosophy Guidebooks, 1996), pp.12, 13.

¹⁰⁷ R J Delahunty, *Spinoza: The Arguments of the Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.x. Proquest Ebook Central.

¹⁰⁸ Dodd, p.250.

¹⁰⁹ Rosemary Ashton, *G H Lewes: An Unconventional Victorian* (London: Pimlico, 2000), p.16.

Criticism in the *Tractatus*, with its emphasis on treating the Bible as a historical document, the product of a particular time and culture. The essay evaluated the romantic, predominantly German, enthusiasm for Spinoza's ideas, challenging earlier interpretations of Spinoza's ideas as reductively atheistic. His championship of Spinoza lasted throughout his life, with a second essay appearing in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1866.¹¹⁰

The importance of German thought is also emphasised by Ward. In her introduction to *Amiel's Journal* (1884), she quotes the views of a French critic, Darmstetter:

To study philology, mythology, history, without reading German [...] is to condemn one's self to remain in every department twenty years behind the progress of science.¹¹¹

The cross-fertilization of French and German ideas is echoed by another French critic, Quinet, quoted by Ward. He perceived the pre-eminence of German culture, ideas and writing to French intellectuals, a pre-eminence which, in echoes of the roles of classical texts in developing style, led to French 'imitation' as well as translation:

German systems, German hypotheses, beliefs, and poetry, all were eagerly welcomed [...]. Under the Restoration, France continued to study German philosophy and poetry with profound veneration and submission. We imitated, translated, compiled, and then again we compiled, translated, imitated.¹¹²

The Swiss philosopher, Frédéric Amiel, whose *Journal Intime* (1883) she translated, had studied in Germany, and Ward attributes aspects of his more 'technical philosophical language' in his *Journal* to his German training.¹¹³ His book embraces critiques of a wide range of late eighteenth century and contemporary European writers, Rousseau, Châteaubriand, Joubert, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Schopenhauer amongst others, and therefore provides an assessment of Europe's philosophic and literary culture, as well as providing a confessional self-portrait of a man painfully divesting himself of traditional forms of religious faith. Her translation of Amiel was, she claimed, initially prompted by Mark Pattison,¹¹⁴ Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, and a close friend of the Wards, and Ward clearly saw

¹¹⁰ Ashton, *G H Lewes*, pp. 231, 232.

¹¹¹ HFA JI, Mary Ward 'Introduction', p.xvii.

¹¹² HFA JI, Mary Ward 'Introduction', p.xvii.

¹¹³ HFA JI, 'Preface' by Mary Ward, p.v.

¹¹⁴ Sutherland, p.98.

herself, her writings and translations in alliance with Lincoln and Balliol Colleges' Liberal religious sympathies¹¹⁵, as well as deriving from the Arnold family tradition of liberal thought, in particular anti-traditionalist religious essays such as *Literature and Dogma* (1873) and *God and the Bible* (1875) by her uncle, Matthew Arnold.

The Status of Women Translators

In a letter to Sara Hennell, Eliot described another friend as 'so judicially blinded as to think translation and nothing but translation would be an easier life than that of a governess',¹¹⁶ and in a following letter exclaimed that 'there are not even the devil's wages for a translator – profit and fame'.¹¹⁷ The letters were written towards the end of her work on translating Strauss, during which she had also felt 'inclined to vow' that she would never translate again.¹¹⁸ Yet she did. The rewards which she perceived in translation were therefore such as to offset the unremitting work and the lack of financial gain.

Whether consciously or subconsciously aware of the difficulties of an entry into literary life by means of fiction, or just initially uncertain of their own ability to create and shape stories, both Eliot and Ward commenced their careers as intellectual writers through translation as well as through journalism, possibly because, as Scholl suggests, the Victorian journalistic convention of anonymity allowed women to enter on journalistic and then literary careers 'on relatively equal professional terms with the men of letters',¹¹⁹ and, as Judith Johnston emphasises, the role of print technology expanded the general opportunities for employment in journalism and publishing.¹²⁰ Scholl¹²¹ and Ermarth¹²² emphasise the more general point that educated middle class women who gained the ability to read and translate other modern European languages had access to the ideas and cultural norms expressed in that language. Such access inevitably led to evaluation, critique and counter-critique of each culture's ideas.

For both women, translation proved to be an intense and protracted experience, mediated as it was by friends and advisers such as Sara Hennell and Lewes in Eliot's case,

¹¹⁵ MW Rec, Ch.VII, p.126.

¹¹⁶ GEL.I, (April?1846), p.212.

¹¹⁷ GEL.I, (April?1846), p.215.

¹¹⁸ GEL.I, to Sara Hennell, April 1844, p.176.

¹¹⁹ Scholl, p.1

¹²⁰ Johnston, p.6.

¹²¹ Scholl, p.1.

¹²² Ermarth, p.160.

and by Edmund Scherer, Amiel's French editor, in Ward's case. Eliot's translation of Strauss took two and half years, and her translation of Feuerbach took at least five months.¹²³ Her first mention of translating Spinoza was in December 1849, and her translation of the *Ethics* was completed between November 1854 and February 1856. Ward's translation of Amiel began in September 1883 and took her until April 1885 to complete.¹²⁴

Through their translations, Eliot and Ward could use the force of more commonly recognised male intellectual authority to augment their audience's receptivity to ideas in which they themselves believed passionately. The choice of original texts in German and French reflects their own judgement, as well as that of their friends and mentors, of the significance of those texts to crucial contemporary debates. The points of view were ones to which they had already committed themselves intellectually, in Ward's case through a published response to the attack on 'unbelief' in John Wordsworth's 1881 Bampton Sermon.¹²⁵ Eliot's remark that 'with the ideas of Feuerbach I everywhere agree' sounds measured when compared with Ward's recollection that, on her first reading of it, Amiel's *Journal Intime* 'laid its spell upon [her] at once'.¹²⁶ These dynamics – often gendered in unusual and interesting ways - between translator and translated, and the way that both Eliot and Ward conceptualize this 'fidelity' is a particular point of focus.

What they were seeking, through translation and wider dissemination of their chosen works of scholarly male authority was support from the European mainstream and a broadening of the base of the argument. Scholl describes the contribution of Eliot and the other writers in her study as follows:

By translating foreign perspectives on issues [...], they significantly widened the debates and became, to an extent, the English spokesperson for these ideas.¹²⁷

The type of recognition identified by Scholl is exemplified by the fact that Eliot's translation of Feuerbach was prefaced as being by 'Marian Evans, Translator of Strauss's Life of Jesus.' (She had remained the anonymous translator of Strauss on first publication.) Eliot's role as *de facto* editor of, and contributor to, the *Westminster Review*, and Ward's journalism for *The Times* and *Macmillan's Magazine* could also ensure that the radical ideas with which they were associated and their own translations were the subjects of public debate. Margaret

¹²³ GEL.I and II, vol.I (pp.169-219) and II (pp.77-166)

¹²⁴ Sutherland, pp.98, 99.

¹²⁵ MW Rec, Ch.IX, p.169.

¹²⁶ MW Rec, Ch.XI, p.209.

¹²⁷ Scholl, p.6.

Homans' argument that Eliot's translations were a suppression of her self-expression seem to ignore both Eliot's irony and her commitment to securing increased exposure of European ideas, but the interplay of authority and ownership of ideas between a translator and the translated text is summed up by her in relation to Eliot's writing:

[...] the independence of her own words from Strauss's acquires, paradoxically, the sanction of the weight of Strauss's argument.¹²⁸

That Ward and Eliot were fortunate in choosing routes which brought them recognition as creative writers is confirmed by one of Bassnett's reflections on the ambiguous status of translation among the general public:

Who now remembers that George Eliot was a distinguished German translator and translated a number of important philosophical works, including Spinoza's *Ethics*?¹²⁹

Through their experience of a foreign culture and intense immersion in its literature, Scholl argues that writers such as Eliot became '[...] double agents, working both for and against the home culture and the foreign, speaking to both but belonging to neither.'¹³⁰ Instead of conflict, Elizabeth Ermarth emphasises the enhanced perspective of access to more than one language and culture:

To learn a second language is to discover a second system for formulating everything. The gain in perspective is powerful.¹³¹

I argue, however, that the experience of translating, and of knowledge of other European cultures, gave both Eliot and Ward the confidence to express alternative ways of thinking, which then led them to retranslate the otherness of European ideas back into the medium of English society, to see how new ways of belief in relationship might work, and what sort of community might result from them.

¹²⁸ Margaret Homans, *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth Century Women's Writing* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p.178.

¹²⁹ Susan Bassnett, Chapter 11, 'Telling Tales', *Reflections on Translation*, ed. by Susan Bassnett (Bristol; Buffalo: Multilingual Matters, 2011), p.52. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹³⁰ Scholl, p.189.

¹³¹ Ermarth, p.160.

Choosing Fiction

There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, [...]. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it.¹³²

Arnold's celebrated suggestion that the collapse of dogmatic Christianity meant that it must be to poetry that people turn for interpretation and consolation forms a significant counterpoint to the writings of both Ward and Eliot, and in this study I refer frequently to his parallel quest to find a new way of responding to the needs for interpretation and consolation. But after the active engagement of translation, and its expansion of understanding, both Eliot and Ward turned to the novel to interpret and actively create practical, possible alternatives to those endangered assumptions which seemed to have underpinned personal choice and society's interrelationships. Their novels used the realist mode to explore the alternative scenarios and perceptions of what would happen as new understandings superseded the old. Hina Nazar has analysed Eliot's move from translation to fiction as follows:

Eliot's discomfort with Strauss's method indicates why she turned to fiction to further the critique of religion begun by the Left Hegelians: fiction tempers criticism with sympathy. It helps us understand how things came to be in addition to what is wrong with them.¹³³

Valerie Dodd argues that the transition from translation of philosophy to the creation of novels acknowledges a dialogue; and that Eliot's oeuvre developed out of earlier dialogues between philosophy and art:

In turning from philosophy to the novel, which implicitly celebrated life's resistance to theory, Marian Evans tacitly acknowledged this dialogue between speculation and fiction.¹³⁴

¹³² Matthew Arnold, 'The Study of Poetry' in *Vol 9: English Literature and Irish Politics*, of *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* (10 Volumes), ed. R H Super (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1973), p.161.

¹³³ Hina Nazar, 'The Continental Eliot' in *Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture : Companion to George Eliot*, ed by Amanda Anderson and Harry Shaw (Hoboken, N J: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2013), p.421. Proquest Ebook Central

¹³⁴ Dodd, p.129.

Eliot's experimentation with and then embrace of fiction to consider and embody ideas, to transform them from theory into empirical reflection on the living of life - human experience - produces a depth and resonance of fiction which is particularly her own. Davis argues that Victorian realist writers had a 'wider moral aim of committing imagination first to realizing, and then to rescuing, the inherent value of human life upon earth',¹³⁵ and that Eliot makes her novels a final place of meaning for the small significances of human lives and choices:

[...] a moral holding ground for meanings that all too often, in a world without the traditional God, would otherwise be unjustly underused or unappreciated, denied, and lost.¹³⁶

Georg Lukács's analysis of the novel form's ironic expression of the struggle between idea and reality, and the 'profound hopelessness of the struggle but also to the still more profound hopelessness of its abandonment',¹³⁷ also identifies the novel's ironic purpose as seeing 'where God is to be found in a world abandoned by God; [...].'¹³⁸ His analysis, focusing on the struggle to find meaning and strategies to deal with the reluctance of meaning to be identified, provides a model for my examination of the fiction of Eliot and Ward.

Fiction was fraught with issues for a woman writer, as Eliot famously discussed in her essay 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists'.¹³⁹ In describing her tentative transition from critic, translator and journalist into novelist, Eliot deferred to Lewes' estimate of her potential success:

His prevalent impression was that though I could hardly write a *poor* novel, my effort would want the highest quality of fiction – dramatic presentation. He used to say, "You have wit, description and philosophy – those go a good way towards the production of a novel."¹⁴⁰

Eliot appears to have concurred with Lewes's analysis of the fundamental building blocks for a work of fiction, and the idea that philosophy, and Eliot's own abilities as a philosopher and

¹³⁵ Davis, p.359.

¹³⁶ Davis, p.391.

¹³⁷ Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. by Anna Bostock (London: The Merlin Press, 1971), p.86.

¹³⁸ Lukács, p.92.

¹³⁹ George Eliot, 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists', in *Selected Essays, Poems and other Writings*, ed. by A S Byatt and Nicholas Warren (London: Penguin Classics England, 1990), p.161.

¹⁴⁰ George Eliot, 'The making of George Eliot 1857-1859' in *The Journals of George Eliot*, ed. by Margaret Harris and Judith Johnston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p.289.

presenter of ideas, were one of the vital components. To examine ideas through the drama of human interaction was also Ward's purpose as the writer of fiction. Her *Recollections* cite the moment she decided that the impact of new ideas about religion and the ways in which they could affect people's lives could best be explored through use of the novel form:

How could one show England what was really going on in her midst? Surely the only way was through imagination; through a picture of actual life and conduct; through something as 'simple sensuous and passionate' as one could make it.¹⁴¹

The complex adjustments of idea which the Victorian realist novel could express through its cast of interacting characters became, in Eliot's and Ward's hands, the vehicles for exploring how individuals and communities should or could relate in a post-orthodox Christian world. Its capacity to explore the interplay of ideas through characters' generation and decoding of each other's languages has been identified by critics such as Bakhtin.¹⁴² At a tangent to this view of language and meaning as social and cultural transactions, Amiel described the psychological and emotional constraints resulting from the mismatch between language and experience:

In all the chief matters of life we are alone, and our true history is scarcely ever deciphered by others. The chief part of the drama is a monologue, or rather an intimate debate between God, our conscience and ourselves. Tears, griefs, depressions, disappointments, irritations, good and evil thoughts, decisions, uncertainties, deliberations, - all these belong to our secret, and are almost all incommunicable and intransmissible, even when we try to speak of them, and even when we write them down. What is most precious in us never shows itself, never finds an issue even in the closest intimacy. Only a part of it reaches our consciousness, it scarcely enters into action except in prayer, and is perhaps only perceived by God, for our past rapidly becomes strange to us.¹⁴³

Amiel's insistence on the limited capacity of our individual language to translate ourselves to ourselves both at a conscious and subconscious level, or to others at a conscious level, and on the solitary significance of our internal monologue in suggesting our deepest and most insistent thoughts illuminates the difficulties of dramatising, through the medium of

¹⁴¹ MW Rec, Ch.IX, p.168.

¹⁴² Mikhail M Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', *Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p.298. ACLS Humanities E-books.

¹⁴³ HFA JI, entry for 27 October, 1856, p.58.

language, the intellectual and spiritual crises which were the subjects of both of the women novelists of my study. Their use of realism's free indirect speech, the method of making a character's conscious and sub-conscious internal monologue or dialogue apparent, turning characters 'inside out',¹⁴⁴ is a mirror image of Feuerbach's outside-in insistence on translating religion's objectifications and projections back into the human psyche. Moreover, their novels also describe the inadequacy of language to translate complex emotion and truths which lie beyond the expression of language, and their inevitable replacement by signs and symbols. The heteroglossia of contesting translations of reality, and the impossibility of translation except through the slipperiness of non-verbal signification are both incorporated into Eliot's and Ward's novels, even as they attempt to translate into novelistic practice the implications of their European philosophers' ideas.

Summary

The scrupulous search for and release of meaning from their translations reverberates through the ideas and language used by the narrators and the characters of both Eliot's and Ward's novels, not just in the immediate aftermath of translation, but as I will show, even in novels written fifteen to twenty years later. Eliot's novels, as I will demonstrate, used ideas derived from her translations in order to explore the difficulties of learning to translate each other's individual languages, of finding the sacred in human relationships, and of understanding the human place in the world. Ward's novels use her experiences and materials as a translator to probe the experience of doubt, the scope of individual conscience, and the gaps or gulfs which lie between the languages of individuals, and even between emotion and its recognition and understanding.

In the first chapter, I contextualize Ward's and Eliot's theories of translation in relation to ideas about translation in Victorian culture in general. The chapter traces, through letters and autobiography, the emotional pendulum of the task of translation, often from initial enthusiasm to more sober assessment and introspection. This chapter aims to provide a counterpoint to Scholl's influential conceptualisation of the dynamics of the translation process, and instead examines the Victorian translator/translated relationship through the critical lens of a search for fidelity, rather than 'mastery'.

¹⁴⁴ Davis, p.365.

In Chapter 2, I move to examine specific instances of translating practice. This chapter considers Eliot's translation of Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*. While critical attention has mostly focused on the impact of Feuerbach's ideas on Eliot's own and on those explored in her novels, particularly the concept of the construction of self through dialogic interaction, I also explore Feuerbach's own use of translation as a metaphor for his project, and the influence of this conceptualization on Eliot's narration. In Chapter 3, I consider Eliot's translation of Spinoza's *Ethics*, which has received far less critical attention than her other translations. I argue here that Spinoza's ideas are more fully integrated into Eliot's fiction than has traditionally been thought. In Chapter 4, I move to Ward, and consider her translation of Amiel's *Journal Intime* in relation to her most famous novel, *Robert Elsmere*. I trace both how Amiel's sense of the multiplicity of his identities and his analyses of other philosophers form major contributory strands in Ward's delineation of the emotional experience and consequences of losing faith. In Chapter 5, I consider not only the influence of Amiel on later novels dealing with themes of faith and doubt, particularly *Helbeck of Bannisdale* and *Eleanor*, but also how those novels address translation as a metaphor for finding understanding in the clash between differing languages of faith and culture. Ward's role as translator and mediator between her father's Catholicism and the Arnold family's liberal convictions is examined with reference to hitherto unpublished letters sent to her father during the final editing of *Helbeck of Bannisdale*. In relation to *Eleanor*, Amiel's continuing influence on plot, character and language is explored alongside the interwoven influence of another translation project, Joubert's *Pensées*, for which Ward collaborated with Katharine Lyttelton, and wrote the introduction. The importance of her continuing attempt to translate Catholicism's symbolic rituals into a faith for modernity is considered with reference to her novel *Eleanor*.

Chapter 1

Interpreting Another Man's Mind

I do not think it was kind to Strauss (I knew he was handsome) to tell him that a *young lady* was translating his book. I am sure he must have some twinges of alarm to think he was dependent on that most contemptible specimen of the human being for his English reputation.

George Eliot to Cara Bray, June 1844¹

The playful, self-protective ironies of Eliot's response to her friend, Caroline (Cara) Bray, written about six months after she had started work on translating David Strauss's *Leben Jesu*, suggest how keenly these two women must have perceived the radical nature of their ambitions for Eliot's translation. Eliot's ironic reduction of the relationship between eminent theological scholar and intellectually ambitious young translator to something which fuses popular romantic imagination with popular misogynistic prejudice ('I do not think it was kind to Strauss (I knew he was handsome) to tell him that a *young lady* was translating his book') disguised her own much more complex relationship with the original text and her own task. Her initial enthusiasm for work which could make a significant contribution to religious and philosophic debate became diluted by growing reservations; about its potential impact on a wider public ('Glad I am that someone can enjoy Strauss! The million certainly will not, and I have ceased to sit down with him with any relish'²), about Strauss's approach ('leathery Strauss'³), and, perhaps more disconcertingly, about aspects of the application of his theory to specific instances:

[...] in many cases I think him wrong, as every man must be in working out into detail an idea which has general truth, but is only one element in a perfect theory, not a perfect theory in itself.⁴

In the letter to Cara of June 1844, which both mocks and recognises the intensity of the translator's relationship with her source and also mocks but resents the widespread assumptions about women's abilities, Eliot's representation of a relationship between male

¹ GEL.I, 18 June 1844, p.177.

² GEL.I, to Sara Hennell, 6 April 1845, p.185.

³ GEL.I, to Sara Hennell, August? 1845, p.197.

⁴ GEL.I, to Sara Hennell, ? 1845, p.203.

and female intellectuals implicitly suggests an expectation that an intellectually or stylistically demanding work should find a worthy translator. This chapter will look at what theories the two translator novelists that are the subject of this thesis held about their work, and what their experience of the process of translation proved to be. In an 1855 essay on *Translations and Translators* for *The Leader Magazine*, Eliot in particular was forthcoming in her condemnation of:

[....] all young ladies and some middle-aged gentlemen who consider a very imperfect acquaintance with their own language, and an anticipatory acquaintance with the foreign language, quite a sufficient equipment for the office of translator.⁵

By the time she wrote the article, she had completed translations of Strauss's *Leben Jesu* and of Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentums*, and was in the act of translating Spinoza's *Ethics*. Modern theorists, as already discussed, have debated the relationship between a translator and his or her translated text, dissecting the powers of hermeneutic analysis, emotional identification and linguistic creativity involved. Scholl in particular has emphasised the translator's power to 'challenge' and 'critique' the source author:

As mediators between cultures, and between authors and a distanced readership, translators manipulate and direct their readers through their dialogue with the original text [...] often challenging and critiquing the ideas presented.⁶

Scholl's is an extreme statement of the power of the translator to determine how far a target audience should be exposed to a faithful translation. None of Eliot's decisions provide evidence of 'challenge and critique', although they do show a sensitivity to the cultural expectations of an English readership. She considered adopting a more editorial role by omitting some sections of Feuerbach's appendices as too abstract for an English audience, but ultimately retained them.⁷ Susan Hill demonstrates that Eliot omitted a specific sentence about adultery ('Even a glance toward another is already adultery'⁸) from her translation of Feuerbach, hypothesising that the omission might have been editorial, and based on a

⁵ GE TT, p.339.

⁶ Lesa Scholl, *Translation, Authorship and the Victorian Professional Woman*, p.3.

⁷ GEL.II, to Sara Hennell, 7 May 1854, pp.153, 154.

⁸ Susan E Hill, 'Translating Feuerbach, constructing Morality: The Theological and Literary Significance of Translation for George Eliot' in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 10/1/1997, Vol. 65, Issue 3, p. 635-653; <<http://www.jstor.org.liverpool.idm.oclc.org/stable/1465655>> [accessed 11 June 2017] p.642.

judgement that Feuerbach was here overstating a case, or that it reflected a personal caution about how it related to her own and Lewes's predicament. (They left together for Belgium the month after the publication of *The Essence of Christianity*.) The reason for such a small act of omission in meeting the demands of absolute fidelity to the author remains hypothetical. In relation to Strauss, he had endorsed her translation of *Leben Jesu* as 'et accurata et perspicua' in his Preface.⁹ The only issues which Ward raised in connection with Amiel related to possible obscurities - the 'technical philosophic language', influenced by German philosophic terms¹⁰ - of some of *Amiel's Journal*, and she chose to render such passages in a more literary than a scientific, philosophic language. She justified her decision as reflecting what Amiel had himself done in those passages which had been published in his lifetime.¹¹ None of these temperings of absolute fidelity amount to challenging the original author, although they may seem to attach considerable significance to the translator's judgements of the target readership.

Where the roles of translator and editor become fused 'manipulation' and 'direction' become more overt. Eliot considered that such a role of double translation - of language and of meaning - might be necessary to make Spinoza's *Ethics* more accessible to an English-speaking audience:

After one has rendered his Latin faithfully into English, one feels that there is another yet more difficult process of translation for the reader to effect, and that the only mode of making Spinoza accessible to a larger number is to study his books, then shut them, and give an analysis.¹²

Such an approach alters the relationship between translator and translated, where the translator-editor has the power to exclude and interpret. Harriet Martineau's condensation of Auguste Comte's *Philosophe Positive* provides an extreme example of a transference of power between originator and translator. Martineau reduced Comte's six volume work to about one quarter of its original length, publishing it in 1853 as *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte (freely translated and condensed by Harriet Martineau)*. Comte had accepted the advantages of Martineau's shorter, more accessible version over his own before its

⁹ David Strauss, 'Preface', *Life of Jesus*, trans. George Eliot, 3 vols (London: Chapman Brothers, 1846), I, p.vi.

¹⁰ HFA JI, 'Preface' by Mary Ward, p.v.

¹¹ HFA JI, 'Preface' by Mary Ward, p.vi.

¹² GEL.I, to Mr and Mrs Charles Bray, 4 December 1849, p.321.

publication, and recommended it to his students as the best introduction to his ideas. Frederic Harrison, the editor of the 1895 edition of Martineau's translation, observed that:

It is a singular fact in literary history and a striking testimony to the merit of Miss Martineau that a work of a French philosopher should be studied in France in a French retranslation from his English translator - and that at his own formal desire.¹³

The process of condensation clearly placed Martineau in a more powerful relationship with the emerging text than would have been possible with a more rigidly faithful translation. Her Preface made it clear that, as well as condensing his ideas, she had omitted sections in the 'Book on Physics' which failed to reflect scientific advances and had removed 'recapitulations' and 'redundancies' in Comte's writing arising out of its evolution from lectures.¹⁴ In business terms, the power of patronage was hers, as she offered Comte a proportion of the proceeds of the sales of the translation.

Martineau's bold editing of Comte to ensure the *Cours* was accessible and up-to-date scientifically is an extreme example of a confident mid-Victorian departure from faithfulness. Another departure, Robert Willis's translation of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, was criticised both as a poor translation and as unfaithful to the source author. Matthew Arnold's review condemned Willis for:

[...] putting himself a great deal too forward by notes and observations, and of even sacrificing his author's opinions to his own. [...] his English editor has thought fit, [...], to "condense and somewhat modify" – *ie.*, totally to alter, - because they do not agree with his own notions [...]. What Spinoza's reader wants to know is what Spinoza thought of the English revolution, not what his editor thinks.¹⁵

Most others, including Eliot and Ward, devoted themselves to the difficult problem of achieving and defining a 'faithful adherence', rather than a subversion of the original text.

¹³ Frederic Harrison, 'Introduction', *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte (freely translated and condensed by Harriet Martineau)*, 3 vols, (Kitchener, Ont: Batoche Books, 1999). I, p.13. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁴ Harriet Martineau, 'Preface' to *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte (freely translated and condensed by Harriet Martineau)*, I, pp.19, 23.

¹⁵ Matthew Arnold, 'Tractatus Theologico-Politicus', in *Essays in Criticism, First Series* in *Vol 3: Lectures and Essays in Criticism*, in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* (10 volumes), ed. by R H Super (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1962), pp.61, 62.

Eliot's Theorisation of Translation

Eliot's 1855 essay on *Translations and Translators* was written after publication of her translations of Strauss and Feuerbach, and during her translation of Spinoza's *Ethics*. In it, she distinguishes between different types of translation and their importance:

[...] very modest qualifications will suffice to [...] translate a book of ordinary travels, or a slight novel, while a work of reasoning or science can be adequately rendered only by means of what is at present exceptional faculty and exceptional knowledge.¹⁶

Excluding the 'modest' and 'slight' books, utilitarian or trivial, dismissed by Eliot, there remains an ambivalent area, where relative values are debated and revised, separating the intrinsic nature of a source text, its originality of ideas and expression, its particular wealth of cultural cross-reference or poetic voice, from the intellectual analysis and stylistic sophistication which enable the source's particular thoughts and particular stylistic expression to be reproduced convincingly within the cultural assumptions and traditions of another language. Addressing these problems and trying to illuminate the relationship of mutual interdependence between translator and translated, Eliot herself turned to the language of metaphor, drawing on a range of analogous activities and relationships.

The imagery of mastery is among a number of metaphors used in discussing the act of translation, but only in relation to eliciting the meaning of the text, and demonstrating expertise in reproducing that meaning. But her usage does not suggest Scholl's concept of a contest for reassignment of authority: nor does initial subservience appear to be part of Eliot's conceptualisation of the relationship between translator and translated. Her essay does not underestimate the challenges of translation both in rendering complex ideas and in conveying stylistic or poetic impact, nor the scale of the achievement if a translator was successful. She commends John Miller Dow Meiklejohn's 1855 translation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, which she sees as 'the very hardest nut - [...] - for a translator to crack so as to lay open the entire uninjured kernel of meaning',¹⁷ praising it in terms of 'mastery': 'Mr Meiklejohn's translation - [...] - indicates a real mastery of his author'.¹⁸ But the word

¹⁶ GE TT, pp.339, 340.

¹⁷ GE TT, p.340.

¹⁸ GE TT, p.340.

mastery here is used to indicate the authority and competence with which Meiklejohn approached a complex task rather than indicating any hierarchical ranking. The metaphor of a 'kernel of meaning', concealed and protected by the external shell of language, suggests the potential for meaning and form, for both hermeneutic and linguistic elements to be evaluated independently of each other. In developing the metaphor, Eliot is able to suggest the potential for disaster which must be negotiated and the effort and care involved in the act of translation as revelation. The subsequent metaphor of 'mastery' exposes the dynamic challenges of the task of translation, challenges which - Eliot suggests - increase with the complexities of the subject matter to be translated. The metaphor also invokes the latent power waiting to be released by any effective transference of the ideas of one culture into another's, and the exchange of authority and empowerment to the translator where their work is successful.

Her essay contains a number of other metaphors for translation in relation to poetry, all based in other art forms and all emphasising the qualities of skill and equivalence of impact, a requirement which Arnold was also to emphasise in his criticism of translations of poetry. A good translation, Eliot proposes, should be like 'the same music played on another but as good an instrument'¹⁹ rather than a 'feeble echo', and its 'faithful adherence to the original' should be 'just as it is to examine a fine engraving of a favourite picture'.²⁰ The combination of the two metaphors suggests not only the way in which the same subject matter can be represented through different crafts, but also the translator's need to analyse and define the essence of form and meaning ('a fine engraving'), and to recreate the sensuous effect of the original ('same music [...] on [...] as good an instrument'). The interplay between the different art forms suggests the intellectual skill and creativity which are essential to good translation. The similes used by Eliot also suggest the sacrifices or modifications which may have to be made to the sensuous impact of an art work in order to prioritise the transference of meaning from one language to another. An engraving prioritises line, but loses depth and colour. An alternative instrument prioritises musical line but inevitably alters its tone and expressiveness.

Eliot's essay closes with a suggested hierarchy of recognition, which prioritises originality and artistry:

¹⁹ GE TT, p.341.

²⁰ GE TT, p.341.

Though a good translator is infinitely below the man who produces *good* original works, he is infinitely above the man who produces *feeble* original works. We had meant to say something of the moral qualities especially demanded in the translator – the patience, the rigid fidelity, and the sense of responsibility in interpreting another man’s mind. But we have gossiped on this subject long enough.²¹

For her, originating thought and originating writing has greater intrinsic artistic or intellectual value than the complex cultural and intellectual operation involved in transferring that thought effectively into a different language, although both great writing and its translation are considered ‘infinitely above’ ‘feeble’ original work.

Scholl argues in relation to ‘Translations and Translators’ that, because the essay’s hierarchy challenges any perceptions of the inferiority of good translation, it also implicitly challenges ‘the apparent inferiority of women’,²² and because Eliot’s essay advocates the superiority of German translation of English works to English translations of German works, she suggests that Eliot may be using this ‘as metaphorical of the nations’ attitudes towards women and the roles available to them’.²³ In fact, the essay is highly critical of women’s translations. ‘All young ladies’, and Miss Burt’s translation of Goethe’s *Zueignung* in particular, receive Eliot’s dismissive criticism of their efforts. German translations she notes are ‘more often undertaken by men of genius’,²⁴ mentioning Schlegel’s and Tieck’s translations of Shakespeare, which she still faults for their occasional ‘gross inaccuracies’,²⁵ and weakening of the ‘concreteness’ of Shakespeare’s language.²⁶ What she does argue is that when even writers ‘of genius’, such as Schlegel and Tieck, make mistakes with connotation and denotation, it:

[...] might well make less accomplished persons more backward in undertaking the translation of great poems, and by showing the difficulty of the translator’s task, might make it an object of ambition to real ability.²⁷

It is difficult to see how Scholl’s interpretation can be made to apply to this essay, which clearly argues that excellence in understanding, faithful adherence to the original, and

²¹ GE TT, p.342.

²² Scholl, p.94.

²³ Scholl, p.94.

²⁴ GE TT, p.341.

²⁵ GE TT, p.342.

²⁶ John Walter Cross, *George Eliot’s Life as related in her Letters and Journals*, p.191.

²⁷ GE TT, p.342.

skill in creating poetical equivalents are the high goals and infrequent achievements of translation, and that this applies whether the translation is by a woman, a man or a German genius.

The essay assumes an assertive and confident voice delivering what seem to be male discriminations and judgement, but the final sentence of the quoted extract ('we have gossiped on this subject long enough') is one of Eliot's playful, unsettling intrusions into the thoughts of this apparently male voice by a mocking female voice. The word 'gossip' immediately subverts earlier pretensions to serious analysis of the translator's role, and at the same time satirises the prejudices of readers who might be surprised to see translation theory from a woman writer. The multiple ambiguities of this voice of female irony have a subversive effect on the preceding analysis of the products of male ('the man's') endeavour, which emphasised the primary importance of moral, rather than intellectual, qualities in a good translator. The language of 'faithful adherence' and of 'patience', 'rigid fidelity', and 'responsibility' suggests religious virtues (patience, diligence and humility) and a correspondence in value and approach between interpreting 'another man's mind' and rigorous, 'rigid fidelity'. Not that Eliot expected that there could be definitive translations. The problems of fidelity in biblical translation inform Eliot's attitudes to translation in the essay. At its beginning, she quotes, with some irony about the lessons to be inferred, the legend of the seventy translators of the Old Testament into Greek who, despite working separately, apparently all produced identical translations. However, the quasi-religious obligations to the relationship involved in translation suggest the significance with which Eliot later invested the humanist, Feuerbachian lessons about the importance of 'interpreting another man's mind' for the characters in her novels. She may be ironic and self-aware in talking about the task of translation, but this is always balanced against her clear intention to attach to translation a sense of the significance and seriousness of approach, the 'rigid fidelity' and responsibility originally derived from biblical models which, even if she did not necessarily trust the stories or the outcome, stressed the transcendental importance of the task.

In 1856, Eliot wrote again about the difficulties of transferring meaning from one language and culture to another in her essay, 'The Natural History of German Life'. She argued that it was its idiosyncrasies and irrationalities which gave each language its richness, its allusiveness and complex resonances, and which also constituted the greatest difficulties for translation to capture and transfer from one culture to another:

[...] the great sections of the civilized world are only approximately intelligible to each other, and even that, only at the cost of long study; one word stands for many things, and many words for one thing; the subtle shades of meaning, and still subtler echoes of association, make language an instrument which scarcely anything short of genius can wield with definiteness and certainty. Suppose, [...] that the effort [...] to construct a universal language on a rational basis has at length succeeded, [...] which effects the purpose of communication as perfectly and rapidly as algebraic signs. Your language [...] will never express *life*, which is a great deal more than science. With the anomalies and inconveniences of historical language, you will have parted with its music and its passion, with its vital qualities as an expression of individual character, with its subtle capabilities of wit, with everything that gives it power over the imagination; [...].²⁸

Eliot's sense of the complex transaction in meaning and value represented by translation, set out in these essays, was also explored in later letters to Charles Ritter, who had translated selections of her work into French. In 1872 she wrote of her sense that a translation could never convey the totality of suggested meaning and emotional significance adhering to any group of words, wherever they were used 'with any closeness of intention'.

One sees [...], that you must be keenly aware of the incommunicableness, even by the best translation, of the subtleties which cling to the native phrases of an author – at least when that author writes with any closeness of intention.²⁹

In 1875, she again wrote to Ritter:

[...] the evident care with which the meaning is rendered has been not seldom repaid by a felicity. [...]. I understand your discontent with your own rendering. No one language is completely furnished with verbal and idiomatic equivalents for another, and it is easier to produce something better than the original than what is everywhere exactly equivalent to it.³⁰

Eliot's puzzling comment that 'it is easier to produce something better than the original' may reflect courtesy, diffidence, or a distillation of her feelings about the difficulties of finding words in one language which transfer the ideas and associations of another. But the letters clearly suggest the subtle power interplay between author and translator. Eliot is always courteous, but her tentative circumlocutions of judgement ('not seldom repaid by a felicity')

²⁸ George Eliot, 'The Natural History of German Life' in *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, ed. A S Byatt and Nicholas Warren (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), p.128.

²⁹ GEL.V, to Charles Ritter, 3 July 1872, p.287.

³⁰ GEL.VI, to Charles Ritter, 3 January 1875, p.109.

also suggest that his translations had not tempted her to revise her 1855 essay's judgement of relative values and that the work of translation was 'infinitely below [...] good original work.'

Matthew Arnold's Translation Theory

In an 1861 essay on 'Translating Homer', Matthew Arnold, writer, critic, translator and translation theorist considered themes of intellectual control and artistic creativity, and his conclusions are broadly similar to Eliot's. He considered that the aims of translation were both faithfulness and 'to reproduce [...] the effect'³¹ of the work being translated, thus suggesting participation in a parallel re-creative act to that of the original. It demands not only that a writer understands as fully as possible the variety of impacts of a complex work of art, but also that he or she has the ability to deliver those impacts. However, in relation to Homer, Arnold argued that the only adequate judges of a translation's faithfulness to the effect of the original were scholars of classical Greek. He used the essay to criticise some translations of Homer, particularly Francis Newman's 1856 translation of the *Iliad*, because it failed to transfer Homer's essence, his original 'rapidity of style', directness of expression, and 'nobility' of thought.³² What evolved into the Arnold and Newman debate reveals just how complex and ambivalent the arguments for fidelity in translation could become – 'in what faithfulness consists',³³ in Arnold's words. Both combatants recognised that a translation should be faithful. The contrast between them over the politics of translation resolves itself into how far a sense of its foreign culture should be embodied in or should inform a translation. Newman chose a popular metre and an obscure vocabulary to express his priority to:

retain every peculiarity of the original [...]. So also the English translator should desire the reader always to remember that his work is an imitation [...].³⁴

Arnold advocated hexameters and a simple vocabulary. Although neither suggested what Venuti terms the English 'regime of fluent domestication',³⁵ Arnold's essay has become a

³¹ Matthew Arnold, 'On Translating Homer', in *On the Classical Tradition*, in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, (10 Volumes), ed. by R H Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), p.98.

³² Arnold, p.102.

³³ Arnold, p.98.

³⁴ Francis W Newman, 'Preface' to *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. Francis Newman (Cambridge [eng]: Proquest LLC, 1999), pp.xvi, xvii. Literature Online.

focus for criticism of his views as elitist, because of his argument that the arbiters of a successful translation had to be relevantly skilled academics.³⁶

Arnold recognised, as Eliot did, an intrinsic superiority in any original creative act, while also arguing that a translator must provide an equivalent power of intellectual understanding and range of language with which to translate it. In contrast with Eliot's essay's metaphors of artistic and sensuous transformation, from painting to etching, from one musical instrument to another, Arnold's essay uses a more startling image to convey the mystery and opacity of the transformation and coalescence which has to be made between one language and culture and another. He uses - perhaps mischievously - a quotation from Coleridge:

Coleridge says, in his strange language, speaking of the union of the human soul with the divine essence, that this takes place

Whene'er the mist, which stands 'twixt God and thee,
Defecates to a pure transparency;

and so, too, it may be said of that union of the translator with his original, which alone can produce a good translation, that it takes place when the mist which stands between them – the mist of alien modes of thinking, speaking, and feeling on the translator's part – 'defecates to a pure transparency', and disappears.³⁷

Arnold seems to anticipate some modern theorists in suggesting that the interchange between source author and translator must reflect 'denotation' and 'connotation', that it involves contextual knowledge and wider cultural awareness. He goes further than Grossman's claim that translators must achieve 'a kind of satisfying harmony'³⁸ and demands a quasi-religious and mystical 'union [...] with the original'. Equally his adaptation of Coleridge's metaphor of a meeting in the 'mist' suggests the impossibility of rigidity about transference of literal meaning and prescriptiveness about method. By implication, the analogy between the source text and the divine essence implies a clear hierarchy of value.

³⁵ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p.99. EBA, Taylor & Francis.

³⁶ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, p.112, and Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism from The Spectator to Post Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984), p.64, cited by Venuti.

³⁷ Arnold, 'On translating Homer', quoting Coleridge's 'Reason', in *On the Classical Tradition*, p.103.

³⁸ Edith Grossman, *Why Translation Matters*, pp.82, 83.

Shifting Values of Text and Translation

Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere³⁹ argue that a diametrically opposed intellectual trend in attitudes to translation was initiated during the Victorian era. Rather than subsuming a quasi-religious reverence into translation of the works of ‘another man’s mind’ during the nineteenth century, they argue that there was a gradual withdrawal of literal significance from interpretations of the Bible, and its replacement by a metaphorical or poetic significance, a transition in understanding for which, ironically, Eliot’s translation of Strauss and Arnold’s essays, influenced by writers such as Renan and Strauss, were catalysts. Similarly, Hilary Fraser argues that Eliot’s translation of Strauss and Arnold’s subsequent arguments in *Literature and Dogma* (1873) saw the substitution of ‘dynamic work of poetry and metaphorical description’ in place of an ‘unalterable sacred text’.⁴⁰

Certainly Eliot’s attitudes to the value of experience of reading a translation relative to that of reading an original text were ambiguous and shifting. Displaying a somewhat pessimistic attitude to the possibilities of translation capturing nuances of meaning, insight and cultural cross-reference, she is recorded as advising people that in order to be able to read the most important texts of another language, it was worthwhile to learn that language. William Hale White (Mark Rutherford) described her viewpoint when writing about her in 1885:

[....] she really was one of the most sceptical, unusual creatures I ever knew. [....] she told me that it was worthwhile to undertake all the labour of learning French if it resulted in nothing more than reading one book – Rousseau’s *Confessions*.⁴¹

Judith Johnston draws attention to similar views expressed by Jane Sinnett, Eliot’s predecessor at *The Westminster Review*. Sinnett argued that complex works by ‘distinguished writers’ needed to be read in their original language. She compared this process of acculturation to a ‘gradual approach to a distant country’, and contrasted it with reading a

³⁹ Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation*, (Multilingual Matters, 1998), p.3. Google ebook

⁴⁰ Hilary Fraser, *Beauty and Belief: Aesthetics and Religion in Victorian Literature*, p.165.

⁴¹ William Hale White, *Athenæum*, (3031), 28 November 1885, <https://search-proquest-com.liverpool.idm.oclc.org/docview/8757890?accountid=12117> p.702. [accessed 11 June 2017]

translation where ‘we are, as it were, dropped by a balloon into the strange city, and walk about puzzled and bewildered as in a dream’.⁴²

Scholl’s identification of the arc a translator navigates from initial subservience to critique, challenge and final independence, and Bassnett and Lefevere’s arguments about the replacement of literal faithfulness by metaphorical or poetic significance has to be assessed against the nuances of the language of Victorian translators themselves. Recognising the supremacy of origination, as well as emphasising the skill and creative capacity any translator needs to transmit the meaning and impact of a work into their own language, they emphasise the significance of fidelity to the ideas and expression of another. Eliot’s attitude to translation and to the identification with a source text required for any effective translation can be deduced from the impact which her translations had on her novels, and the continued dialogue with the ideas of Feuerbach and Spinoza which the novels represent. It is in her novels that exploration, critique and challenge take place. The process of translation itself becomes one of the motifs of her final novel, *Daniel Deronda*, as translation moves towards transformation and transmutation. One of its images considers how the intensely felt and comprehended existence of other people, such as that experienced by a translator, ‘transmutes’ each individual:

“But *was* it beautiful for Bouddha to let the tiger eat him?” said Amy. [...] Deronda [...] defended the myth. “It is like a passionate word [...]. It is an extreme image of what is happening every day – the transmutation of self.”⁴³

If Mordecai’s hope is for faithful adherence to his original mission by a new life, what Deronda offers him is love, faithfulness, and reinterpretation of purpose, rather than its reproduction. Eliot’s image of the costs and inevitability of transmutation resulting from exposure to other people’s ideas and experience, but of transmutation of those ideas themselves, is echoed by the Brazilian translator Augusto de Campos writing about the process of translation:

Translation for me is [...] to get into the pretender’s skin to re-pretend everything again, each pain, each sound, each colour. (Augusto de Campos, 1998: 186)⁴⁴

⁴² Judith Johnston, *Victorian Women and the Economies of Travel, Translation and Culture 1830-1870*, p.42.

Johnston’s quotation from Sinnett is referenced as Jane Sinnett, Schiller 478, 479.

⁴³ GE DD, Ch.xxxvii, p.435.

⁴⁴ Susan Bassnett, *Reflections on Translation*, p.7.

For Eliot and, as we shall see, Ward, translated texts may have contained ideas which were already sympathetic explorations of her own ('with the ideas of Feuerbach I everywhere agree'), but the intensity of the endeavour to translate, the detailed examination of 'denotation and connotation' ensured that the texts they had translated with such fidelity were then transmuted for critique and challenge, as their fictional representations experimented with how their radical, potentially culturally disruptive ideas could become recognised as part of the range of human experience reflected in the 'midst' of the realist novel.

Eliot's Experience of Translation

In later years, Eliot was to assure John Cross, her husband and biographer, of the 'debt she felt that she owed to the Miss Franklins for their excellent instruction [...].'⁴⁵ The Miss Franklins ran the school she attended between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, and by the time she left their school she had learnt French as well as English, history, arithmetic, music and drawing. Her adolescent letters, such as those to Maria Lewis,⁴⁶ already displayed a formidable range of reading, scholarship, and spiritual aspiration, but she was fortunate that her father's generosity continued to provide her with a widening range of language skills. She had Italian lessons from 1839 onwards, German lessons from 1840 onwards, and taught herself Latin. Access to the library at Arbury Hall, the home of her father's employer, allowed her to read Latin texts, as well as a wide range of European writings.⁴⁷ Even so, her views on the frustrations and injustices of a girl's education may also be deduced from her narrator's descriptions and judgements of the triviality of the educations experienced by many of her female characters, notably Rosamond Vincy, and the longing for a better education and greater opportunities shown by Dorothea Brooke, Gwendolen Harleth, and Maggie Tulliver.

Although Eliot appreciated the role of her educators, the scale of her struggle both to appreciate her own powers - and to have them appreciated fully by others - can be gauged by the recommendation of her former schoolmistress, Miss Franklin, to the families who, she

⁴⁵ Cross, p.13.

⁴⁶ GEL.I, to Maria Lewis (eg p.10) cover a range of devotional literature and biography.

⁴⁷ Gordon Haight, *George Eliot: a Biography*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1968). Chapter 1 details Eliot's education, pp.11, 24, 25.

hoped, would welcome Marian Evans into cultivated, middle class society in Coventry. The following is an extract from Mrs John Cash's account:

Miss Franklin dwelt with much pride on Miss Evans's mental power, [...]; but the great recommendation [...] was the zeal for others which [...] had led her to visit the poor most diligently [...].⁴⁸

Her transformation from promising but misunderstood student began with her move to Coventry, where her friendships with other educated women assumed an emotional depth and offered an intellectual stimulus which changed her life. Her letters track her transition from gifted pupil to intellectual authority, as she moved out of adolescence and abandoned her orthodox religious education for a world of more diverse and intellectually stimulating friendship. The families with whom she established close friendships were in a position to offer her ideas, interests, opportunities and acquaintanceships through which she eventually evolved her literary career. The Brays and Hennells, themselves related through marriage, offered intellectual challenge, combined with the capacity for passionate friendship. After her father's death, Eliot wrote to them from Geneva that she had not 'found any one who can bear comparison with you; not in kindness to me - ça va sans dire [that goes without saying] - but in solidity of mind and in expansion of feeling'.⁴⁹

The Brays and Hennells, both Unitarian families, were at the centre of Coventry's intellectual life. Eliot's early letters mention meeting Harriet Martineau ('one of those great people whom one does not venerate the less for having seen'⁵⁰), as well as visits by Robert Owen and Ralph Emerson.⁵¹ Cara Bray's brother, Charles Hennell, was the author of *An Inquiry regarding the Origin of Christianity*, published in 1838, which had been translated into German with a preface by David Strauss, and Charles Bray was the author of *The Philosophy of Necessity*, published in 1841. Eliot's friendships with the Bray and Hennell families' women not only meant that she confronted and responded to the religious radicalism and the scholarly, scientific, and philosophical interests of their published male authors, but also that she entered into a life of shared reading, translation and discussion of recent scientific, philosophical or literary texts, and attending lectures with Cara Bray or Sara Hennell. The following extract of a letter sent to Cara demonstrates her expectation that

⁴⁸ Cross, p.46.

⁴⁹ GEL.I, to Mr and Mrs Charles Bray, 20 September 1849, p.310.

⁵⁰ GEL.I, to Martha Jackson, 21 April 1845, p.189.

⁵¹ GEL.I, to Sara Hennell, 16 September, 1843, p.161; and Cross, p.104.

friendship should be an educational experience, and also shows how confident Eliot was of her own and others' ability to read and translate a variety of European languages (and to criticise other people's translations). Her image of Manzoni's meaning being encased in one form and transferred to an inferior ('out of silver into pewter') anticipates her other metaphors of translation's literal transformation of form, meaning and value in her essay on *Translations and Translators*:

I send you the first part of Wallenstein with the proposition that we should study that in conjunction with the Thirty years war [...]. [...] you shall have Joan of Arc [...] when you have got through Wallenstein, which will amply repay you for any trouble in translating it, and is not more difficult than your reading ought to be now. I have skimmed Manzoni, who has suffered sadly by being poured out of silver into pewter [...].⁵²

Despite the emotional and intellectual importance of these female friendships, and the practical support they provided during her translations of Strauss and Feuerbach, Eliot did not write about friendship of this sort in any of her novels. The tutelary, intellectually and spiritually expanding friendships are always, in her fiction, between men and women. In their intensity and response to the character's need for an exchange of ideas which may rescue them intellectually or morally, they become charged with the subversion of expectations, the difficulties and the drama of maintaining an emotionally crucial and intellectually rich friendship which defines itself as outside conventional expectations of relationship between the sexes. Her heroines appear, for the most part, isolated from other female characters with more conventional abilities and ambitions, and isolated, either by their abilities, moral awareness, or aspirations, from their society's conventional expectations of them. Their bonds with other women arise out of episodes of heightened emotional need or resolution, such as Dorothea's mission to help Rosamond save her marriage or Gwendolen's seeking reassurance from Mirah about Deronda's character. Ermarth suggests that this lacuna in Eliot's portrayal of friendship was because she:

Insist[s] on doing full narrative justice to the isolation of women and to the obstacles their training carefully provides against their forming strong female ties.⁵³

⁵² GEL.I, to Mrs Charles Bray, December 1842, p.153.

⁵³ Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, *The English Novel in History, 1840 – 1895*, p.201.

It was through the Bray and Hennell web of friendship and acquaintance with European intellectuals that Eliot acquired her commission to translate Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu*. Strauss himself had publicly welcomed Charles Hennell's work, and the task of translating *Leben Jesu* was originally undertaken by Charles Hennell's fiancée, 'Rufa' Brabant, but, after the Hennells' marriage in 1844, it was suggested that Eliot be asked to undertake and complete the task. Sara Hennell acted as go-between and wrote that she was convinced that Eliot would 'give the meaning faithfully and spiritedly'.⁵⁴ In Charles Hennell's memoir, he states that he found a 'real pleasure from its [Eliot's translation] showing [him] with what delicacy the meaning was being made to transfuse itself.'⁵⁵ Both friends' descriptions of Eliot's approach to translation emphasise qualities such as her fidelity and creative intelligence ('faithfully and spiritedly') which have already been discussed in relation to Eliot's own theories. That this combination of qualities was a relatively frequent term of praise can be deduced from the fact that Matthew Arnold also praised Ward's translation of Amiel as 'at once spirited and faithful'.⁵⁶ Charles Hennell's description of the 'delicacy' with which meaning was 'being made to transfuse itself' suggests not only the complexity of the process of translation, but also the organic change of meaning from one state to another.

Eliot's letters contain no explicit rationale for her decision to undertake the translation. The project was, however, one which would establish her in the Bray/Hennell circle as more than the intellectually gifted friend, and would moreover cement the links of this circle with a world of like-minded intellectual endeavour in Europe. The work also offered her an opportunity, following her loss of faith in orthodox Christianity and the transfer of her enthusiasm to agnostic inquiry, to play her part in increasing the accessibility of scholarly re-evaluations of orthodoxy.

Strauss's style and method, with its relentless exposure and deconstruction of the historicity of the Gospel narrative and of supernatural interpretation, his critical scrutiny of rationalist explanations, and substitution of an understanding of the Gospels as myth, was to prove a sometimes dispiriting task. In his preface to the first edition of the book, Strauss (as translated by Eliot) had defined his objectives as follows:

⁵⁴ GEL.I, from Sara Hennell to Mrs Charles Christian Hennell, January 1844, p.171.

⁵⁵ GEL.I, Footnote 1, letter from Sara Hennell to Mrs Charles Christian Hennell, January 1844, p.171.

⁵⁶ MA Am, p.267.

The exegesis of the ancient church set out from the double presupposition: first, that the gospels contained a history, and secondly, that this history was a supernatural one. Rationalism rejected the latter of these presuppositions, but only to cling the more tenaciously to the former, maintaining that these books present [...] history. Science cannot rest satisfied with this half-measure: the other presupposition also must be relinquished, and the inquiry must first be made whether in fact, and to what extent, the ground on which we stand in the gospels is historical.⁵⁷

Eliot's early enthusiasm for Strauss's ideas and the translation project is clear from the letters between her and Sara Hennell. Sara's letter to Rufa Hennell of January 1844 mentions that the proposal that Eliot should complete the translation was 'very cordially received'.⁵⁸ Both she and Mary Ann had looked through the early sections of translation, (those carried out by Rufa) and concluded that: 'it is remarkably difficult, but we both think it very interesting'.⁵⁹ Eliot later wrote to Charles Hennell that:

I am glad for the work's sake, glad for your sake, [...], that matters have turned out so well.

Pray think no more of my pens, ink and paper. I would gladly give much more towards the work than these and my English if I could do so consistently with duty.⁶⁰

Eliot's commitment both to the work and to the Bray Hennell group of friends is clear from this extract. From her wording it appears that she was willing to bear costs and provide time demanded by the process of translation herself, 'consistent' with her 'duty', presumably not only to running her father's household but also to avoiding any awkward confrontation with his religious views. According to Haight⁶¹, by the time the letter was written, John Chapman had agreed with Charles Hennell to fund half of any expenses and half of any profit from the completed translation. A few months later, in April 1844, Eliot was still assuring Sara that while she could work fast, she had no regrets about undertaking the work,⁶² and all the letters between her and Sara show how seriously they both took her responsibilities as translator, and how much she relied on Sara's emotional as well as intellectual support.

Sara was involved in checking the minutiae of both German and Greek translation, discussion of the more arcane aspects of the references, and the management of proofs.

⁵⁷ Strauss, 'Preface', I, p.x.

⁵⁸ GEL.I, from Sara Hennell to Mrs Charles Christian Hennell, January 1844, p.171.

⁵⁹ GEL.I, from Sara Hennell to Mrs Charles Christian Hennell, January 1844, p.172.

⁶⁰ GEL.I, to Mr Charles Christian Hennell, April 1844, p.175.

⁶¹ GEL.I, to Mr Charles Christian Hennell, April 1844, Haight's note 3, p.175.

⁶² GEL.I, (April 1844), p.176.

Eliot's letters between January 1844 and June 1846 discuss issues such as the inclusion and translation of Greek quotations,⁶³ scholarly abbreviations, and detailed stylistic issues (such as the relative advantages of using 'as if' compared with 'as though').⁶⁴ In other letters, Eliot discusses, apparently in response to Sara's comments, the precise meanings of certain words or phrases and how they should be translated. Some of these generated requests for a Hebrew lexicon or help with the Hebrew quotations from Charles Hennell,⁶⁵ and involved an understanding of the ritual and anthropological function of the Israelites' scapegoat, the Passover meal, the sacramental meal instituted by Christ, and the operation of the Jewish calendar.⁶⁶ Another letter considers how closely to keep to the original where problems such as repetition of a particular German word raise stylistic issues in English:

It will not do to translate the words always the same though that might seem the proper plan at first. For sometimes the introduction of them is of real and obvious use and has some influence on the sense, and at another time they are a mere pleonasm or else could not be strictly represented in English without committing an arrant Germanism.⁶⁷

Eliot's wish to avoid any 'Germanism' in her translation is clear from her use of the word 'arrant' and the vehemence with which she attacks Strauss's style as unnecessarily repetitious ('mere pleonasm').

Eliot's letters repeatedly thank Sara for her help and psychological support. A few instances stand out as representing what Sara offered Eliot not only in terms of scholarship but also in friendship:

You do not guess how much pleasure it gives me to look over your pencillings – they prove so clearly that you have really entered into the meaning of every sentence, [...]. I am quite indebted to you for your care and I feel greatly the advantage of having a *friend* to undertake the office of critic.⁶⁸

Here Eliot seems to value Sara's role as surrogate translator. Her phrase 'you have really entered into the meaning' reminds the reader of the absolute primacy for Eliot of the 'fidelity'

⁶³ GEL.I, (September 1844), p.181.

⁶⁴ GEL.I, (6 April 1845), p.185.

⁶⁵ GEL.I, (13 June 1845), p.195.

⁶⁶ GEL.I, (April 1846), p.213.

⁶⁷ GEL.I, (September? 1845), pp.198, 199.

⁶⁸ GEL.I, (13 June 1845), p.195.

and ‘responsibility’ needed ‘in interpreting another man’s mind’,⁶⁹ but it also suggests the importance of involvement and self-identification. Elsewhere in the letters, it is clear that Sara was raising minor grammatical issues, and also advising Eliot to keep to as close a translation as possible:

You are quite right about the *ausser den* [‘except the’ or ‘out of the’] etc. Please to alter it and strike out the interpolations of the faithless Dr Pollian [Eliot’s nickname].⁷⁰

Eliot treated Sara’s comments seriously, and accepted them, after due consideration, in instances like this:

I do not think my use of the words etymologically improper, and they correspond better than any other to *Bezeichnung* [designation] and *bezeichnet* [designates], but I see the nature of your objection and I have felt it in other connexions so that on the whole I adopt your suggestion as the less exceptionable phrase.⁷¹

The seriousness of the latter extracts contrasts with the comic, teasing spirit of others, one of which alludes to the version of multi-tasking which Eliot had adopted to run her father’s household and complete the translation of Strauss:

I have *not* the German of §81. I gave you from §64 to 84. I cannot therefore alter the passage which you have copied and which I have just this moment had the misfortune to drop into the pie.⁷²

Despite Sara’s support and encouragement, the work was beset by periods of dissatisfaction. By April 1845, Eliot was calling the task ‘soul-stupefying labour’,⁷³ was deeply discouraged by the difficulties of funding publication,⁷⁴ and had developed personal and scholarly reservations with Strauss’s interpretations of his sources:

⁶⁹ GE TT, p.342.

⁷⁰ GEL.I, (1845), p.202.

⁷¹ GEL.I, (23 May 1846), p.218.

⁷² GEL.I, (1845), p.201.

⁷³ GEL.I, (6 April 1845), p.185.

⁷⁴ GEL.I, (May 1845), pp.190, 191.

I am never pained when I think Strauss right – but in many cases I think him wrong, as every man must be in working out into detail an idea which has general truth, but is only one element in a perfect theory, not a perfect theory in itself.⁷⁵

Eliot's irritations with the work and its pressures, and her recurrent doubts about its worth are clear from this outburst:

It is very laughable that I should be irritated about a thing in itself so trifling as a translation, but it is this very triviality of the thing that makes delays provoking. The difficulties that attend a really grand undertaking are to be borne, but things should run smoothly and fast when they are not important enough to demand the sacrifice of one's whole soul.⁷⁶

Her initial attitude of self-sacrifice for the good of the work has been replaced by cynicism or irony towards the value of the translation and the personal cost to her which work on it has necessitated. The dramatic reversals of feeling suggest the potential conflicts which can arise between the twin intellectual attitudes of a translator, which combine sympathy, even empathy with a source, with a rigorous critical reading. It reveals how intensely she had invested her 'whole soul' in the project, but discovered through the exercise of critical intelligence that the book had flaws as well as significant arguments. Two years into the project, in February 1846, Cara Bray observed that Eliot was 'Strauss-sick',⁷⁷ but the work was finally completed by May of that year. As the pressures of completing the work eased, Eliot wrote to Sara with a more balanced assessment of the strengths of Strauss's book:

I do really like reading our Strauss – he is so klar und ideenvoll [clear and full of ideas] but I do not know *one* person who is likely to read the book through, do you?⁷⁸

Her words reveal the debt she felt to Sara. 'Our Strauss' cements an intellectual intimacy and recognises Sara's contribution, and the centrality of their relationship to the project. The German of her final assessment of Strauss as 'klar und ideenvoll' is a further recognition of the joint language she and Sara have been using during the work. In June that year, the translation was published by John Chapman without a reference to its translator. A

⁷⁵ GEL.I, (1845), p.203.

⁷⁶ GEL.I, (May 1845), p.191.

⁷⁷ GEL.I, from Cara Bray to Sara Hennell, 14 February 1846, p.206.

⁷⁸ GEL.I, (20? May, 1846), p.218.

review of it in *The Prospective* by Charles Wicksteed, indicates the notoriety which Strauss's book, 'the far-famed *Leben Jesu*',⁷⁹ had accumulated even before its publication in English. The review in the main addresses and criticises Strauss's arguments, but in relation to the translation itself speculated that 'the passages of a specially scholastic character, at least, have received their version from 'a discerning and well-informed theologian'.⁸⁰ Wicksteed commends the translation as 'faithful, elegant and scholar-like'⁸¹ and praises the 'easy, perspicuous and harmonious force'⁸² of the English style, which nevertheless renders the original 'word for word, thought for thought, sentence for sentence'.⁸³ Despite its praise for all those aspects of translation which Eliot aspired to provide and valued so highly, she distanced herself from the review in a letter to Sara:

The review of Strauss contains some very just remarks, though, on the whole I think it shallow and in many cases unfair. The praise it gives to the translation is just what I should have wished – indeed I cannot imagine anything more gratifying in the way of laudation. Is it not droll that Wicksteed should have chosen one of my interpolations or rather paraphrases to dilate on? The expression "granite," applied to the sayings of Jesus is nowhere used by Strauss, but is an impudent addition of mine to eke out his metaphor.⁸⁴

Scholl argues that this last remark confirms Eliot's sense that she has outgrown Strauss and claimed mastery. I would argue instead that it rather indicates her misgivings about the reviewer's expertise, and moreover that her fidelity to Strauss could encompass and celebrate a small creative act of her own, which, against her standards of rigid fidelity, she nevertheless still judged 'impudent'.

The positive critical reception for Eliot's translation combined with the dramatic impact of the work on English intellectual life enabled her to commence her journalistic career with the *Westminster Review*. Her now recognised expertise in translation, as well as her scholarship enabled her to write on a wide range of topics while at the *Review*, including reviews of other translations, literary, artistic and philosophic topics. Through her editorial

⁷⁹ Charles Wicksteed, 'Strauss's Life of Jesus', Article II, (1846). *The Prospective Review*, (8) Oct 1846): 479-520, p.478. <<https://search-proquest-com.liverpool.idm.oclc.org/docview/4432054?accountid=12117>> [accessed 11 June 2017]

⁸⁰ Wicksteed, p.478.

⁸¹ Wicksteed, p.478.

⁸² Wicksteed, p.478.

⁸³ Wicksteed, p.478.

⁸⁴ GEL.I, (15 November 1846), p.227.

work combined with her published translations, she began to gain acknowledged status amongst writers and intellectuals.

The translation of *Leben Jesu* and the death of her father marked a watershed in Eliot's life. But she did consider translation again, although with some scepticism about the degree to which a translation is an adequate vehicle to ensure the accessibility of a complex work for a wider audience. While in Geneva, recovering from the strain of translating Strauss and from the grief of her father's death, she began translating Spinoza's *Ethics* from the Latin. In an 1849 letter to Charles and Cara Bray, already quoted, she writes that:

Spinoza and I have been divorced for several months. [...]. If you are anxious to publish the translation in question, I could, after a few months, finish the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* to keep it company - but I confess to you, that I think you would do better to abstain from printing a translation. What is wanted in English is not a translation of Spinoza's works, but a true estimate of his life and system. After one has rendered his Latin faithfully into English, one feels that there is another yet more difficult process of translation for the reader to effect, and that the only mode of making Spinoza accessible to a larger number is to study his books, then shut them, and give an analysis.⁸⁵

The language she uses adopts ironic metaphors of relationship to indicate the intensity of emotional involvement between translator and translated ('Spinoza and I have been divorced') which develop the ironic language of male and female relationship in her letter about Strauss to Cara Bray. In considering the case for making a writer – in this case Spinoza - 'accessible to a larger number', Eliot argues that any 'faithful' translation would still necessarily leave an obscure gulf of understanding between a reader and Spinoza's meaning. She calls this challenge to comprehension a 'yet more difficult process of translation for the reader', implying that the reading of a complex work in translation demands a further act of imaginative acculturation and comprehension, as suggested by Jane Sinnott. Eliot's recognition that any rendering of meaning is inevitably a process which involves the source author, the translator and the reader in an effort to transfer meaning anticipates the debates about the value of translation and the role of the reader of more recent times. Chapter 3 considers her translation of Spinoza in more detail, but, in a more general sense, Eliot's view that complex arguments presented in an abstruse form required some other way of making them accessible to the public is clear, and reveals her sense that she was in a position to

⁸⁵ GEL.I, to Mr and Mrs Charles Bray, 4 December, 1849, p.321.

provide the intellectual bridge building which might be necessary. In the letter, she proposes that a ‘true’ analysis and estimate of Spinoza’s ideas was preferable to a literal or ‘faithful’ translation, but I will argue that, once she had completed her translation of the *Ethics* in 1856, she chose instead - and not just in relation to Spinoza - to use her novels to explore the ideas she had considered as she translated and moreover think through carefully some of the issues involved in the politics of translating them.

After the experience of translating Strauss, Eliot’s views of translation as the best way of making European ideas more accessible underwent a number of variations. Sometime within five years of her 1849 advice to Charles Bray about the need for ‘an estimate’ of Spinoza’s ‘life and work’ rather than a translation, she was advising Hale White to learn French in order to read Rousseau in the original. Yet in June 1853⁸⁶, she agreed to undertake another translation, that of Ludwig Feuerbach’s *Das Wesen des Christentums [The Essence of Christianity]*, a book first published in Germany in 1841. However, it was not until January 1854 that discussion of the work surfaces in a letter to Sara Hennell. Eliot’s letter expresses an early ‘reluctance’ to involve her friend, concerned that Feuerbach’s argument might ‘repel’ her, but once she was confident that Sara understood and sympathised with the significance of the book, she wrote to her to say that she would ‘feel it a real comfort to have your *prospective* sympathy while I am writing, so be assured you shall have a whole cargo of MS’.⁸⁷ Their working method appears to have been similar to that adopted during Eliot’s translation of Strauss. Sara checked the manuscript and made pencil comments or suggested amendments, which the two discussed by letter when it was necessary.

The letters reveal discussions about what constituted faithfulness to the source author, where Sara was apparently arguing the case for a closer and perhaps more literal fidelity to the original text and Eliot was considering its readability for an English audience:

I don’t think a translator is bound to reproduce the *occasional* offensive defects of taste in a writer. I confess I have not gone on that principle of damaging faithfulness. Indeed I have felt it necessary in the part you have read to omit a whole sentence. I *could not* do otherwise – and indeed German sarcasm may be fairly said to be untranslatable. I think you would agree with me if the whole case were before you.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ GEL.II, Haight’s timescale, p.77.

⁸⁷ All quotations are from GEL.II, to Sara Hennell, 18 January, 1854, p.137.

⁸⁸ GEL.II, (11 February 1854), p.142.

In February, she was sharing concerns about the style of the Preface to the Second Edition with Sara, and emphasising how important it was as a statement of Feuerbach's ideas. The style of the book itself was – she noted ironically - “– *for a German* – concise, lucid and even epigrammatic now and then”.⁸⁹ However, she was concerned about the Germanisms of style and the abstract nature not only of the Preface but also the Appendices. Clearly she wished the Preface to reflect the ‘lucid’ and accessible style of the book itself, and Sara was asked to be the judge of her translation’s readability:

I shall send you Feuerbach’s Preface soon. [...] his Preface reads like a caricature of the faults of German writing generally, one sentence is nearly a page and a half long. [...] I wish you to pay particular attention to the Preface and to mark everything which seems odd and does not flow easily – as it is very important that this preface *should be read*.⁹⁰

English perceptions of German style had been strongly influenced by Thomas Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* (1834) which satirised the abstraction and length of sentences to be found in the writings of German Idealism. Eliot seems to be referring to this type of caricature as being relevant to Feuerbach’s Preface. In one otherwise undated March letter, she shared a cognoscente’s joke with Sara about one of the Preface’s long sentences, obviously spanning two pages, (‘I send you the original of the Preface to amuse you with the long-winded sentence pp. ix and x.’⁹¹) and, then, in a postscript, asked for advice about how to render into English what was, presumably, Feuerbach’s more usual style of short sentences:

Feuerbach’s sentences are too uniformly short. Would you weave them together at all, or leave the style intact?⁹²

By the end of March, her nervousness and reservations about her achievement and its reception had commenced, as sections of the manuscript started to be sent off to the printers. A letter of 31st March is evidence of a similar type of despair to that which had afflicted the later stages of her translation of Strauss. She feared that no-one would ‘read the book, still less understand it’,⁹³ and that Sara herself might be ‘bore[d]’ or find her effort ‘a labour’.⁹⁴ At

⁸⁹ GEL.II, Letter 1, 6 February 1854, p.141.

⁹⁰ GEL.II, Letter 1, 6 February 1854, pp.140, 141.

⁹¹ GEL.II, (March 1854), p.147.

⁹² GEL.II, (March 1854), p.147.

⁹³ GEL.II, (31 March 1854), p.147.

⁹⁴ GEL.II, (31 March 1854), p.147.

one moment at the end of April she was in despair about the probable reception of the book and her translation:

I am too entirely without hope about the book to be sensitive. The press will do nothing but abuse or ridicule it [...].⁹⁵

Three days later (29th April), she was addressing the problems of translating the appendix. Her letter to Sara indicates her misgivings, not only about the haste with which she was forced to translate, and the stylistic consequences, but also about the significance of certain sections to an English public:

[...] read as quickly as you can the portion of the appendix which I send to you [...], and to tell me how far it will be necessary to modify it for the Eng[lish] public. I have written it very rapidly and have translated it quite literally so you have the *raw* Feuerbach – not any of my cooking. I am so far removed from the popular feeling on the subject of which it treats that I cannot trust my own judgement. With the ideas of Feuerbach I everywhere agree, but of course I should, of myself, alter the phraseology considerably. Before I do this however, I want you to tell me what I *must* leave out. Mind, I want to keep in as much as possible. [...] don't think of the *style* but only of the matter and the crudity of expressions.⁹⁶

The style of the Appendix clearly caused her concern due to the laxity of Feuerbach's style and vocabulary, as well as the concerns arising from the enforced literalness of her translation. To convey the difference between her initial translation of the Appendix and her more finished translations of the main body of the book, she used the binary opposition of cooked and raw, a metaphor which immediately suggests the haste and scarcely digestible nature of the translation, compared with the care which had gone into translating the main text. Her reservations about Feuerbach's 'phraseology', and 'crudity of expressions', as well as the nature of her reservations about the accessibility of the content of the appendix for the English reader are clarified in a letter of 7th May. While both letters emphasise her commitment to the book's ideas ('with Feuerbach's ideas I everywhere agree'⁹⁷ and 'the Appendix [...] contains a great deal of important and accessible matter'⁹⁸), in the later letter she specified which sections of the Appendix were problematic due to their 'Germanised' and

⁹⁵ GEL.II, (26 April 1854), p.152.

⁹⁶ GEL.II, (29 April 1854), p.153.

⁹⁷ GEL.II, (29 April 1854), p.153.

⁹⁸ GEL.II, (7 May 1854), p.154.

abstract nature, and asked Sara's advice about whether they should be omitted.⁹⁹ She also gave examples of the 'laxity' of Feuerbach's language in the second section of the Appendix, where he had used the same German word in different semantic contexts:

The laxity of Feuerbach's language is particularly tiresome in the 2d §. I am obliged to translate sensation in one place and emotion in another.¹⁰⁰

Just as with her translation of Strauss, Eliot suffered various crises of confidence about the reception of Feuerbach's book, but once the work was at proof-reading stage she rediscovered her admiration for Feuerbach's ideas and his expression of them in the book itself:

The proof-reading of Feuerbach is really a pleasure to me and opens up afresh to me what there is of truth and beauty in the book.¹⁰¹

Again she frequently expressed her appreciation of Sara's role, ('It is such a comfort to have at least *one* person who can appreciate one's work'¹⁰²) and of the significance of her contribution to an intellectual achievement:

I feel your reading of Feuerbach as a real act of friendship to me - but it is something still better than that – a contribution towards the perfecting of a mental product [...].¹⁰³

The translation was published in July 1854. It was reviewed, hardly impartially, in *The Herald* by Sara Hennell herself, who praised the way the 'tough metaphysical German'¹⁰⁴ had been rendered. G H Lewes, another scarcely neutral reviewer, noted the book's publication as 'a bombshell thrown into the camp of orthodoxy',¹⁰⁵ but his departure with Eliot for 'Labassecour',¹⁰⁶ Weimar and Berlin¹⁰⁷ was a further bombshell to their friends, and effectively concluded Eliot's reliance on Sara Hennell's advice and judgement in

⁹⁹ GEL.II, (7 May 1854), p.154.

¹⁰⁰ GEL.II, (7 May 1854), p.154.

¹⁰¹ GEL.II, (17 May 1854), p.155.

¹⁰² GEL.II, (6 Feb 1854), p.141.

¹⁰³ GEL.II, (March 1854), p.147

¹⁰⁴ GEL.II, Footnote 8, letter to Sara Hennell, 10 July 1854, p.164.

¹⁰⁵ GEL.II, Footnote 3, letter to Sara Hennell, 10 July 1854, p.165.

¹⁰⁶ GEL.II, to Sara Hennell, 10 July 1854, p.165.

¹⁰⁷ GEL.II, to Mr and Mrs Charles Bray and Sara Hennell, 19 July 1854, p.166.

relation to translation. Despite friendly reviews, Eliot's misgivings about its initial reception were vindicated. Mathilde Blind noted that Chapman 'lost heavily' by the publication of *The Essence of Christianity* because 'there was no demand for it in England.'¹⁰⁸

There are no letters which shed any light on the translation of Spinoza completed in 1856 while in Europe with Lewes. It had also been one of Lewes' projects, and it is likely that any consultations about Spinoza's style would be with him. However, the judgements of her 1855 essay on translation, written while she was translating Spinoza, that translation demanded 'the patience, the rigid fidelity, and the sense of responsibility in interpreting another man's mind'¹⁰⁹ reflect the type of deliberation and attentiveness to 'denotation and connotation' displayed in her letters about her translations of Strauss and Feuerbach. What is missing is how far the translation of Spinoza was accompanied by similar frustrations and relations to those she experienced during her other translations. The act of 'translation' offered the opportunity to enter into and interpret 'another man's mind', and it also offered the first disciplined steps in that combination of erudition, philosophical inquiry and imagination which later enabled her to create each of her fictional characters and worlds.

Ward's Experience of Translation

While Eliot's volatile experience and evolving attitude to the process of translation has to be pieced together from her letters and essays, Mary Ward, born thirty years later than Eliot, left her own edited presentation of her life in her *Writer's Recollections*. Her letters are now held in the Special Collections and Archives of the Honnold/Mudd Library at Claremont University, California. Her *Recollections* are both a record of her intellectual development, of the way her religious, spiritual and social convictions were formed, and of the intellectual milieu in which she lived. In addition, there are a limited number of letters, most undated, quoted in Janet Trevelyan's biography of her mother, *The Life of Mrs Humphry Ward*.¹¹⁰

When Ward was recalling and judging her education and route into a literary life, she was forthright about the deficiencies in girls' schooling prior to the introduction of the 1870 Education Act, and the growth in secondary schooling for girls which followed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century:

¹⁰⁸ Mathilde Blind, *George Eliot*, (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1885), p.64. Bibliolabs (Biblioboard core).

¹⁰⁹ GE TT, p.342.

¹¹⁰ Janet Penrose Trevelyan, *The Life of Mrs Humphry Ward*.

I learnt nothing thoroughly or accurately, and the German, French and Latin, which I soon discovered after my marriage to be essential to the kind of literary work I wanted to do, had all to be re-learnt before they could be of any real use to me; nor was it ever possible for me [...] to get that firm hold on the structure and literary history of any language, ancient or modern, which my brother William [...] got from his six years at Rugby, and his training there in Latin and Greek.¹¹¹

Ward was the symbolic and physical offspring of the great religious debates which had so bitterly divided Christian intellectuals in the nineteenth century. Her *Recollections* struggle to be just and generous to a much loved father and mother but they reveal the fragile dependence of the family on the spiritual scruples of their father, which took him into the Catholic Church, out of it for an eleven year period, and then finally back into it again. She got her first sight of Oxford, the scene of her intellectual awakening, during her father's return to the Anglican Church and therefore to the possibility of working once again in Oxford. In 1867, when she was sixteen, she left the school she found so unsatisfactory and embarked on her self-education. Its romance is captured in the *Recollections*, and later influenced her description of the education of Laura Fountain in *Helbeck of Bannisdale*. She:

[...] slipped into the Oxford life as a fish into water. [...]. There was in me [...] a real hunger to learn [...]. But [...] I had no definite teaching, and everything I learnt came to me from persons – and books - sporadically, without any general guidance or plan. It was all a great voyage of discovery, organised mainly by myself, on the advice of a few men and women very much older [...].¹¹²

Through the academic connections of her father, Tom Arnold, and those of her uncle, Matthew Arnold, by the time she was twenty she had met many of the leading English scholars and translators of the day and was aware of and expected to participate in the worlds of French and Spanish scholarship lying beyond Oxford. Her mentoring by Mark Pattison and J R Green demonstrates that her abilities with language and scholarship were recognised early in her life. Somewhat like Mme de Stael, of whom she quoted with approval that she 'wrote her books out of the talk of the distinguished men',¹¹³ Mary Arnold absorbed and interrogated the ideas and controversies of intellectual Oxford.

¹¹¹ MW Rec, Ch.vi, p.96.

¹¹² MW Rec, Ch.vi, p.102.

¹¹³ MW Rec, Ch.viii, p.147.

Her childhood had meant that she was aware of the contemporary arguments about biblical and ecclesiastical authority, as well as feeling the human cost of intellectual decision in relation to them, a cost she was later to dramatise in *Robert Elsmere*, *Helbeck of Bannisdale* and *The Case of Richard Meynell*.¹¹⁴ Through her marriage at nineteen to Humphry Ward, a Brasenose College tutor, she had committed herself to the Oxford milieu with which the Arnold family were so identified. She had become part of an academic society where those she met expected to develop intellectual argument through written publications, and where the ability to read foreign literature in the original language was an anticipated part of an academic career. Her account of her early married life makes it clear that she married Humphry, academia and literature in equal measure.

It became plain very soon after our marriage that ours was to be a literary partnership. My first published story, written when I was eighteen, had appeared in the *Churchman's Magazine* in 1870, and an article on the 'Poema del Cid', the firstfruits of my Spanish browsings in the Bodleian, appeared in *Macmillan* early in 1872. [...]. Our three children arrived [...], and all the time I was reading, listening, talking, and beginning to write in earnest – mostly for the *Saturday Review*.¹¹⁵

In her *Recollections* she mentions a wide range of European thinkers and scholars, mainly French, whom she had met and heard during her twenties, both in Oxford and during a visit to Paris with her husband, in 1874:

We took with us some introductions from Oxford – to Mme Mohl, the Renans, the Gaston Parises, the Boutmays, the Ribots, and, from my Uncle Matthew, to the Scherers at Versailles. M. Taine was already known to us and it was at their house, on one of Mme Taine's Thursdays, that I first heard French conversation at its best [...].¹¹⁶

In 1878, when she was twenty seven, she received her first academic commission, a request from Dr Wace to contribute work on the West Goths for Smith's *Dictionary of Biography*. Her presentation of the challenges of Dr Wace's commission subtly transform it from an apparent statement of modest diffidence into an assertion of her scholarly achievements, of her expertise in French, Spanish, the Latin of two different, non-classical periods and German, and of her confidence in her scholarly and critical acumen:

¹¹⁴ Mrs Humphry (Mary) Ward, *The Case of Richard Meynell* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1912).

¹¹⁵ MW Rec, Ch.VIII, p.143.

¹¹⁶ MW Rec, Ch.VIII, p.153, 154.

The French and Spanish reading it involved was no difficulty. But the power of reading Latin rapidly, both the degraded Latin of the fifth and sixth centuries, and the learned Latin of the sixteenth and seventeenth was essential; and I had only learnt some Latin since my marriage, and was by no means at home in it. I had long since found out too, in working at the Spanish literature of the eleventh to fourteenth century, that the only critics and researchers worth following in that field were German; and [...] the prospect of a piece of work which meant, in the main, Latin texts and German commentaries, was rather daunting.¹¹⁷

In 1881, she received the impetus to integrate her involvement in the Oxford religious debates of her youth, her family's historic and current engagement with these debates, and her love of mastering the ideas and styles of other cultures than her own. She heard a sermon by John Wordsworth, a religious conservative, which moved her to publish, almost immediately, a pamphlet rebutting its theme that agnostic positions were incompatible with a moral approach to living. Seven years later she published the famous transformation of the pamphlet's debate into her third work of fiction, *Robert Elsmere*, as described in more detail in Chapter 4. The book's long gestation was influenced by an adventitious approach from M. Scherer, a French critic, whom she had met on her visit to Versailles in 1874. They had discussed contemporary French religious thought, and, in 1884, according to Ward, he sent her his French edition of Frédéric Amiel's *Journal Intime*, which, as Amiel's literary executor, he had published in France in two volumes, volume I in 1883, a year after Amiel's death, and volume II in 1884. An article about Amiel by Ward appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* (May, 1884) making it clear that, at that point, the second volume was still to be published.¹¹⁸ Sutherland notes that Ward read the *Journal Intime* while she was on holiday in Switzerland in the summer of 1883 and proposed to provide a translation for Macmillan on her return in September 1883.¹¹⁹ Her *Recollections* note that she had been sent a copy, presumably of volume II of Amiel's *Journal Intime*, by Scherer, in 1884. From then on she was engaged on its translation, completing it for publication by the end of 1885. Sutherland also records that Ward told Macmillan, the future publisher of *Robert Elsmere*, that she had

¹¹⁷ MW Rec, Ch.IX, p.163.

¹¹⁸ M. A. W. (1884). 'The Literature of Introspection: Amiel's Journal Intime 1', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1859-1907, 49(292), 268-278

<<http://search.proquest.com.liverpool.idm.oclc.org/docview/5751774?accountid=12117>> p.272. [accessed 18 May 2017]

¹¹⁹ John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian, Pre-eminent Edwardian*, p.98

first read Amiel due to the dying Pattison's recommendation that 'in *importance* it seemed to him that nothing of its kind had equalled it since Rousseau's *Confessions*'.¹²⁰

She described her reaction to first reading the *Journal Intime* in the *Recollections*:

The book laid its spell upon me at once; and I felt a strong wish to translate it. M. Scherer consented and I plunged into it. It was a delightful but exacting task. At the end of it, I knew a good deal more French than I did at the beginning! For the book abounded in passages that put one on one's mettle, and seemed to challenge every faculty one possessed. M. Scherer came over [...] - and we spent hours [...], turning and twisting the most crucial sentences this way and that.¹²¹

The language Ward uses about the act of translation highlights the differing ways in which she responded to its challenge compared with the intellectual and moral discipline of Eliot ('patience', 'fidelity', and 'responsibility'). Ward's recollection of her emotion on first reading *Amiel's Journal* is conveyed in romantic terms. It engaged her imagination ('laid its spell') and her emotions ('felt a strong wish'). Ward's language, 'plunge', 'exacting', 'mettle', 'twisting and turning', is more dynamic and confrontational than Eliot's references to 'patience' and 'rigid fidelity', and compares with Grossman's description of 'plunging' into the 'dynamic' and 'hallucinatory' process of translation:

When one tries to grasp it [a single language] long enough to create a translation, the Byzantine complexity of the enterprise is heightened and intensified [...], for the second language is just as elusive, just as dynamic, just as recalcitrant as the first. The experience of plunging into the maelstrom of signification and intention that whirls and boils between them as we attempt to transfer meaning between two languages, to hear the effects, the rhythms, the artfulness of both simultaneously, can verge on the hallucinatory.¹²²

Ward's friendship with Edmond Scherer (his daughter Jeanne became Ward's French translator) meant that he advised her about the translation of crucial sentences, although Ward implies that this was more a matter of style than of meaning. In her Preface she thanks Scherer for his 'help and advice through the whole process of translation', and also Bernard Bosanquet, the translator of Lotze, for his advice on the translation of the more technical

¹²⁰ Sutherland, p.98

¹²¹ MW Rec, Ch.XI, p.209.

¹²² Grossman, p.68.

philosophic passages.¹²³ Trevelyan describes the work on the translation as ‘long and exacting’,¹²⁴ and considered that her mother:

[...] enjoyed the struggle with the precise meaning of the French phrases and always maintained she owed much to it, both in her knowledge of French and of English.¹²⁵

In her preface to the *Journal Intime*, Ward also elaborated the difficulties for which she had needed to find solutions, which lay in the predominantly private tone of the *Journal* in conjunction with its technical or abstract German philosophic language. She also considers the strategic choices open to translators of philosophic thought between technical expressions and ‘more literary’ representations of the same ideas, and justifies her approach on the grounds that Amiel himself ‘softened his phrases’ for publication:

The difficulties of the translation have been sometimes considerable, owing, first of all, to those elliptical modes of speech which a man naturally employs when he is writing for himself and not for the public [...]. Every here and there Amiel expresses himself in a kind of shorthand, [...] for which an English equivalent, at once terse and clear, is hard to find. Another difficulty has been his constant use of a technical philosophical language, which, according to his French critics, is not French - even philosophical French - but German. Very often it has been impossible to give any other than a literal rendering of such passages, if the thought of the original was to be preserved; but in those cases where a choice was open to me, I have preferred the more literary to the more technical expression; and I have been encouraged to do so by the fact that Amiel, when he came to prepare for publication a certain number of *Pensées*, extracted from the *Journal*, [...] frequently softened his phrases [...].¹²⁶

Ward’s decision about how to deal with the abstract philosophic terms may have been justified too by her awareness that Amiel’s French speaking friends thought of his Germanised philosophic expressions as defects of style, which otherwise they greeted as subtle, sublime and exhilarating.¹²⁷ Her Preface also concedes that she ‘allowed myself to transpose a sentence bodily’ in ‘two or three cases’, and ‘in a few instances’ added ‘explanatory words to the text’, which are ‘indicated by square brackets’.¹²⁸

¹²³ HFA JI, ‘Preface’ by Mary Ward, p.vi.

¹²⁴ Trevelyan, p.48.

¹²⁵ Trevelyan, p.48.

¹²⁶ HFA JI, ‘Preface’ by Mary Ward, p.v.

¹²⁷ Edmund Scherer, ‘Introduction’ to *Fragments d’un Journal Intime* by Henri-Frédéric Amiel, ed. by Edmund Scherer (Geneva: Georg, 1884), p.xxix.

¹²⁸ HFA JI, ‘Preface’ by Mary Ward, p.vi.

The 'spell' which the book had laid on her, in its articulation of ideas with which she already had intense sympathy, clearly influenced the debate she presented in her novel, *Robert Elsmere*. As with Martineau and Comte, with Eliot and Strauss and later Feuerbach, Ward saw Amiel as presenting the major issues and encapsulating the human predicament of his age:

He speaks for the life of to-day as no other single voice has yet spoken for it; in his contradictions, his fears, his despairs, and yet in the constant straining toward the unseen and the ideal which gives a fundamental unity to his inner life, he is the type of a generation universally touched with doubt, and yet as sensitive to the need of faith as any that have gone before it; [...].¹²⁹

What she identified in Amiel was the range and variousness of his psychological states: his voice and its manifestations enunciated the complexity of contemporary life and the variety of emotional responses possible. The year of the publication of *Amiel's Journal* (December 1885), she began work on *Robert Elsmere*, and, in writing it, plundered the characters she had met in Oxford, and that of Amiel himself, and his sense of his psychological multifariousness and intellectual richness, as it emerges from *Journal Intime*.

In her *Recollections* Ward claims that her translation of *Amiel's Journal* 'obtained a warm welcome both here and in America'¹³⁰, and that its reputation has 'maintained its place until now'.¹³¹ She quotes two appreciative letters, one from Jowett and one from Walter Pater. She had asked Matthew Arnold to review her translation, and this he eventually did, but not until twenty-two months later, for *Macmillan's Magazine* in September 1887. Sutherland describes the review as a 'bombshell'.¹³² He claims that Arnold was 'tepidly polite' about Ward's translation and 'silently and quite extensively corrected her renderings from the French'.¹³³ In fact, Arnold's essay describes the translation as 'at once spirited and faithful',¹³⁴ the terms Sara Hennell had used in relation to Eliot's translation of Strauss. Certainly Arnold characterised Amiel's psychology as a 'morbid pathology'.¹³⁵ Amiel is the antithesis of the qualities which Matthew Arnold admired, those of disinterested calm and wholeness, and Amiel's confessional struggle between faith and doubt would have appeared

¹²⁹ HFA JI, 'Introduction' by Mary Ward, p.xliii.

¹³⁰ MW Rec, Ch.XI, p.209.

¹³¹ MW Rec, Ch.XI, p.209.

¹³² Sutherland, p.100.

¹³³ Sutherland, p.100.

¹³⁴ MA Am, p.267

¹³⁵ MA Am, p.273

to Arnold as full of the ‘doubts’ and ‘discouragement’ which, his 1853 Preface demanded, must be so represented as to avoid the poetically ‘morbid.’¹³⁶ His essay dismissed those aspects of Amiel’s thought influenced by Buddhist nihilism and a ‘bedazzlement with the infinite’,¹³⁷ but praises Amiel as a critic of ‘real power, originality and value’, ‘well informed, just and penetrating in an eminent degree’,¹³⁸ not only in relation to books but also in relation to his analyses of social, political, and religious issues. Amiel’s religious views Arnold recognised as ‘water to our mill’,¹³⁹ but in addition he recommended that any further critical writings to be found amongst Amiel’s surviving papers would be of public interest.¹⁴⁰ A few months after writing the review, in August 1887, he decided it should appear in the second series of essays in criticism¹⁴¹ and this expectation may have been uppermost in his mind in balancing the original review towards an analysis of Amiel’s thought rather than any more extensive appreciation of Ward’s translation.

Sutherland claims that Arnold ‘silently and extensively corrected her [Ward’s] renderings from the French’¹⁴² in his review. R H Super’s notes suggest that Arnold began his review by using Ward’s translation, but ‘gradually took to emending it, often extensively, and his alterations are instructive lessons in style’.¹⁴³ Super highlights a number of examples where Arnold used his own variant translations rather than Ward’s. It is difficult to understand why he did so, except as a move to integrate his translation into his intended essay. Apart from one instance, both translations are faithful to the French original, though choosing valid alternatives to render it. Some examples will show the range of variation. Amiel writes ‘calme comme un dieu’.¹⁴⁴ Ward translates this faithfully as ‘calm like a god’.¹⁴⁵ Arnold translates it as ‘calm like God’.¹⁴⁶ Amiel writes of ‘la mortification interieure’.¹⁴⁷ Ward translates this as ‘mortification of spirit’:¹⁴⁸ Arnold as ‘inward

¹³⁶ Matthew Arnold, Preface to the first edition of *Poems* (1853), in *On the Classical Tradition*, vol I, of *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* (10 volumes), ed. by R H Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960), pp.1, 3.

¹³⁷ MA Am, p. 270.

¹³⁸ MA Am, p.273.

¹³⁹ MA Am, p.281.

¹⁴⁰ MA Am, p. 281.

¹⁴¹ MA Am, R H Super’s notes to ‘Amiel’, p.460.

¹⁴² Sutherland, p.100.

¹⁴³ MA Am, R H Super’s Notes to ‘Amiel’, p.460.

¹⁴⁴ Scherer, p.44.

¹⁴⁵ HFA JI, 28 April, 1852, p.22.

¹⁴⁶ MA Am, p.268.

¹⁴⁷ Scherer, p.33.

¹⁴⁸ HFA JI, 26 August, 1868, p.143.

disappointment'.¹⁴⁹ In a further passage, Amiel describes the training of a critic, 'Alors seulement il a fait le tour de toutes les manières d'être et possède toutes les nuances de l'appréciation'.¹⁵⁰ Ward translates this as 'By then only can he hope for insight into all the modes of being, and for mastery of all possible shades of appreciation',¹⁵¹ whereas Arnold translates it as 'Not till then has he compassed all modes of being, and made every shade of appreciation his own',¹⁵² which is admittedly more concise and elegant than Ward's rendering. In the same journal entry, Arnold's choice of word to translate 'la coupelle' is perhaps more accessible than Ward's, where he translates it as a 'crucible', and Ward translates it as 'refining rod'.

Although the review is not as tepid as suggested by Sutherland, her uncle's approach to the review and to Amiel was not as enthusiastic as Ward might have hoped. It is interesting to consider the parallels between Arnold himself and Amiel. He recognised Amiel's excellence as a critic and he suggested that some of the Amiel's themes, his 'fascination with the infinite [...] lend themselves well to poetry'.¹⁵³ Some of Amiel's themes were similar to those of Arnold's own poetry – doubt, a sense of the unknowable depths of human personality, even a sense that there was a spiritual robustness missing from his experience. These were the themes which Arnold had begun to reject as lacking the vigour, simplicity, and optimism of classical models. Perhaps it is not surprising that he found difficulties in appreciating Amiel's intimate and confessional writings.

Ward's only other involvement in a published translation was that of Joseph Joubert's *Pensées*. The translation was published as *Joubert: Selected Thoughts*, translated by Katharine Lyttelton. Lyttelton was a friend of the Ward family, and Ward provided the preface to the translation. However, it appears that she and Lyttelton worked together on the translation during the summer of 1898. Peter Collister cites a letter from Ward at that time telling her son that 'Katharine and I are doing Joubert 6 hours a day and there is no room for anything else.'¹⁵⁴ It is therefore clear that she was providing more than a preface, she was very heavily involved in the translation and management of the project. Lyttelton's translation acknowledges the permission of Matthew Arnold's wife to use his translations of

¹⁴⁹ MA Am, p.272.

¹⁵⁰ Scherer, p.72.

¹⁵¹ HFA JI, 19 October, 1869, p.162.

¹⁵² MA AM, p.274.

¹⁵³ MA Am, p.271.

¹⁵⁴ Peter Collister, 'Mrs Humphry Ward's *Eleanor*: A late Victorian Portrait of Chateaubriand and Pauline de Beaumont.', *Neophilologus*, 65, issue 4 (1981), 622-39. p.1 [accessed 18 May 2017]. The letter from Ward was dated 17 August, 1898.

those of the *Pensées* quoted in his essay on Joubert (1863).¹⁵⁵ The use of a limited number of Arnold's translations in place of Lyttelton's and Ward's own may obliquely suggest the effects of Matthew Arnold's review of *Amiel's Journal* with its 'emendations' of Ward's translations. But it certainly reflects the intention of making the book an 'Arnold' family project.

The translation was completed in 1898, in advance of the publication of *Eleanor* (1900). Work on the translation and the writing of *Eleanor* were therefore intertwined in the same way that the translation of Amiel and the writing of *Robert Elsmere* had been a decade earlier. Her interest in Joubert had commenced much earlier, however. Ward had written to her father, probably during 1884, (the letter is undated), that she had been reading Joubert's *Pensées* and *Correspondance* as background research for her introduction to *Amiel's Journal*, which suggests that even at that stage she saw that there were important parallels between the two writers, a possibility suggested in the *Journal Intime's* analysis of Joubert's achievement. She recommended Joubert's writing as charming and 'extraordinarily acute'.¹⁵⁶ But what she extracted from the *Pensées* was neither the charm nor acuteness of Joubert, but the doomed story of his friends, Châteaubriand and Mme de Beaumont, in other words a 'human and emotional crisis'.¹⁵⁷ If *Robert Elsmere* and *Helbeck of Bannisdale* explore the consequences of intellectual difference on emotional bonds, *Eleanor*, as well as revisiting the theme of loss of faith, explores what happens to an existing intellectual bond when threatened with emotional distancing.

Ward, like Eliot before her, responded to the ideas she translated and to her empathy with and judgement of her source author in her fiction. Spinoza's life influenced Eliot's fiction as did his system, and Ward's analysis of Amiel's enigmatic personality entered her novels along with his ideas and language. In *Robert Elsmere*, she succeeded in making a debate about authenticity, tradition, and the nature of personal religion and morality, which had been up to then largely conducted within intellectual and ecclesiastical circles, a topic of consuming interest to a huge reading audience. Her presentation of the many nuances of the Victorian religious debate and its impact upon the lives of her protagonists is a vindication of her belief in her power to present one of the great issues of her day through 'a picture of actual life and conduct'.

¹⁵⁵ Matthew Arnold, 'Joubert' in *Lectures and Essays in Criticism*, of *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* (10 volumes), ed. by R H Super, Vol III (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1962) .

¹⁵⁶ Trevelyan, p.47.

¹⁵⁷ MW Rec, Ch.XII, p.231.

Experiencing the way ideas were conditioned by the possibilities and limits of another language was also clearly very important to both Eliot and Ward. Then as now, translators needed to resolve competing aims, that of rendering the meaning of writing in a source language as nearly as possible, of suggesting its complex cultural connotations, and that of determining how they could transfer as nearly as possible the uniqueness of the experience of reading the product of an alien language and culture. When trying to describe the demands of this indefinable intellectual process, both Eliot and Ward, and their contemporary Matthew Arnold, chose to try to suggest what it involved through metaphorical language. Eliot's metaphors focus on tangible examples of exchange but, in most cases, accept that it necessarily involves diminishment; pewter for silver, an engraving instead of a painting, a Jew's harp instead of a piano.¹⁵⁸ The difference between a literal, hasty translation and a fully worked one is like the difference between raw and cooked food.¹⁵⁹ Only in one place, does her metaphor of cracking a nut with care to release the 'kernel' of meaning suggest the focus, force and caution needed to translate and the nature of the reward if successful. Ward's description of translation gives far greater sense of the drama of its enactment and challenges, and of the dynamism of the exchange between two languages. Her language of 'twisting and turning' anticipates the multi-dimensionality of descriptions such as Grossman's of 'the maelstrom of signification and intention that whirls and boils between' the two interacting languages. Grossman's attempt to identify what happens in the space between the two languages is also anticipated by Matthew Arnold's description of the mist of 'alien modes of thinking, speaking and feeling', in which the translator meets and seeks union with his source writer and which has to dissipate before an effective translation can be made.

The feminist theorist, Barbara Godard, tries to make this space definable, claiming that 'equivalence is located between the coding-decoding operations of two text *systems* rather than between the contents or words of two messages.'¹⁶⁰ Investigating that space between languages, of ambiguity or non-linearity of signification, the space of cultural difference, the space between differing understanding of intentions, and between attempts to reach relationship became the project of the novels both women wrote. Godard argues that 'feminist discourse presents transformation as performance as a model for translation'.¹⁶¹ The

¹⁵⁸ GE TT, p.341.

¹⁵⁹ GEL.II, to Sara Hennell, 29 April 1854, p.153.

¹⁶⁰ Barbara Godard, 'Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation' in *Translation, History and Culture*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevre (London: Pinter Publishers,1990), p .92.

¹⁶¹ Godard, p. 91.

transformative, dramatic power of novels opens up other ways of perceiving and reacting to the ideas of the dominant male discourse of nineteenth century theology and philosophy, allows for irony, irreverence, subversion – for life, which as Eliot said is ‘a great deal more than science’.¹⁶²

¹⁶² George Eliot, ‘The Natural History of German Life’, pp. 128, 129.

Chapter 2

Eliot And Feuerbach: Translation And Transmutation

Ludwig Feuerbach's intellectual importance and the continuing range of ambivalent and contradictory responses to his thought even today are suggested in Marilynne Robinson's novel *Gilead* (2004). Her protagonist, John Ames, is composing his dying thoughts on his family's and country's history and religion for his young son to read when grown up:

Ludwig Feuerbach says a wonderful thing about baptism. I have it marked. [...]. Feuerbach is a famous atheist, but he is about as good on the joyful aspects of religion as anybody, and he loves the world. [...]. But he is marvellous on the subject of joy, and also on its religious expressions.

[...] he unsettled the faith of many people, but I take issue as much with those people as with Feuerbach. It seems to me some people just go around looking to get their faith unsettled. That has been the fashion for the last hundred years or so. My brother Edward gave his book to me, '*The Essence of Christianity*', thinking to shock me out of my uncritical piety, as I knew at the time.¹

Robinson's fictional eighty year old John Ames is writing in 1956, a hundred and fifteen years after the German publication of *Das Wesen des Christentums*, and just over a hundred years after the 1854 publication of George Eliot's translation of it, the only English translation available for John and Edward Ames to read. Robinson demonstrates its variety of impacts. John Ames remains able to respond spiritually to Feuerbach's apparently passionate empathy with those needs and experiences which generate human religious impulses, keeping this mentally detached from the book's parallel and destructive analysis of the psychological and anthropological rationale for religion. But the novel makes it clear that it was the power of the latter analysis which tore apart the Ames family when John Ames was a young man of seventeen or eighteen (about forty years after Eliot's translation had appeared); that Edward and their parents lost their faith as a result of it, then moved away, leaving John to his faithful but isolated, backwater life. Nevertheless his life demonstrates that a book, which had once so radically deconstructed the religious impulse, contributing to a hundred year 'fashion' for the 'unsettlement' of faith, has the capacity to be integrated into a life of faith, its radical reverberations re-interpreted and re-accommodated by Judaeo-Christian theology.

¹ Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead* (London: Virago, 2005), p.27.

The lives of the Ames family suggest the wide range of religious and politico-philosophical impacts stemming from *The Essence of Christianity*. The book's atheism, its conception of man's psychological self-definition based in his or her relationship with others and his or her understanding of the human species as an 'object of thought',² its demand for a 'confession, that the consciousness of God is nothing else than the consciousness of the species'³ which will usher in 'a turning point of history',⁴ its emphasis on empirical realism rather than impirical idealism, as well as its dialogic method of argument are thought to have helped to define such disparate intellectual developments as the materialism of Marx and Engels and the psychological analyses of Freud. It is also seen as influencing strands of early twentieth century theology, along with the Higher Criticism, through the work of existential theologians such as Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich and others.⁵ Barth epitomises the contradictoriness of responses to Feuerbach. In his 1957 introductory essay to *Das Wesen des Christentums*, he argued both that Feuerbach's subjectivism was a significant liberating influence on nineteenth century theology and the development of his own theological views, and also (as Rosemary Ashton notes) that Feuerbach's theory was 'a platitude', and 'at bottom trite beyond compare'.⁶

What Eliot found stimulating in Feuerbach's ideas was his attempt not only to highlight Christianity's contradictions, but to reconstruct out of its sense of the sacredness of human life and relationship, shorn of the illusions of religion, a type of humanist religion; a reinterpretation of Christianity as a religion of feeling which had started with philosopher-theologians such as Schleiermacher.⁷ Feuerbach's book provided Eliot with a less dessicated scepticism than Strauss's view of Christianity's claims. It combined a rational analysis of the psychological functions of religion with an acceptance of and interest in its emotional and psychological significance. It celebrated the central meaning of those human needs, emotional, rational, and behavioural, which found such resonance in the claims of Christianity, while still exposing their human basis and trajectory and rejecting their claims to a supernatural reality. Feuerbach claimed that religion was not an unveiling of the divine, but

² LF EC, Ch.I, p.1.

³ LF EC, Ch.XXVII, p.270.

⁴ LF EC, Ch.XXVII, p.270.

⁵ Elizabeth Ermarth, *The English Novel In History 1840-1895*, ed. by Elizabeth Ermarth, p.106. .

⁶ Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought 1800-1869*, p.164.

⁷ B M G Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.39-42.

was instead ‘the solemn unveiling of a man’s hidden treasures, the revelation of his intimate thoughts, the open confession of his love-secrets’,⁸ a revelatory function with parallels both with translation and with the type of psychological exploration Eliot was committed to writing in her novels, her ‘endeavour to see what our thought and emotion may be capable of’,⁹ as she explained to Dr Joseph Paine in 1875. Feuerbach’s aim was to construct a way of making human relationship carry the force and emotional wealth of resonance which was once carried in and through the idea of the ‘sacred’. His ideas and their impact on European thought mirror Eliot’s own influence on the English novel, with her exploration of human relationship as the fulcrum of change both in wider society, and on individuals, through the depth, intensity and life-changing quality of relationships.

Feuerbach’s belief in the sacred nature of relationship and its capacity to replace the function of the divine –‘*Homo homini Deus est*’¹⁰ - is reflected in Eliot’s narrators’ comprehensive understanding and judgement of their characters, and the narrators’ insistence on the necessity of readers thinking analytically about the processes of their thoughts and feelings. Feuerbach’s interest in the psychology of relationship left a lacuna over the nature of moral action itself. Eliot, however, was interested on the nature of ‘goodness’. Her exploration of a good life and its relationship to Feuerbach’s ideas of the ‘sacred’ are discussed later in this chapter, but principally in Chapter 3, dealing with her novels’ exploration of the implications of Spinoza’s ethical system.

In this chapter, I will assess how Eliot responded to Feuerbach’s ideas as she worked on her translation, and explore the way in which Feuerbach used translation as a metaphor for his argument, contrasting this with Eliot’s own ideas and metaphors about translation, those of transmission and transmutation. I will explore how Feuerbach’s dialogic presentation of his argument through identification followed by criticism reflects ideas about translation discussed in the introduction, and how this approach is echoed and reinterpreted in Eliot’s fiction. Finally, I will discuss how Feuerbach’s ideas about feeling, understanding, relationship and the new humanist sense of the sacred are given secondary translation and reinterpretation in Eliot’s novels.

⁸ LF EC, Ch.I, p.13.

⁹ GEL.VI, (25 January 1876), pp. 216, 217.

¹⁰ LF EC, Ch.XXVII, p.271.

Eliot's Response to Feuerbach's Ideas as his Translator

In *The Essence of Christianity*, Eliot found a development of Strauss's idea of substituting humanity for the figure of Jesus, whose metamorphosis into a divine figure was, Strauss had argued, derived from human myth-making tendencies and expectations:

[...] is not the idea of the unity of the divine and human natures a real one in a far higher sense, when I regard the whole race of mankind as its realisation, than when I single out one man as such a realisation?¹¹

Feuerbach's intense engagement with the human religious impulse and his hypothesis about the psychological roots and anthropological function of religion had already created a stir in Germany. In 1854, as the translation got underway, Eliot told Sara Hennell that:

Your impression of the book exactly corresponds to its effect in Germany. It is considered *the* book of the age there, but Germany and England are *two* countries. People here are as slow to be set on fire as a *stomach*.¹²

No doubt she hoped that an effective English translation would liberate the same powerful response as in Germany. Her letters to Sara between January and May 1854 discuss some of the challenges in translating Feuerbach's ideas effectively, revealing a translator's combination of identification and judgement. The identification was with Feuerbach's ideas, and the judgement emerges through her frustration with his expression of them, particularly in his Preface and Appendix, as discussed in the previous chapter. Her letter hints that she was already thinking about how she, in contrast, would choose to express such ideas:

With the ideas of Feuerbach I everywhere agree, but of course I should, of myself, alter the phraseology considerably.¹³

In May, she was more specific about her criticisms of the style of the Appendix as 'abstract and Germanised' and imprecise:

The laxity of Feuerbach's language is particularly tiresome in the 2d §. I am obliged to translate sensation in one place and emotion in another.¹⁴

¹¹ David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus*, III, p.437.

¹² GEL.II, (18 January 1854), p.137.

¹³ GEL.II, (29 April 1854), p.153.

Eliot's emphasis on 'the important and accessible matter' in the '2d 3d and 4th sections of the Appendix'¹⁵ is significant as the ideas amplified there relate to many of the concepts which proved to be most interesting to her. Feuerbach's Appendix, Section [§] 2, discusses the significance of feeling, and its function in creating social relationships, in validating individual experience, and in providing an apparent, subjective assurance of God's existence. Eliot's emphasis on the laxity of Feuerbach's language in relation to important distinctions of meaning indicate how troubling she found her decisions as translator, where literal equivalence needed to be sacrificed in order to express Feuerbach's meaning with precision and with 'fidelity [...] in interpreting another man's mind'.¹⁶

Sensations man has in isolation; feelings only in community. Only in sympathy does sensation rise into feeling. [...].

The last refuge of theology therefore is feeling. God is renounced by the understanding; he has no longer the dignity of a real object, of a reality which imposes itself on the understanding; hence he is transferred to feeling; in feeling his existence is thought to be secure. [...].

The certainty of God is here nothing else than the self-certainty of human feeling, [...].¹⁷

Eliot's obligation 'to translate sensation in one place and emotion in another'¹⁸ relates to this section. Susan Hill argues that these discriminations demonstrate her fidelity to the original, but also 'the translator's desire creatively to transform that text'.¹⁹ While this is a possible interpretation, I would argue that Eliot's concern here is not with transformation but with clarity. Her emphasis on the distinctions in English meaning is reinforced by a translator's footnote which she added to section 4. It underlines her interest in Feuerbach's discussion of feeling and her sense of the inconsistencies of his nomenclature:

Here follows in the original a distinction between *Herz*, or feeling directed towards real objects, and therefore practically sympathetic; and *Gemüth*, or feeling directed towards imaginary objects, and therefore practically unsympathetic, self-absorbed.

¹⁴ GEL.II, (7 May 1854), p.154.

¹⁵ GEL.II, (7 May 1854), p.154.

¹⁶ GE TT, p.342.

¹⁷ LF EC, Appendix §2, p.283.

¹⁸ GEL II, (7 May 1854), p.154.

¹⁹ Susan E Hill, 'Translating Feuerbach, Constructing Morality: The Theological and Literary Significance of Translation for George Eliot', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 10/1/1997, vol 65, issue 3, p.635-653; <http://www.jstor.org.liverpool.idm.oclc.org/stable/1465655> , [accessed 10 June 2017] p.643

But the *verbal* distinction is not adhered to in the ordinary use of the language, or, indeed, by Feuerbach himself; [...].²⁰

Eliot's efforts to render Feuerbach's thought with more consistent differentiation than that provided in the original text suggest how important the ideas seemed to her. Feuerbach's analyses of feeling and its definition of the individual through social interaction have an immediate relevance to novels such as *Silas Marner*, describing the protagonist's diminishment by solitude and rehumanisation through relationship.²¹ Hill comments that these explicit choices by Eliot indicate 'her role as faithful translator and reveal[s] her interpretive presence in the text.'²² However, I would argue that they also indicate Eliot's personal emphases, the nexus of her interests in Feuerbach's ideas and her attempt to confront them precisely.

Section 4 of the Appendix discusses the relationship between reason and feeling and provides a counterpoint with Eliot's writings which suggest a Spinozistic immanence in creation. Feuerbach's discussion of the nature of reason seems here to have parallels with the 'blessedness' of Spinoza's 'intellectual love of God',²³ and, in ways similar to Spinoza's, to fuse the language of philosophical analysis with the terminology of religion:

Reason is the self-consciousness of the species, as such; [...].²⁴

Reason is thus the all-embracing, all-compassionating being, the love of the universe to itself. To reason alone belongs the great work of the resurrection and restoration of all things and beings—universal redemption and reconciliation. Not even the unreasoning animal, the speechless plant, the un sentient stone, shall be excluded from this universal festival. But how would it be possible that reason should interest itself in all beings without exception, if reason were not itself universal and unlimited in its nature?²⁵

Feuerbach's celebration of reason's transcendence of materiality is transformed later in the section to suggest that fusion of intellect and emotion which Eliot advocates in novels such as *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*:

²⁰ LF EC, Appendix § 4, footnote, p.287.

²¹ George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, (ElecBook, 2000), ProQuest Ebook Central.

²² Hill, p.642.

²³ BdeS Eth, 5p32, Corollary, p.235.

²⁴ LF EC, Appendix § 4, p.285.

²⁵ LF EC, Appendix §4, pp.286, 287.

And, in fact, feeling, the heart of man as a rational being, is as infinite, as universal as reason; since man only truly perceives and understands that for which he has feeling.²⁶

The significance of the early appendices and their ideas can be judged from the close translation Eliot made from Feuerbach's imagery conveying reason's aspirational embrace of 'the unreasoning animal, the speechless plant, the un sentient stone,' into the narrator's famous and ambiguous meditation in *Middlemarch* about the consequences of fusing 'vision and feeling'.

If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence.²⁷

The *Middlemarch* meditation uses the same categories as Feuerbach, but infuses them with a greater particularity and specificity. It translates them from scientific categories into particular lived experiences. I shall be using this famous passage from *Middlemarch* to explore, in this chapter and the next, the ways in which Eliot transforms both Feuerbach's and Spinoza's ideas, giving them particular and specific fictional life and interpretation.

Metaphors of Translation, Transmission and Transmutation

The *Essence of Christianity* examines a range of Christian doctrines and their emotional and intellectual impact, before analysing how these doctrines fulfil human psychological needs. Identification with religion's role and emotional resonance is followed by a rationalising deconstruction of its psychological function: subjective experience is deconstructed by objective analysis of it. Just as Strauss had demythologised religious text and dogma, before resurrecting the ideas as mythic truths, Feuerbach explained subjective experience as an objective psychological phenomenon, an approach which was developed in the work of psychologists and anthropologists, such as William James (*The Varieties of*

²⁶ LF EC, Appendix §4, p.287.

²⁷ GE M, II. 20. p.189.

Religious Experience),²⁸ and James Frazer (*The Golden Bough*)²⁹ at the end of the nineteenth century.

In his *Preface* to the second edition of his book, Feuerbach's justification of his arguments in the face of the furore they had already produced uses the metaphor of translation to explain his refutation of any supernatural or divine elements of religion.

[...] it is to be hoped that readers whose eyes are not sealed will be convinced and will admit, even though reluctantly, that my work contains a faithful, correct translation of the Christian religion out of the Oriental language of imagery into plain speech. And it has no pretension to be anything more than a close translation, or, to speak literally, an empirical or historic-philosophical analysis, a solution to the enigma of the Christian religion.³⁰

His defence that his work 'contains a faithful, correct translation of the Christian religion' claims an attention to original biblical texts and liturgy analogous to that of their translations into vernacular languages from the 14th century onwards. His additional self-deprecating claim that his work had 'no pretension to be anything more than a close translation' implies that translation is able to provide a 'close' or exact equivalence between the original 'oriental imagery' and contemporary 'plain speech'. In considering this claim, Susan Hill argues that his 'equation of "faithful translation" with "analysis" and "solution" denies that translation can be a simple linguistic process'.³¹ Rather, I suggest, it anticipates descriptions of the complexity of the process of translation, such as Grossman's description of it as a 'penetrating [...] critic[ism]'.³² Translation, in Feuerbach's defence of his motives and position, is portrayed as a secondary, faithfully derivative activity, re-veiling the radical and unsettling significance of his ideas and deflecting accusations of a direct assault on religion.

Further on, the nature of the project to translate 'oriental imagery' into 'plain speech' is elaborated, as one which also translates or 'interprets' actual human experience into thought about its psychological significance. His analysis claims to speak 'in the language of

²⁸ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, ed. by Matthew Bradley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁹ James Frazer, *The Golden Bough, A Study in Magic and Religion* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1993).

³⁰ LF EC, 'Preface', p. xiii.

³¹ Hill, pp.638, 639.

³² Edith Grossman, *Why Translation Matters*, p.73.

men, not an empty, unknown tongue',³³ and to be based on scientific empiricism, rather than Idealism, 'in direct opposition to the Hegelian philosophy'.³⁴

This philosophy has for its principle, not the Substance of Spinoza, not the *ego* of Kant and Fichte, [...] not the Absolute Mind of Hegel, in short, no abstract, merely conceptional being, but a *real* being, the true *Ens realissimum* – man; its principle, therefore, is in the highest degree positive and real. It generates thought from the *opposite* of thought, from Matter, from existence, from the senses [...].³⁵

I, on the contrary, let religion itself speak; I constitute myself only its listener and interpreter, not its prompter. Not to invent, but to discover, 'to unveil existence,' has been my sole object; to *see* correctly my whole endeavour.³⁶

On one hand, he represents his work as a derivative translation of Biblical and exegetical metaphor, and, on the other, as a translation of religion's manifestations into an understanding of the human needs from which they arose. Feuerbach aimed to reveal the sources and meaning of actions and attitudes which had become detached from their origins in subjective experience. His adoption of 'a faithful, correct translation' [eine getreue, richtige Übersetzung] or 'a close translation' [eine sinngetreue Übersetzung]³⁷ as appropriate metaphors for the task of retrieving cogent, contemporary meaning from the language of religious metaphor, human psychological truth from the belief systems and practice of religion, and, in particular, his insistence on the primacy of lived experience in 'unveiling', as well as 'generating' and validating deductions quasi-scientifically, found resonance in Eliot's own thought. In an 1875 letter to Dr Joseph Frank Payne, she set out her belief that novels should 'generate thought from the opposite of thought' or, in her own formulation, be 'an endeavour to see what our thought and emotion may be capable of [...] clothed [...] in some human figure and individual experience', and alluded to the dichotomies between empirical science, theorisation, and the synthesis of art:

[...] my writing is simply a set of experiments in life - an endeavour to see what our thought and emotion may be capable of - [...]. I become more and more timid - with less daring to adopt any formula which does not get itself clothed for me in some

³³ LF EC, 'Preface', p.xv.

³⁴ LF EC, 'Preface', p.xiv.

³⁵ LF EC, 'Preface', p.xv.

³⁶ LF EC, 'Preface', p.xvi.

³⁷ LF EC, 'Preface', p. xiii and Ludwig Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Vorrede zur zweiten Auflage (Stuttgart, Philipp Reclam, 1988), p.18.

human figure and individual experience, and perhaps that is a sign that if I help others to see at all it must be through that medium of art.³⁸

It is clear that both Feuerbach and Eliot rejected any simple imposition of an intellectual pattern on human experience. Ideas had to be derived, empirical, find their own metaphors, provide ‘translations’ of human experience from one medium to another. In Feuerbach’s case, translation was also revelation, an exploration of the roots of dogmatic teaching, not in the divine, but in psychological truth and human experience. In Eliot’s case the formula, the diagram, the engraved outline had to be retranslated through the complexities of human experience, psychological self-discovery, and interchange between the mental languages of other human beings. They both saw literal and metaphorical translation as the key to broadening understanding and finding equivalence.

In her final novel, *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot transfers Feuerbach’s intellectual process of translation, or the revelation of the psychological rationale for religious ideation, into the embodied dramas of ‘transmission’ and ‘transmutation’. The words identify how people’s lives can be changed by each other, by novels, or even by incomprehensible Hebrew poetry. Transmission is presented as a creation of shared meaning, born out of relationship, a mysterious process, part intellectual, part emotionally intuitive. Mordecai talks of the ‘great Transmitters’³⁹ in the history of Judaic thought, and his life is devoted to finding a worthy recipient to whom to transmit his own visionary ideas. ‘Transmutation’, on the other hand, is how Deronda describes the impact one person can have on another’s life.

“But *was* it beautiful for Bouddha to let the tiger eat him?” said Amy. [...] Deronda [...] defended the myth. “It is like a passionate word [...]. It is an extreme image of what is happening every day – the transmutation of self.”⁴⁰

The novel traces the transmissions, or creations of shared meaning between Mordecai, Mirah and Deronda, and the changes, or transmutations, characters generate in each other. Grandcourt and Deronda are the negative and positive catalysts for change in Gwendolen’s life. Mordecai and Mirah transmit their ideas and also deliver the transmutation of Deronda from an adopted member of the English upper class into a Jewish political leader. In contrast,

³⁸ GEL.VI, (25 January 1876), pp. 216, 217.

³⁹ GE DD, VI. 42. p.484.

⁴⁰ GE DD, V. 37. p.435.

Grandcourt's spiritual and emotional atrophy remains aloof from any shared meaning, or receptiveness to transmutation.

The sharing of meaning by individuals and societies is explored through Mordecai's attempts to transmit the significance of a cultural and religious tradition through teaching a Hebrew poem to young Jacob Cohen. The subject of the poem, presented in an English translation described as 'something like' the meaning of the Hebrew original, is the mysterious internality of human conscience and its perception of the sacred, ('Shut beneath in silent awful speech/ The Law lies graven'⁴¹), lines which in their conjunction of contradictory sense images dislocate rational understanding and demand intuitive comprehension. They parallel the epigraph of the novel, 'Let thy chief terror be of thine own soul',⁴² and the novel's treatment of Gwendolen's and Deronda's spiritual crises. Transmission for Mordecai becomes an attempt to establish a language within which the meanings of 'silent awful speech' become perceptible; the language he uses –Hebrew - is 'unintelligible' to Jacob – and its approximate translation ('verses with a meaning something like this'⁴³) is into a solemn and hieratic language which, the narrator suggests, is like the poetry of Yehuda Halevi.⁴⁴

Such transmission is a process by-passing the reason and involving a complex emotional osmosis:

"The boy will get them engraved within him," thought Mordecai; "it is a way of printing."

None readier than Jacob at this fascinating game of imitating unintelligible words; [...]. Yet he [Mordecai] waited with such patience as a prophet needs, and began his strange printing again undiscouraged on the morrow, saying inwardly —

"My words may rule him some day. Their meaning may flash out on him. It is so with a nation —after many days."⁴⁵

Just as his poem talked of the internal Law lying 'graven' beyond human attempts to articulate a language for it, words which also echoed the biblical imagery of the revelation of ethical law to humanity, Mordecai uses the metaphor of 'engraving' to describe transmission's process of assimilation and internalisation, with its meaning realised through

⁴¹ GE DD, V. 38. p.445.

⁴² GE DD, page facing title.

⁴³ GE DD, V. 38. p.445.

⁴⁴ GE DD, V. 38. p.445.

⁴⁵ GE DD, V. 38. p.444.

contingent association. The words ‘engraved’ and ‘graven’ suggest clarity of outline, indissoluble impact, and the capacity for reproduction and wider transmission. They recall a metaphor used by Eliot in her 1855 essay on translation in relation to her commendation of Schlegel’s translation’s ‘faithful adherence’ to Shakespeare:

[...], and it is a high pleasure to track it in its faithful adherence to the original, just as it is to examine a fine engraving of a favourite picture.⁴⁶

The degree to which Eliot achieved a successful ‘transmission’ of ideas through her integration of individual experience with thought about its significance has been the subject of critical ambivalence. Henry James notably managed both to acclaim her success and to remain equivocal about its impact. In an 1873 review of *Middlemarch*, noting Eliot’s commitment to realism and its theoretical and intellectual sources, he wrote:

The author has commissioned herself to be real, her native tendency being that of an idealist, and the intellectual result is a very fertilizing mixture. The constant presence of thought, of generalizing instinct, of *brain*, in a word, behind her observation, gives the latter its great value [...].⁴⁷

In contrast with Eliot’s own emphasis on the primacy of ‘some human figure and individual experience’,⁴⁸ James’s 1885 review of her life claimed that:

[...] she proceeds from the abstract to the concrete; [...] her figures and situations are evolved, [...], from her moral consciousness, and are only indirectly the products of observations. They are deeply studied and elaborately justified, but they are not *seen* in the irresponsible plastic way. The world was, first and foremost, for George Eliot, the moral, the intellectual world; the personal spectacle came after; [...].

Yet the same article identifies Eliot’s combination of moral vision with sympathy for the individual as the essence of her success:

⁴⁶ GE TT, p.341.

⁴⁷ Henry James, ‘Middlemarch. A Book Review of George Eliot's Novel’, originally published in *Galaxy*, March, 1873, < <http://www.complete-review.com/quarterly/vol3/issue2/jameshmm.htm> > [accessed 9 June 2017]

⁴⁸ GEL.VI, to Dr Joseph Frank Payne, 25 January 1876, pp. 216, 217.

Nothing is finer, in her genius, than the combination of her love of general truth and love of the special case; [...].⁴⁹

James's ambiguous views about Eliot's creation of worlds where thought about the significance of experience is integral to and delimited by that experience, in a parallel movement to that of Feuerbach's anti-Hegelian generation of 'thought' and meaning from 'existence' and from the 'activity of the senses',⁵⁰ points to an area which remains critically debated, the tensions between realism, form, and some of the ideological intentions informing Eliot's fiction. Amanda Adamson has defended Eliot's 'conscious enactment' of moral and philosophical thought:

Beyond her critique of undesirable forms of theory and abstraction, then, stands a far more demanding attempt to represent her moral-philosophical views as a consciously enacted form of life [...]. Across the novels, a number of individual characters represent [...] a significant moral struggle to enact ideals, one punctuated by errors or lapses.⁵¹

Such defences are underlined by the views of philosophers themselves. Iris Murdoch argued compellingly in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* that the novel 'is an ethical form dedicated to truth of seeing.'⁵² A contemporary philosopher, Martha Nussbaum, has also argued that fiction has a unique role to play in the analysis of certain ethical problems, and that the particularities of the conjunction of moral choice with circumstance can best be explored through fiction:

[...] there may be some views of the world and how one should live in it, [...] that emphasise [...] its complexity and mysteriousness, its flawed and imperfect beauty, that cannot be fully and adequately stated in the language of conventional philosophic prose, [...], but only in a language and in forms themselves more complex, more allusive, more attentive to particulars.⁵³

⁴⁹ Henry James 'George Eliot's Life', *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 1885, p.668-677
<<http://unz.org/Pub/AtlanticMonthly-1885may-00668>> [accessed 18 May 2017] p.673.

⁵⁰ LF EC, 'Preface', p.xiv.

⁵¹ Amanda Adamson, 'Living Theory: Personality and Doctrine in Eliot', in *Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture: Companion to George Eliot*, ed. by Amanda Anderson and Harry Shaw, (New York, NY, USA: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), p.443. Proquest Ebook Central.

⁵² Martha C Nussbaum, 'Faint with Secret Knowledge': Love and Vision in Murdoch's *The Black Prince* ' in *Iris Murdoch, Philosopher*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.1. Oxford Scholarship Online

⁵³ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, p.3.

The Influence of Feuerbach's Style

Feuerbach's book is divided into two parts. The first traces, then unpicks, the congruence of human feeling, understanding and will ('to will, to love, to think, are the highest powers, are the absolute nature of man as man, and the basis of his existence'⁵⁴) with Christian revelation and doctrine; the second aims to expose the contradictions and psychological self-deceptions inherent in religious faith, with specific reference to Christianity. The construction of Part 1 of the book as a dialogue between sympathy and analysis, between an intense engagement with the viewpoint and feelings of the religious, followed by an intellectual distancing and a critique of that viewpoint, offered Eliot the '*truth of feeling*'⁵⁵ she required as well as intellectual rigour. It also underlines Feuerbach's conception of it as an act of translation – the presentation of the original religious language with its human emotional resonances followed by its reasoned translation into the psychological projections of human need it represents.

Knoepfmacher comments that Feuerbach's language retained 'some of the poetry of the old belief'.⁵⁶ Just as in prophetic books and epistles, Feuerbach's style is designed to inspire, convince, and engender a sense of shared emotion. Robinson's character, John Ames, mentioned earlier, celebrates his response to the 'wonderful' or 'marvellous' presentations of religious emotion in *The Essence of Christianity*. As discussed in the introduction, Eliot also makes use of the allusive richness of the vocabulary of Judaeo-Christianity in order to suggest the enduring realities of human experience to be inherited by post-Christian ideas. Aspects of Feuerbach's style are also crucial to his ideas and are a way of realising them. I shall consider the influence of two aspects on Eliot; his dialogue with the reader, and his advocacy of interruption as a route to experiencing the 'uncommon significance' of 'the ordinary course of things'.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ LF EC, Ch.I, p.3.

⁵⁵ GEL.I, to Sara Hennell, 9 October, 1843, p.162.

⁵⁶ U C Knoepfmacher, *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel: George Eliot, Walter Pater and Samuel Butler*, p.47.

⁵⁷ LF EC, Ch.XXVII, p.278.

i) The Dialogue with the Reader

The dialogic nature of Feuerbach's argument suggests the internal 'I and thou' conversation, identified in his 'Introduction' as the dynamic of thought and creator of objective self-understanding:

Man is himself at once I and thou; he can put himself in the place of another, for this reason, that to him his species, his essential nature, and not merely his individuality, is an object of thought.⁵⁸

This internal dialogue of thought is translated into a conversation between the author and the reader, whose putative views are alternately invoked and satirised, in a process of clarifying and revising existing misconceived patterns of thought and feeling. Feuerbach demands agreement through his use of the first and second persons of 'I', 'we', 'you', as well as setting out a more impersonal, analytical argument mainly expressed in the third person. In Part 1, he frequently enters into a persona, both impassioned and manipulative, a proselytising, subjective, feeling 'I', apparently convinced of traditional understandings of Christian dogma, only to withdraw sharply and deconstruct or translate its assumptions later in the chapter or even section. In the chapters, 'The Mystery of the Incarnation' and 'The Mystery of the Suffering God', he writes:

[....]: God is a God who loves me – who loves man in general. Here lies the emphasis, the fundamental feeling of religion. The love of God makes me loving; the love of God to man is the cause of man's love to God; the divine love causes, awakens human love. "We love God because he first loved us."⁵⁹

These emotionally-charged first-person sentences are followed by a more detached and questioning reflection:

Is not the love of God to man – the basis and central point of religion – the love of man to himself made an object, contemplated as the highest objective truth, as the highest being to man?⁶⁰

⁵⁸ LF EC, Ch.I, p.2.

⁵⁹ LF EC, Ch.IV, p.57.

⁶⁰ LF EC, Ch.IV, p.58.

A similar pattern of passionate identification followed by a move to rational detachment is found in discussing Christ's suffering:

Is not what God my Lord does my model? [...]. Do I not also know the history of his suffering? Should it be an object of cold remembrance to me, or even an object of rejoicing, because it has purchased my salvation? Who can think so—who can wish to be exempt from the sufferings of his God? ⁶¹

These sentences are answered a paragraph later by a more detached, third person voice:

God suffers, means in truth nothing else than: God is a heart. [...]. The mystery of the suffering God is therefore the mystery of feeling, sensibility. A suffering God is a feeling, sensitive God. But the proposition: God is a feeling Being, is only the religious periphrase of the proposition: feeling is absolute, divine in its nature. ⁶²

In this latter quotation, Feuerbach again makes explicit that his switch from first to third person voices, from the language of religious emotion to the language of psychological analysis, from the mode of sympathy and feeling to the mode of detachment and thought, is analogous to a translation or 'periphrase' of one to the other, and a representation of the demands of the act of translation, empathy and judgement. His use of the process of translation as an image for his project has clear parallels with Eliot's own quasi-religious language describing her conception of translation and its emphasis on combining fidelity and interpretation:

[...] the rigid fidelity, and the sense of responsibility in interpreting another man's mind [...]. ⁶³

In his critique of Colin McCabe's argument that Eliot's narrator's metalanguage controls readers' reactions, ⁶⁴ David Lodge suggests, without elaboration, that 'the narrator's discourse in Eliot's fiction is modelled on the 'I-thou speech situation [...]'. ⁶⁵ I would argue

⁶¹ LF EC, Ch.V, p.62.

⁶² LF EC, Ch.V, pp.62, 63.

⁶³ GE TT, p.342.

⁶⁴ Colin MacCabe, 'The End of Metalanguage: from George Eliot to *Dubliners*', in *George Eliot*, ed. by K M Newton (London: Longman, 1991), p.158.

⁶⁵ David Lodge, '*Middlemarch* and the Idea of the Classic Realist Text', in *George Eliot*, ed. by K M Newton, p.179.

further that Feuerbach's rhetorical machinery, his transitions between passages of sympathetic feeling and passages of detached commentary is reflected in the alternations of narrative stance displayed in Eliot's fictional presentation of her 'experiments in life'. Whereas Feuerbach's third-person voice is one of detached human understanding in dialogue with, and often in contrast to, the impassioned feeling of his first-person voice, Eliot's third-person narrative voice is a synthesis of sympathetic feeling and rational judgement. It is, as I have suggested, the voice of the translator emerging from behind the translation.

The voice has been the subject of considerable critical attention, with debates about omniscience, polyvocalism and its implications for Eliot's use of realist conventions, and with Lodge and McCabe debating the extent to which it controls readers' reactions or insists on their engagement in thought.⁶⁶ Eliot's technique of free indirect discourse and her views about the role of sympathy have been explored by critics such as Suzy Anger.⁶⁷ I would argue that as well as being the voice of the translator behind the text, it is a representation of the 'emotional intellect' at work, Eliot's translation of Feuerbach's identification of feeling and understanding as human 'perfections' which allow the perception of 'the perfection, the infinitude of his species, [...] whether as an object of feeling, of conscience, or the thinking consciousness'.⁶⁸ The main flow of Eliot's narratives is presented through just such a voice of the 'thinking consciousness', but they are interrupted by passages of another narrative voice, that of an 'I' who demands a direct engagement with readers, and exaggerates, satirises, or demands that readers analyse their responses. Just as Feuerbach demands that the reader reconsider the focus and nature of their emotions objectively to gain self-understanding, so Eliot also demands that her reader becomes 'an object of' his or her own 'thinking consciousness', and achieves a greater measure of self-understanding.

ii) Interruption

Hardy's identification of moments of disillusion,⁶⁹ Carroll's analysis of the collapse of Eliot's characters' world view,⁷⁰ and Levine's emphasis on the experience of

⁶⁶ Lodge, p.179.

⁶⁷ Suzy Anger, *Victorian Interpretation*, pp.116, 117.

⁶⁸ LF EC, Ch.I, p.7.

⁶⁹ Barbara Nathan Hardy, *The Novels of George Eliot: a Study in Form*, p.198.

⁷⁰ David Carroll, *George Eliot and the conflict of interpretations: a reading of the novels*, p.2.

destabilisation⁷¹ all point to those moments in Eliot's novels where characters lose a habitual way of thinking and growth or change is enforced upon them. In my introduction, I suggested that this could echo the pain of Eliot's loss of faith and her troubled experience of translating Strauss, but it is also for her a way of shedding misconception and discovering the real. It echoes Feuerbach's insistence that the 'uncommon significance' or a sense of the sacred in the 'ordinary course of things'⁷² can only be discovered through 'interruption' of a sense of normality, through entering into the perceptions and world of another, as would a translator, according to Edith Grossman.

Eliot's narrator's switch of person and voice, and use of sudden interruptions to the flow of narrative, and the dramatic switches between subjective and objective within Feuerbach's dialogues thus reflect similar authorial purposes. Eliot argued that a reinterpretation of the ordinary through a realistic picture of human life:

[...] such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment.⁷³

Both she and Feuerbach emphasised the function of 'interruption' or 'surprise' as a method of finding significance or even meaning 'to that which is apart from themselves'. Where Eliot seems to further develop Feuerbach's idea is in linking attention to 'what is apart from themselves' to a growing moral awareness. Feuerbach argues that sympathy and love negate 'abstract moral rectitude'.⁷⁴ Eliot's novels are concerned with translating good from abstraction into the reality of human experience, but in mysterious ways they also emphasise the contribution of human action to the requirements of an abstraction, formulated by Mordecai, for example, as 'Eternal Goodness'.⁷⁵

One of Eliot's methods of securing surprise uses the alternation of voice and address used by Feuerbach. One such alternation of third person, free indirect discourse, expressing detached understanding, with a challenging direct address to the reader, can be found in

⁷¹ Caroline Levine, 'Surprising Realism' in *Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture : Companion to George Eliot*, ed. by Amanda Anderson and Harry Shaw, p.63.

⁷² LF EC, Ch.XXVII, p.278.

⁷³ George Eliot, 'The Natural History of German Life', in *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, ed. by Byatt and Warren, p.110.

⁷⁴ LF EC, Ch.III, p.49.

⁷⁵ GE DD, VI. 47. p.542.

Middlemarch's famous description of Dorothea's emotional chaos during her honeymoon in Rome.

[....]: all this vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual, mixed confusedly with the signs of breathing forgetfulness and degradation, at first jarred her as with an electric shock, and then urged themselves on her with that ache belonging to a glut of confused ideas which check the flow of emotion. [....]; and in certain states of dull forlornness Dorothea all her life continued to see the vastness of St. Peter's, [....], the excited intention in the attitudes and garments of the prophets and evangelists in the mosaics above, and the red drapery which was being hung for Christmas spreading itself everywhere like a disease of the retina.⁷⁶

Both Scholl⁷⁷ and Hardy⁷⁸ have noted the conflation of Dorothea's response to Rome with her sexual disappointment, but I would argue that the complex imagery suggested by a third-person narrator, who seems to understand Dorothea's emotional confusion and to expect the same understanding from the reader, also provides an epic analogy for her disappointed ambitions for a life of loving intellectual endeavour, through its descriptions of analogous disjunctions of spiritual and intellectual experience, and contrasts of past intention ('the excited intention [....] of the prophets') with a present pathological perception ('disease of the retina') offered by western Christendom and western civilisation itself. The comprehensiveness of psychological understanding and cultural allusion displayed by this third person voice and its commentary is disrupted by a more challenging and subversive first person voice:

Nor can I suppose that when Mrs. Casaubon is discovered in a fit of weeping six weeks after her wedding, the situation will be regarded as tragic. Some discouragement, some faintness of heart at the new real future which replaces the imaginary, is not unusual, and we do not expect people to be deeply moved by what is not unusual. That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ GE M, II. 20. p.188.

⁷⁷ Lesa Scholl, *Translation, Authorship and the Victorian Professional Woman: Charlotte Brontë, Harriet Martineau and George Eliot*, p.162.

⁷⁸ Barbara Nathan Hardy, *George Eliot: A Critic's Biography* (London: Continuum, 2006), p.60.

⁷⁹ GE M, II. 20. p.189.

I have already noted the much more specific echoing of Eliot's translation of Feuerbach's Appendix, section 4. But this voice, just like Feuerbach's first person voices, addresses the reader directly, drawing them into a collusive relationship with its conclusions ('we do not expect', 'if we had a keen vision', 'we should die', 'the quickest of us'), yet simultaneously distancing and ironising that collusion. In contrast to the detached understanding of the third person narrator, and its analogies suggesting a tragic-heroic scale to Dorothea's disappointment, the first person voice challenges sympathy as too facile and conventional emotional wisdom as too cynical, destabilising and enforcing the reader to work out how his or her views are being manipulated. This voice ambivalently diminishes the scale of Dorothea's tragedy, and the reader's capacity for sympathy. Simultaneously requiring and denying the possibility of the reader attaining Feuerbachian 'keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life', the narrator finally enforces a further recognition of a shared emotional 'stupidity'. Yet again, reflecting the demands of translation and Feuerbach's analyses, Eliot seems to demand both identification and judgement, emotional vision and rational assessment, and the disconcerting switches between these modes are designed to make the reader think about the origins and effects of sympathy, and to question him or herself as well as the narrative. Lodge argues that Eliot's authorial commentary 'constantly forces' the reader 'to think for himself, and constantly implicates him in the moral judgements being formulated'.⁸⁰ But in the *Middlemarch* passage quoted above, it is the very uncertainty about viewpoint which is significant. The reader is forced to hold in tension an understanding of the ordinariness of characters or their fates, besides an understanding of their subjective significance.

A similar dislocation of attitudes occurs in *Adam Bede* where Hetty's emotional triviality is initially emphasised by the narrator in direct addresses to the reader. This impression undergoes subtle change as minor characters describe her during her journeys in hope and in despair.⁸¹ Hetty, like Gwendolen in *Daniel Deronda*, becomes the 'slenderer, more insignificant thread'⁸² of vain egoism on which Eliot assembles her accounts of deepest human grief and despair, of the enormity of moral responsibility and punishment, and invokes, like Feuerbach, mankind's psychic need of a 'Suffering God' to provide strength in the tasting of 'the bitterest of life's bitterness'.⁸³ I suggest that Eliot's determination to make

⁸⁰ Lodge, p.181.

⁸¹ GE AB, V. 36 and 37, pp.348-367.

⁸² GE DD, II. 11. p.109.

⁸³ GE AB, IV. 35. p.345.

the reader think is intensified by the interchange between third person indirect narrative and first person interrogation of reaction and viewpoint, and that we, as readers, have to understand that our views are always contingent and may have new perspectives enforced on them.

As discussed in my introduction, Eliot's engagement with Feuerbach's ideas, and the ways in which her novels examine their implications for the lives of individuals and their communities, has been the subject of considerable critical discussion. I shall look at the ways in which Eliot both embraced and critiqued a number of his ideas, including the internal dialogue of thought, the dialogue between 'I and thou' as a catalyst of change, and the sacred nature of relationship.

The Influence of Feuerbach's Internal Dialogue of Thought

As I have demonstrated, the dialogue with the reader as a 'thou', with ideas to be adjusted through exposure to the various voices of the author or narrator, is a manifestation of one of Feuerbach's central ideas about the significance of human relationship in defining ourselves and our ideas about our world. In his introduction to *The Essence of Christianity*, however, he identifies another type of dialogue which, he argues, demarcates human consciousness from that of the rest of the animal kingdom, the ability to engage in a creative internal dialogue, producing ideas, abstractions, and an understanding of the world beyond the self because of the human ability to conceptualise what it is to be human. 'Man thinks - that is he converses with himself',⁸⁴ says Feuerbach and continues:

Man is himself at once I and thou; he can put himself in the place of another, for this reason, that to him his species, his essential nature, and not merely his individuality, is an object of thought.⁸⁵

He ascribes to the internalised 'I and thou' dialogue the dynamism behind intellectual understanding of the world of the sensations; the sympathetic understanding or translation of the inner lives of other individuals and the recognition of the limits of selfhood; but, above all in this work, the ability to project from individual experience a conceptualisation of the capacities, emotional, intellectual and behavioural, of humanity as a whole, 'the idea of man

⁸⁴ LF EC, Ch.I, p.2.

⁸⁵ LF EC, Ch.I, p.2.

as a species, [...], of humanity as a whole'.⁸⁶ In *The Essence of Christianity*, the dual or even triple voices reflect the dissonances of the human internal dialogue, the dynamism and empowerment which can result from a divided self, and the creatively difficult relationship which humanity experiences in its attempts to reconcile the feeling unconscious with the reflecting, thinking consciousness. Eliot's translation of this division and dynamic can be detected in *Daniel Deronda's* descriptions of Gwendolen's emergent understanding of herself, from a perception that she has limitations which are the subject of Daniel's critical intelligence, to a passionate internal questioning undermining her public self-possession, a bravura which gives way to the sudden emergence of irrational yet premonitory states of subconscious dread. Similarly Eliot shows, through the merging of a character's own articulation of his thoughts into the free indirect speech of the narrator, that process of internal question and answer of thought, described by Feuerbach:

At least, Deronda argued, Mordecai's visionary excitability was hardly a reason for concluding beforehand that he was not worth listening to except for pity's sake. Suppose he had introduced himself as one of the strictest reasoners: do they form a body of men hitherto free from false conclusions and illusory speculations? The driest argument has its hallucinations, too hastily concluding that its net will now at last be large enough to hold the universe. Men may dream in demonstrations, and cut out an illusory world in the shape of axioms, definitions, and propositions, with a final exclusion of fact signed Q.E.D. No formulas for thinking will save us mortals from mistake in our imperfect apprehension of the matter to be thought about.⁸⁷

The voice changes from an apparent direct reportage of a character's ideas ('At least, Deronda argued, [...].') to one which could be interpreted as a direct presentation of an internal dialogue ('Suppose he had [...]. Do they form a body of men [...]?') and, through these transmutations, to a voice which could be a fusion of indirect reportage of Deronda's continued internal dialogue with the voice of the narrator. Deronda's dialogue with himself is initially presented through short questions, but the answer ('The driest argument has its hallucinations, too hastily concluding that its net will now at last be large enough to hold the universe'), which could still be interpreted as Deronda's own thoughts, begins a transition to a series of generalisations which increasingly take on the authority of a universalising philosophic voice, the voice of 'us mortals', the human species. Deronda's voice has metamorphosed into that of a critical philosopher outside the narrative structure of the novel,

⁸⁶ LF EC, Ch.XVII, p.160.

⁸⁷ GE DD, VI. 41. pp.477, 478.

and the merging of both voices finally confronts and identifies the reader as one of ‘us mortals’, concluding that any of ‘our’ attempts at rationality hold their own pitfalls. The frequent merging of the narrator’s voice with that of Deronda’s thoughts and suppositions allows Deronda’s conversion from the rational analysis of an uncommitted ‘outsider’ to a perception that Mordecai might be an exemplar of a better way of unifying feeling and intellect, and ultimately to an identification with Mordecai’s cause.

The ‘dialogue of the mind with itself’ was what Matthew Arnold detected at the root of the questioning of old certainties and the pessimism of ‘modern problems’, ‘the doubts’, ‘the discouragement’ of ‘Hamlet and of Faust’.⁸⁸ In contrast, Feuerbach presents the internal dialogue as the vehicle for and catalyst of human consciousness, of the capacity to imagine and generate abstract ideas, and, through the capacity to imagine, to act generously and even altruistically towards other people. The power of the idea of an internal dialogue, to Eliot as to Arnold, lay not only in its exploration of the springs of intellectuality, but also in its inherent dramatic qualities. The internal ‘I and thou’ dialogue of dramatic soliloquy had proved one of the most powerful methods of exposing a character in the act of thought, self-discovery or self-revelation and of enticing an audience into understanding, judgement, or complicity. The act of translation had demanded, as Eliot had discovered, a conscious discipline in the ‘solemn unveiling’,⁸⁹ the faithful understanding and judgement, of the mind of another human being, another ‘thou’. If Feuerbach had invoked Catholic imagery to describe his translation of the metaphors of religion into the psychological, ‘solemn unveiling’ of the human mind, Eliot’s 1855 essay on translation, published a year after her translation of *The Essence of Christianity*, transmutes this Catholic imagery through her more Protestant sensibility, but retains the solemnity of the engagement in an ‘I-thou’ relationship, in this case, the relationship of translator to source author:

[...] the moral qualities especially demanded in a translator - the patience, the rigid fidelity, and the sense of responsibility in interpreting another man’s mind.⁹⁰

Eliot’s experience, as translator, of the solemn duties of inhabiting and interpreting ‘another man’s mind’ can be seen informing her construction of the lives of others in her

⁸⁸ Matthew Arnold, ‘Preface to the First Edition of *Poems* (1853)’ in *On the Classical Tradition*, ed. R H Super (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1960), p.1.

⁸⁹ LF EC, Ch.I, p.13.

⁹⁰ GE TT, p. 342.

novels. For her, the novel offered a form sympathetic to the exploration and unveiling of the interplay between maturing comprehensions of selves and others, and a practical exercise in putting oneself ‘in the place of another’.⁹¹ It could present its characters judging, sympathising and changing viewpoint just as in drama, but it also allows a reflective interaction between narrator and reader, a capacity which Eliot exploited. Feuerbach’s sense of the complexity of human society and its interactions, as well as the possibilities of the self-realisation of the human species, could also find expression through the novel’s capacity to explore both internal mental lives and their external, social interactions.

Feuerbach argued that self-definition is a response to a consciousness of what it is to be human:

It is true that the human being [...] can and must [...] feel and recognise himself to be limited; but he can become conscious of his limits, his finiteness, only because the perfection, the infinitude of his species, is perceived by him, whether as an object of feeling, of conscience, or the thinking consciousness.⁹²

The denouements of *Middlemarch*, *Daniel Deronda*, and *Adam Bede* all present a moment of realisation for a major character – Dorothea, Gwendolen, Adam, – that their visions of themselves require a new consciousness to respond to the external forces of events, other people, and their own self-discoveries. The emergence of this adjustment is an epiphany coinciding with a humble recognition of the smallness of the claims of individual lives in comparison with the lot of humanity as a ‘species’. Suzy Anger argues that Feuerbach’s aim of ‘unveiling’ a shared reality between human beings became Eliot’s artistic aim also.⁹³ However, rather than driven by a Feuerbachian recognition of the ‘perfection, the infinitude’ of the species, Dorothea’s moment of decision as to how to act selflessly in relation to Rosamond, Lydgate and Will is accompanied by a vision of a suffering humanity’s life of ‘labour and endurance’:

"What should I do—how should I act now, this very day, if I could clutch my own pain, and compel it to silence, and think of those three?"

⁹¹ LF EC, Ch.I, p.2.

⁹² LF EC, Ch.I, p.7.

⁹³ Suzy Anger, ‘George Eliot and Philosophy’, in *The Cambridge Companion To George Eliot*, ed. by George Levine, pp. 83, 84.

It had taken long for her to come to that question, [...]. [...]; and she felt the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance.⁹⁴

In *Daniel Deronda*, Deronda similarly urges Gwendolen to look beyond herself and to address her life to the needs of others:

But if you [...] made the unalterable wrong a reason for more effort towards a good that may do something to counterbalance the evil? [...]. Feeling what it is to have spoiled one life may well make us long to save other lives from being spoiled.⁹⁵

In Deronda's own response to Mordecai, he himself exchanges his sense of personal ennui and the comfortable identity of 'an English gentleman' for service to a separate community, that of the European Jew, which Eliot uses as a microcosm of the 'idea of man as a species, [...] of humanity as a whole',⁹⁶ where individualism gives way to community:

Nay, it was conceivable that [...] Deronda might receive from Mordecai's mind the complete ideal shape of that personal duty and citizenship which lay in his own thought like sculptured fragments certifying some beauty yearned after but not traceable by divination.⁹⁷

The I - Thou Relationship as a Catalyst of Change

A number of critics have been intrigued by the moments in Eliot's novels in which characters apprehend a new understanding of their situation. Barbara Hardy focuses on the moments in Eliot's novels where day-time 'disenchantment' marks a 'stage in metamorphosis' from 'the centre to the periphery, from the dream of self which filled the world to a reduced consciousness'.⁹⁸ David Carroll locates the existential crisis in the collapse of a character's 'world view' or preconceptions. Eliot's experiments in life, he argues, 'proceed by the testing, juxtaposing, comparing, and contrasting different ways of making sense of the world until coherence reaches its limit and breaks down into incoherence.'⁹⁹ Caroline Levine argues that Eliot:

⁹⁴ GE M, VIII. 80. p.777.

⁹⁵ GE DD, V. 36. p.420.

⁹⁶ LF EC, Ch.XVII, p.160.

⁹⁷ GE DD, VI. 41. p.476.

⁹⁸ Barbara Nathan Hardy, *The Novels of George Eliot: a study in form*, p.198.

⁹⁹ Carroll, p.2.

[...] shows herself persistently drawn to moments when imaginative habits are brought to a sudden stop, moments when readers and characters are startled into new perceptions of alterity [...], her realism works when it jolts the imagination into a properly feeling and knowing orientation toward the otherness of the world.¹⁰⁰

I suggest that each of these separate analyses identifies the moment when the ego discovers its limits. Feuerbach describes this discovery as being dependent on recognising the reality of a 'thou':

[...]; but the first stone against which the pride of egoism stumbles is the *thou*, the *alter ego*. The *ego* first steels its glance in the eye of a *thou* before it endures the contemplation of a being which does not reflect its own image. My fellow-man is the bond between me and the world.¹⁰¹

Eliot's own allusion to surprise, mentioned earlier, forms part of the artist's project to initiate in the reader 'that attention to what is *apart from themselves*' [my italics] which will form 'the raw material of moral sentiment.'¹⁰² In her novels, it is a destabilising discovery that there is more than the 'I' of unconstrained subjectivity, there is a Feuerbachian 'thou'. In many of Eliot's novels, characters become conscious of their limitations at a moment of critical self-reappraisal, precipitated as their personal myths are undermined by the stubborn refusal of reality or other people to play their expected parts. Eliot echoes Feuerbach's perception of these moments as also constituting a character's move towards 'bonds' with the world beyond.

The novels demonstrate the suffering caused by unchallenged, self-generated illusion, unchecked by the external reality of a 'thou', and also the humanity that evolves in confronting illusion and facing its moral consequences. Dorothea sets aside her illusions to find sympathy with the diminished reality of her husband's predicament; and Arthur Donnithorne and Hetty are stripped of their frivolous illusions through the tragic impact of their actions on themselves and others.¹⁰³ In *Daniel Deronda*, Gwendolen expects to charm and manipulate whomsoever she wishes on her own terms. The dramatic failure of her marriage and her betrayal of her husband's former mistress precipitate the beginning of her own internal dialogue of self-discovery. The two male protagonists, Deronda, whose own

¹⁰⁰ Levine, p.63.

¹⁰¹ LF EC, Ch.VIII, p.82.

¹⁰² George Eliot, 'The Natural History of German Life', p.110.

¹⁰³ GE AB.

internal dialogue exploring his selfhood is incomplete, and Grandcourt, with his impermeable egotism preventing any exchange of understanding, function as her 'thou', offering a different vision from her own of her possibilities and limitations. While Deronda's positive function is to open her eyes to the claims of the rest of humanity, Grandcourt, who, even more than Gwendolen, sees the world on his own terms, without any 'thou' allowed to intrude except as an instrument of gratification, is a warning of the dangers of extreme egotism:

[....]; it [his marriage] had really brought more of aim into his life, new objects to exert his will upon; and he had not repented of his choice. His taste was fastidious, and Gwendolen satisfied it: [....].¹⁰⁴

His manipulative egotism forces her to recognise her own self-centredness:

Any romantic illusions she had had in marrying this man had turned on her power of using him as she liked. He was using her as he liked.¹⁰⁵

The collision of their egos is portrayed as leading to Grandcourt's death and, in Gwendolen's case, a re-evaluation of her moral consciousness. Deronda's becomes her 'thou', combining sympathy and judgement, helping her to translate her failure into a new sense of how to live.

Eliot explicitly alludes to Gwendolen's 'feelings' about Deronda translating him 'without the aid of sacred ceremony [...] into a priest'.¹⁰⁶ Their relationship suggests not only Feuerbach's 'I – thou' path of self-discovery but also his insistence that types of human relationship assume sacred roles - 'the relations of [...] man to man - in short, all the moral relations are *per se* religious'.¹⁰⁷ In her suggestions about how to understand the post-Christian sacred, Eliot shows the evolution of relationship. In some novels, this role is translated through the intervention of one character on behalf of another, presented as a quasi-religious act requiring change of attitude: Dinah's death cell prayers focus on Hetty's illusions,¹⁰⁸ Mrs Winthrop's invitation to Silas is to rejoin the human community of Raveloe

¹⁰⁴ GE DD, VI. 48. p.543.

¹⁰⁵ GE DD, VI. 48. p.556.

¹⁰⁶ GE DD, V. 35. p.401.

¹⁰⁷ LF EC, Ch.XXVII, p.271.

¹⁰⁸ GE AB, V. 45. pp.422, 423.

and confront the injustices of the past,¹⁰⁹ Philip Wakem continues his loving belief in Maggie after her involvement with Stephen.¹¹⁰ Eliot's approach to the Feuerbachian concept of self-definition through exposure to the reality of another person, and its depiction as a sacred recalibration of value, transcends the more usual nature of relationship within many novels, where illusions about self and others are presented as amusing stages en route to greater maturity. Austen, for example, relieves her heroines of their illusions about their own emotions and other people without the consequences becoming tragic. Gwendolen's marital opportunities in relation to a rich, cold, contemptuous man have tragic, violent consequences, which transform her from a brilliant but vain young woman into a tragic heroine, whereas the reader is invited to share in Lizzie Bennet's more optimistic assessment of the romantic and material possibilities of Darcy and his Derbyshire estate.¹¹¹

In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea's disillusion with her early hopes of an emotionally and intellectually rewarding marriage, and her inner rebellion against the arid control of her future by the dying Casaubon lead to an intense rethinking of her beliefs and underpinning of her life's purpose, which Eliot characterised as a continuing 'devotedness':

It was too early yet for her [...] to have readjusted that devotedness which was so necessary a part of her mental life that she was almost sure sooner or later to recover it. Permanent rebellion, the disorder of a life without some loving reverent resolve, was not possible to her; [...].¹¹²

Dorothea's emotional recalibration is from an over-identification with the lives of others to a more just assessment of their needs and of her own. Ermarth observes that 'she is the altruist whose example recommends egoism.'¹¹³ Dorothea's journey is both a critique and a corroboration of that process of putting herself 'in the place of another',¹¹⁴ and of considering the 'essential nature' of those around her,¹¹⁵ identified by Feuerbach as an essential capacity of human consciousness. She turns from her own sense of emotional loss to put herself in the place of Casaubon, and to experience his perception of his limitations beside her own, translating her initial mistaken illusions into a more prosaic and unheroic purpose:

¹⁰⁹ George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, Ch.14, pp.169, 170.

¹¹⁰ George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, ed. by A S Byatt (London: Penguin Classic, 2003), VII. 3. p.522.

¹¹¹ Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*.

¹¹² GE M, II. 20. p.189.

¹¹³ Ermarth, p.158.

¹¹⁴ LF EC, Ch.I, p.2.

¹¹⁵ LF EC, Ch.I, p.1.

And here Dorothea's pity turned from her own future to her husband's past—nay, to his present hard struggle with a lot which had grown out of that past: the lonely labour, the ambition breathing hardly under the pressure of self-distrust; the goal receding, and the heavier limbs; [...]! And had she not wished to marry him that she might help him in his life's labour?— But she had thought the work was to be something greater, [...].¹¹⁶

The experience of the failure of sympathy and understanding within her marriage becomes for her an initiation into a new 'religion', one which appears to owe its conceptions only partially to Feuerbach and Spinoza:

“That by desiring what is perfectly good, even when we don't quite know what it is and cannot do what we would, we are part of the divine power against evil—widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower.”¹¹⁷

Dorothea's idea of the 'perfectly good', and the 'growing good of the world'¹¹⁸ claimed on her behalf by the narrator is an ambiguous anticipation of Mordecai's metaphysical awareness of a moral world of 'Eternal Goodness' informing the world of human action, in this case Deronda's and Mrs Meyrick's care for Mirah:

“The Eternal Goodness has been with you,” [...] “You have helped to fulfil our mother's prayer.”¹¹⁹

A Critique of I-Thou

Feuerbach had argued that it is through the social interaction that humans achieve self-knowledge, knowledge of others, and, even more importantly, the ability to make 'his essential nature, and not merely his individuality, [...] an object of thought.'¹²⁰ Eliot emphasises, in both *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*, the practical difficulties of this process of imaginatively entering into the mind and life of another. Her characters are shown misunderstanding others, and wrestling with the limitations of their own 'thinking consciousnesses'. These misunderstandings affect both individuals and communities, from

¹¹⁶ GE M, V. 48. p.470.

¹¹⁷ GE M, IV. 39. p. 382.

¹¹⁸ GE M, Finale, p.825.

¹¹⁹ GE DD, VI. 47. p.542.

¹²⁰ LF EC, Ch.I, p.3.

Adam's and Arthur's misunderstandings of Hetty, from Maggie's sense that she is misunderstood by her family and community, from the perception that 'people are almost always better than their neighbours think they are'¹²¹ articulated by Dorothea, to Deronda's failure to imagine the nature of Gwendolen's and Grandcourt's relationship:

[...] his imagination was as much astray about Grandcourt as it would have been about an unexplored continent where all the species were peculiar.¹²²

Grandcourt, in some respects the arch-manipulator, has no imaginative resources to identify with any precision the nature of Gwendolen's despair:

Grandcourt [...] had no imagination of anything in her but what affected the gratification of his own will; [...] and [...] was not likely to be infallible in his judgments concerning this wife who was governed by many shadowy powers, to him non-existent. He magnified her inward resistance, but that did not lessen his satisfaction in the mastery of it.¹²³

Each of the novels therefore shows characters and communities emerging from misapprehensions about each other, but not before these have been recognised as the cause of life-changing harm. If Feuerbach's manifesto is essentially optimistic, assuming transformation is possible, Eliot shows how difficult it is, and how cruel illusions about others can be, in a way that owes much to Spinoza's analyses to be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Eliot also explores the limits and focus of sympathetic understanding of another. I have already discussed the *Middlemarch* narrator's ambiguous attitude towards the need for, and the difficulties of, achieving a balanced sympathy. In *Daniel Deronda* it is also seen ambivalently. Characters who feel no responsibility or sympathy for the predicaments of others are judged by the novel, but Daniel also judges himself for his inconclusive and undirected sympathetic imagination.

His imagination had so wrought itself to the habit of seeing things as they probably appeared to others, that a strong partisanship, unless it were against an immediate oppression, had become an insincerity for him. His plenteous, flexible sympathy had

¹²¹ GE M, VIII. 72. p.723.

¹²² GE DD, V. 35. p.384.

¹²³ GE DD, VI. 44. p.516.

ended by falling into one current with that reflective analysis which tends to neutralize sympathy.¹²⁴

Eliot seems to be suggesting that sympathy loses its positive charge unless it can be prioritised by decisions based on understanding. But the process of prioritisation which, in Daniel's case, is secured through his identity as a Jew also causes pain. Gwendolen is left without a structure of 'sacred bonds' to provide a network of hope for her future. Qualls has argued that Gwendolen is left with no tangible hope beyond endurance. He suggests that:

God and the idea of Israel shape Deronda's romance; Gwendolen lives in the "realism" of a deadened world.¹²⁵

Transmutation and Sacredness

Characters in Eliot's novels sense the power of other people's ideas over them and how those ideas may transform them and their preconceptions. Some of these expected transmutations are based on delusions or illusions, as in the cases of Dorothea and Casaubon. In *Daniel Deronda*, Gwendolen and Deronda both discover their future through the moral or prophetic visions of others. In Gwendolen's passionate search for a way of escaping her hatred of Grandcourt and her 'terror of her own soul', it is to Deronda's combination of sympathy and judgement she turns for advice. Deronda's own search for a cause to which to dedicate his life gradually and cautiously embraces Mordecai's transformative vision of a future role for him as a surrogate spiritual and political leader. The emphasis in *Daniel Deronda* on the transmutation of self in the violent parable of Bouddha and the tiger suggests the pain and moral ambivalence of the process. The pain of transmutation is emphasised in Gwendolen's moral and spiritual readjustment, which she recognises as an 'uneasy, transforming process –all the old nature shaken to its depths',¹²⁶ flowing from her sense of guilt and initial attempt to imagine what Deronda might think of her:

¹²⁴ GE DD, IV. 32. pp.335, 336.

¹²⁵ Barry Qualls, 'George Eliot and Religion', in *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*, ed. George Levine, pp.131, 132.

¹²⁶ GE DD, V. 35. p.394.

No chemical process shows a more wonderful activity than the transforming influence of the thoughts we imagine to be going on in another.¹²⁷

Her attempt to anticipate and translate his possible judgement of her objectifies her own self-distaste. Her attempted translation of the views of another person becomes an external validation of her inner concerns and a first step in the transformation of her moral awareness. The interaction of projection and internal transformation continues, Eliot showing that in human relationship, men and women fulfil Feuerbachian roles, almost literally as priestlike confessors without any ‘blessing of the priest.’¹²⁸

Without the aid of sacred ceremony or costume, her feelings had turned this man, only a few years older than herself, into a priest; [....].
Those who trust us educate us. And perhaps in that ideal consecration of Gwendolen’s, some education was being prepared for Deronda.¹²⁹

Eliot’s replacement of the concept of idealising consecration by that of transformative education is just one of her many adjustments of Feuerbach’s ideas, through translation of the idealising illusions and projections involved in establishing a human relationship into a more adequate Spinozan process of gaining knowledge. Shaffer argues that Deronda’s relationship with Gwendolen is evasive and treacherous.¹³⁰ This is an extreme reading of the willing mutual deceptions and unarticulated clarifications of the relationship, but it is evident that Eliot did intend it to be read as a painfully transformative relationship for both characters.

Up to his meeting with Mordecai, Daniel assumes roles which fuse priest, moral saviour, fairy tale hero, teacher, rescuer - both metaphorically and literally - of two women whom he either sees drowning (Mirah) or imagines to be metaphorically drowning (Gwendolen). His function as both confessor and counsellor is undertaken without any overt implication that they should be seen as expressing sacredness. His lessons focus on human interconnectedness:

¹²⁷ GE DD, V. 35, p.394.

¹²⁸ LF EC, Ch.XXVII, pp.270, 271.

¹²⁹ GE DD, V. 35. p.401.

¹³⁰ E S Shaffer, ‘Daniel Deronda and the Conventions of Fiction’, in *Kubla Khan and the Fall of Jerusalem*, p.268.

“[...] - you know more of the way in which your life presses on others, and their life on yours. I don't think you could have escaped the painful process in some form or other.”¹³¹

This humanist, Feuerbachian mode of relationship, with its insistence that ‘there is no other essence which man can think, dream of, imagine, feel, believe in, wish for, love and adore as the *absolute*, than the essence of human nature itself’,¹³² is transformed by his meeting with Mordecai. The solemnity of Mordecai's language of faith reinforces the ambiguities and possibilities of a mysterious alternative spiritual reality beyond the world of realist materiality which in turn alters perception of mundane human existence. Mordecai appeals to this other dimension, enmeshed with ordinary existence, as that of ‘the Eternal Goodness’,¹³³ and his language of faith translates events in one world into indications of the purposes of the other:

[...] bound together in that Omnipresence which is the place and habitation of the world, and events are as a glass wherethrough our eyes see some of the pathways.¹³⁴

The intersections of the world of faith with Eliot's realist novel is reflected through relationships which assert human faith in each other, through acts to reclaim individuals from their isolated illusions, and through individuals perceiving that others believe they can transform themselves for the better. In *Middlemarch* this can be seen in Fred's dependence on securing Mary Garth's faith that he can be transformed. In describing Mrs Bulstrode's decision to continue to share the life of her disgraced husband, Eliot provides a subtle translation of what neither character could translate for themselves, the imperfect, inarticulate nature of human sympathy and belief bridging an unattainable understanding and transcending any judgement:

His confession was silent, and her promise of faithfulness was silent. [...]. She could not say, “How much is only slander and false suspicion?” and he did not say, “I am innocent.”¹³⁵

¹³¹ GE DD, V. 36. p.422.

¹³² LF EC, Ch.XXVII, p.270.

¹³³ GE DD, VI. 47. p.542.

¹³⁴ GE DD, VIII. 63. p.697.

¹³⁵ GE M, VIII. 74. p.741.

A sacred, human relationship, Eliot suggests, consists not only in the Feuerbachian exchange of understanding, but an exchange of belief. Gwendolen embodies this conviction, explaining to Deronda that his belief that she could become a woman who could act to mitigate the pain of others was crucial to her becoming that woman:

"Your saying that I should not go on being selfish and ignorant has been some strength to me. If you say you wish you had not meddled—that means, you despair of me and forsake me. And then you will decide for me that I shall not be good. It is you who will decide; because you might have made me different by keeping as near to me as you could, and believing in me."¹³⁶

With Mordecai, Eliot's interest in the idea of the significance of faith between human beings is developed further. Mordecai's life is one of solitary faith in his own vision until he meets Deronda and fixes on him all his prophetic expectation of an alternative 'I', who, though completely different, will share his intense vision and be capable of fulfilling it:

[...] his imagination had constructed another man [...] who would be a blooming human life, ready to incorporate all that was worthiest in an existence whose visible, palpable part was burning itself fast away.¹³⁷

In expecting, recognising and then convincing Deronda to be a partner in his idealistic project, he commits himself to 'transmission' of ideas as a form of osmosis, or even possession of one person by the ideas of another. His influence over Deronda makes the latter question his own perceptions of reality, and begin to think in terms of destiny and the power of faith:

"[...] some strong relation there must be between me and this man, since he feels it strongly. Great heaven! what relation has proved itself more potent in the world than faith even when mistaken—than expectation even when perpetually disappointed? Is my side of the relation to be disappointing or fulfilling?—well, if it is ever possible for me to fulfil, I will not disappoint."¹³⁸

Deronda's role of 'thou' to Gwendolen is transformed as he is forced to perceive Mordecai as both 'thou' and an alternative 'I', his Jewish alter ego. As he is transformed into

¹³⁶ GE DD, VI. 45. p.524.

¹³⁷ GE DD, V. 38, p.441.

¹³⁸ GE DD, V. 40. p.462.

Mordecai's 'I', Deronda ceases to be Gwendolen's 'thou'. In the relationship between Deronda and Mordecai, Eliot explores Feuerbach's concept of sacred human relationship through a friendship, which becomes brotherhood and ends in a type of substitution. Mordecai's power and claim over Deronda, and Deronda's hesitant acceptance of aspects of his intense vision, portrays it as an extreme example of the benign 'transmutation of self' as substitution, already told in the story of the Buddha and the tiger:

"That is not all my trust in you. You must be not only a hand to me, but a soul—believing my beliefs—being moved by my reasons—hoping my hopes - seeing the vision I point to—beholding a glory where I behold it!" [...] he went on—"You will be my life: it will be planted afresh; it will grow. You shall take the inheritance; it has been gathering for ages. The generations are crowding on my narrow life as a bridge: what has been and what is to be are meeting there; and the bridge is breaking. [...]. You [...] will take the sacred inheritance of the Jew."¹³⁹

In Mordecai and Deronda, Eliot fuses two ways of seeing the world. Mordecai's vision, immersed in the sacred, still points towards a pragmatic action on behalf of humanity's life of 'labour and endurance': Deronda's rationality retains the space for identification with a wider good and transforms him from a 'bored'¹⁴⁰ young man into a leader who can enact Mordecai's vision. Through Deronda's self-identification with Mordecai, and through his understanding of Mordecai's 'denotation' as well as 'connotation', he becomes his translation.

Translating the Sacred

In *The German Idea*, Rosemary Ashton argues that Eliot's novels:

[...] testify to her unchanging belief that 'the idea of God [...] is the ideal of a goodness entirely human' [...].¹⁴¹ They do so in predominantly Feuerbachian terms, the language of the I-Thou relationship, the 'divine' efficacy of human love, the redeeming influence of man on man, personality as revelation, the possibility of 'baptism and consecration' by contact with other natures.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ GE DD, V. 40. p.466.

¹⁴⁰ GE DD, I. 1. p.9.

¹⁴¹ GEL.VI, to Mrs Ponsonby, 10 December, 1874, p.98.

¹⁴² Ashton, *The German Idea*, p.160.

As a commentary on this view, I will be analysing Eliot's emphatic interest in Spinoza's ethical ideas in the next Chapter. While both Feuerbach's and Eliot's humanism is clear, it is presented through language which relies on suggesting the emotional significances of the faith they had – rationally – rejected. One word in particular was detained by Feuerbach to see how it could be re-applied to human life, once God's mediation of it had been rejected. His 'Concluding Application' repeatedly affirms the sacredness of human relationship, of friendship, and of the rituals of everyday life, but demands 'let them be sacred *in and by themselves*.'¹⁴³ Eliot's reconceptualisation of the sacred, up to now discussed in the Feuerbachian terms of relationship, was primarily an ethical rather than a metaphysical conception. Her characters have or develop consciences, which translate an abstract language of ethics into a sense of the sacredness and mystery of the inner law 'graven' in their own minds. Gwendolen's birth of conscience follows her decision to do what she had earlier decided against in marrying Grandcourt, and her psychic terror invests her intuitions of 'calamity' with a mythic significance:

It was new to her that a question of right or wrong in her conduct should rouse her terror; [...]. But here had come a moment when something like a new consciousness was awakened.

[...] the deeper impressions of something awful and inexorable enveloping her seemed to concentrate themselves in the vague conception of an avenging power.¹⁴⁴

The ways in which Eliot describes the development of characters' just perception of themselves is analysed in the next chapter, but the just perception emerges from suffering, from trust in another person to judge but also to show a way forward, and from relationship with another human being. However, the metaphysical and transcendent has not been banished completely. It emerges fleetingly in *Middlemarch*, through the role and beliefs of Dorothea, and it hovers behind the narratives of *Daniel Deronda*. Knoepfelmacher argues that in this final major novel:

[...] events are determined not by the cumulative will of all characters, but by an omnipresent destiny: "all things are bound together in that Omnipresence".

[...] she [Eliot] enlists her relativism to reintroduce the possibility of nonverifiable and nonperceptual truths. She tries to hew belief out of disbelief, affirmation out of denial.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ LF EC, Ch.XXVII, p.271.

¹⁴⁴ GE DD, IV. 28, p.285.

The novel portrays a ‘nonverifiable and nonperceptual’, possibly transcendental, world enmeshed with the world of rationality and realism, a world which emanates warnings, enables answers to prayer, and initiates prophetic fulfilments. The English narrative reflects realism’s sophisticated imitation of cause and effect, the world of Spinoza’s concatenated determinism, and the confusion of this world when presented with evidence which seems to counter it. Mordecai’s narrative offers alternative interpretations of reality through its attentiveness to prayer and its answers, to coincidence, and to reversals of cause and effect which allow his prophetic expectations to intervene in and disrupt the other, English world of realism. Eliot’s experimental projection of a dimension which offers a sacralised reading of reality was a break with her previous novels, where human relationship alone carried the possibility of that interchange of sympathy, understanding and judgement which could transfigure the lives of their characters, the possibility which Feuerbach considered the essence of ‘sacred’ human relationship. In his consideration of the tension which Eliot’s typology of prophet and deliverer, Mordecai and Deronda, exerts upon the realist convention and on reality itself, Carroll notes that:

The hypothesis creates the reality it predicts, the type foreshadows the antitype through which it is fulfilled. Both reverse the logic of cause and effect, and it is upon this reverse logic that the Jewish reality is constructed (and all that this implies for the realistic novel).¹⁴⁶

In *Daniel Deronda* the depiction of sacredness, while still grounded in a Feuerbachian sympathy, also emphasises the faith needed, by Gwendolen in Deronda and by Deronda in Mordecai, to realise their ‘pathway’ to goodness. Instead of an emphasis on a sequencing of action through time, and through cause and effect, the novel offers a sequence of events which moves backwards and forwards, tracing and retracing cause and effect, discovering retrospective objective causes for subjective longings. Its approach echoes that of scripture, fairy tale or Shakespeare’s late plays. Knoepfmacher argues that Eliot’s choice of the Jewish theme reflects Judaism’s combination of ‘ideal and actual’.¹⁴⁷ I suggest it offered an idea of a society whose pre-eminent ethos is one of Feuerbachian community rather than individualism, one of ‘we’ rather than ‘I’, and one which sees its present and its history as a retrospective interrogation of a transcendent will.

¹⁴⁵ Knoepfmacher, p.140.

¹⁴⁶ Carroll, p.295.

¹⁴⁷ Knoepfmacher, p.144.

Eliot's later novels show her continued engagement with the ideas in Feuerbach's 'Concluding Application' about the inherent sacredness of 'the essence of human nature itself'.¹⁴⁸ The appeal to his readers to rediscover the human sacred, stripped of religious illusions, in life and relationship, and through 'interruption' of the 'ordinary course of things' to see the '*religious import*'¹⁴⁹ of life and of everyday objects and actions transmits, through its repeated assertions, a shadowy unease about how sacredness can be retranslated into a demythologised, secularised world, when the 'illusions' of religion are gone.

As discussed earlier, Eliot's novels portray a realistic world interrupted by the narrator's switch of person, withdrawal and intrusion into the narrative. The world of realism is also interrupted by figures or events which, through intensifying their central characters' transformative birth of feeling for other people and their duty to them, clothe the novels' psychological analyses with suggestions of mythic human patterns. These religio-mythic interruptions of the surface flow of Eliot's realism are embedded in narrative rather than presented through the commentary or overt speculative interventions of the narrator. The apocalyptic flood at the end of *The Mill on the Floss*,¹⁵⁰ the journeys by boat taken by Maggie (in *The Mill on the Floss*), Romola (in *Romola*)¹⁵¹ and Daniel (in *Daniel Deronda*),¹⁵² where rational control seems submerged by subconscious processes of psychological reorientation and receptivity; Mirah's rescue from the river¹⁵³ and Gwendolen's ambivalent attempts to save her husband from drowning¹⁵⁴ - all draw their mythic power and suggestiveness from antecedents in biblical writings and romance, where such incidents are emblems of transfiguration, salvation or judgement. The plot of *Daniel Deronda* is explicitly clothed in suggestions of biblical epic and fairy tale romance, suggestions which are further translated into the story of the creation of a modern political leader. Mordecai, with his belief in a mysterious dimension which can create a new reality out of hope and expectation, and which exists beyond the individual human and the material world, anticipating and empowering their transactions, irrupts into the realist narrative with the challenge and urgency of an Old Testament prophet announcing a new order of values.

¹⁴⁸ LF EC, Ch.XXVII, p.270.

¹⁴⁹ LF EC, Ch.XX VII, p.278.

¹⁵⁰ George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, VI.13 and VII.5 (London: Penguin Classics, 2003).

¹⁵¹ George Eliot, *Romola*, ed. Andrew Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), Ch.61.

¹⁵² GE DD, V. 40. pp. 459,460.

¹⁵³ GE DD, II. 17. p.174.

¹⁵⁴ GE DD, VII. 56. pp.647, 648.

Daniel Deronda's exploration of what the secular sacred might mean builds on the exploration of relationship of the earlier novels. I have already discussed the relationships where faith in the other's redeemability or inherent goodness is presented as crucial. However, *Daniel Deronda* insistently emphasises the importance of those relationships identified by Feuerbach as sacred (the relationships of 'child and parent, of husband and wife, of brother and friend'¹⁵⁵) in his 'Concluding Application'. The unveiling of identity through relationship, and the power of such an identity, emerging from the past to determine the future, 'the hidden bonds that bind and consecrate change',¹⁵⁶ is one of the novel's main themes. The legitimacy and power of bonds between and across generations is a presiding motif both in the Gentile world, where it guides the disposal of estates and forging of alliances, and in the Jewish world where it transmits obligations about the way to live and face the future.

Within a world where fathers are absent, detached or irresponsible, patriarchy still wields controlling or arbitrary power, despite the wishes, contrivances and influence of mothers. Gwendolen's resistance to the significance or demands of relationships makes an exception for her mother, for whom she is prepared to make sacrifices; and it is through ignoring a mother's claims on behalf of her children that Gwendolen enters into her period of suffering and transformation. Daniel's mother's mysterious absence from his life focuses his hopes and attention on the sacred nature of the bond:

To Daniel the words Father and Mother had the altar-fire in them; and the thought of all closest relations of our nature held still something of the mystic power [...].¹⁵⁷

Mirah's reverence for the memory of her lost mother provides the guarantee of her identity as a Jewess, her cultural and ethical grounding, and the reconceptualisation of her experiences of suffering and alienation as a sacred destiny. Daniel's search for Mirah's mother and brother and his own conjectures about his own mother drive the Jewish strands of the plot. The texture of the novel interweaves references which strengthen the sense of the significance of motherhood and the emotional depth of kinship; Mrs Meyrick's role as 'little mother', and her reminders to both Daniel and Mirah of the depth and tenacity of a mother's

¹⁵⁵ LF EC, Ch.XXVII, p.271.

¹⁵⁶ GE DD, VI. 42. pp.490, 491.

¹⁵⁷ GE DD, V. 37. p.437.

love: 'Mother's love begins deeper down'¹⁵⁸ are echoed in variations by the Cohens and by Mordecai.

In comparison with this pattern of maternal influence and sacredness, Deronda's mother's attempt to ensure that her son lives the life of a Gentile assumes a more ambiguous significance. It seems that here the depth of the sacred maternal bond can be vitiated by the impersonal, conservative forces of patriarchy. Eliot's portrait of the Princess Halm- Eberstein crystallises the book's internal debate about the fate of women in patriarchal societies, whether in the religious culture of Judaism or the materialistic culture of the English middle and upper classes. She epitomises the ironies of women's existence in these worlds. Despite her earnest intentions to secure her child's assimilation into the Gentile world, her role as his biological mother ironically guarantees Daniel's Jewishness, and allows him to pursue a destiny which overturns all her hopes for him. But in turn she has destroyed Daniel's illusions of the sacredness of the maternal bond:

[...] the moment was cruel: it made the filial yearning of his life a disappointed pilgrimage to a shrine where there were no longer the symbols of sacredness.¹⁵⁹

The narrative thrust of the novel extrapolates Feuerbach's secularised sacred of relationship into a historic sense of the 'deeper roots' of ancestry and of the responsibility of the present to the past and future.

Through Mordecai, Eliot portrays an idealised sacred relationship of brother and friend, but the uncertainties and tensions he generates in realism's Gentile society are made explicit by the ironic narrator:

[...]; but the romantic or unusual in real life requires some adaptation. We sit up at night to read about Çakya-Mouni, St. Francis, or Oliver Cromwell; but whether we should be glad for any one at all like them to call on us the next morning, still more, to reveal himself as a new relation, is quite another affair.¹⁶⁰

Mordecai therefore suggests a level of human interaction through which Eliot, albeit with an ironic awareness of its conflict with realism, suggests the 'sacred'. Both the novel and its characters attempt to reduce and rationalise his impact at the same time as being unable to

¹⁵⁸ GE DD, IV. 32. p.346.

¹⁵⁹ GE DD, VII. 53. p.615.

¹⁶⁰ GE DD, VI. 46. pp.527, 528.

dismiss his claims. Deronda's early conjectures about Mordecai's belief in him attempt to rationalise, but do not entirely dismiss, Mordecai's prophetic expectations:

What I can be to him, or he to me, may not at all depend on his persuasion about the way we came together. To me the way seems made up of plainly discernible links.¹⁶¹

Amanda Adamson, in her essay on the role of the narrator, argues that the ambivalence of characters such as Mordecai reflects Feuerbach's technique of empathy with an ideal followed by its analysis and 'deflation':

Eliot's [...] presentation plays out Feuerbachian elements: inhabiting the projection of a human ideal, and then deflating it through analysis (exposing not only the all-too-human character of the idealized figure, but also the projective idealizations of the heroic protagonist). It is worth noting, moreover, that even while the heroic protagonists of Eliot's fiction are typically drawn to these visionary figures, their attitude toward them is fundamentally a disenchanted one, even as they display ongoing impulses to idealize.¹⁶²

I suggest that this analysis fails to illuminate the ambiguities of Mordecai's impact within the novel, which leave an unresolved sense of the sacred. His claim to see the world in interaction with transcendent purposes entices certain characters but is also resisted by them. The narrator's voice seems to empathise with aspects of Mordecai's vision and respect his fate. The description of his death which closes the novel explicitly evokes the fate of Milton's Samson, and thus absorbs him into a heroic poetic tradition and a historic tradition of Jewish martyrdom. As he dies, Mordecai chooses to relate to the Jewish communal we-thou relationship with 'the divine Unity', and he has no more to say to his other human, 'sacred' companions:

[...] Deronda waited, thinking there might be another word for him. But slowly [...] Ezra [...] raised himself and uttered in Hebrew the confession of the divine Unity, which for long generations has been on the lips of the dying Israelite.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ GE DD, VI. 41. p.478.

¹⁶² Adamson, p.451.

¹⁶³ GE DD, VIII. 70. p.754.

The ending of the novel defines ideas that hover around the novel's structure and thematic material. Mordecai's final assertion of faith and the narrator's implicit identification of him with an epic heroism recalibrate any Feuerbachian humanist reading of the novel, and indicate once again Eliot's resistance to accepting any understanding which is not embraced by 'intellect as well as [their] emotions'.¹⁶⁴ Frank Kermode¹⁶⁵ identified the irresolvable dilemmas of the realist novel seeking to portray the unpredictability and contingency of experience yet needing to provide a consoling sense of closure. The endings of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* do not offer any simple consoling sense of closure. Instead, some of the tensions between the novel's conception and its realist portrayal of character seem to acquire new and more puzzling emphases.

The characters inhabiting the realist world in *Daniel Deronda* do in the end make space for Mordecai and his visionary, intuitive approach to the world. Deronda approaches him both through his intellect and through affection. During one of his musings about Mordecai's claims on him, he considers the nature and scope of Mordecai's vision in terms which align it with Feuerbach's balance of thought and feeling, or of Spinoza's intuitive knowledge. However, the use of terms such as 'passionate vision' places this type of intuition firmly into a Feuerbachian context rather than a Spinozan one. Deronda (and Eliot) describe Mordecai's 'emotional intellect', the fusion of Feuerbach's feeling and understanding:

And since the unemotional intellect may carry us into a mathematical dreamland where nothing is but what is not, perhaps an emotional intellect may have absorbed into its passionate vision of possibilities some truth of what will be - the more comprehensive massive life feeding theory with new material, as the sensibility of the artist seizes combinations which science explains and justifies.¹⁶⁶

Mordecai himself questions the nature of rationality, and redefines it in his own terms, as a process which refuses assimilation by the rationalities of other cultures but asserts 'divine reason'. Divine reason perceives the hidden forces at work in shaping history, and these forces are those of Feuerbachian sacred relationship:

"I, too, claim to be a rational Jew. But what is it to be rational—what is it to feel the light of the divine reason growing stronger within and without? It is to see more and

¹⁶⁴ GEL.III, to Mme Eugene Bodichon, 26 December 1860, p.366.

¹⁶⁵ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the theory of fiction*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), esp. pp. 129 - 131. Proquest Ebook Central.

¹⁶⁶ GE DD, VII. 41. p.478.

more of the hidden bonds that bind and consecrate change as a dependent growth — yea, consecrate it with kinship: the past becomes my parent and the future stretches towards me the appealing arms of children.”¹⁶⁷

It is clear that Mordecai’s conception of rationality embraces Spinoza’s highest knowledge, intuition, ‘divine reason’ in his words, rather than Western Enlightenment rationality, but fuses with this Feuerbach’s emphasis on the sacredness of human relationships, ‘of child and parent, of husband and wife, of brother and friend’¹⁶⁸ as ‘the great axis on which revolves the history of the world’.¹⁶⁹ His mystical vision of human relationships and the ways in which they are interlinked with a transcendent purposive goodness differs from Feuerbach’s God-free religion of humanity, but nevertheless Mordecai’s vision of the inherent sacredness of human relationships, and everyday human actions, translates Feuerbach’s ideas back into a religious language, in this case of Judaism:

“But it is true, as Jehuda-ha-Levi first said, that Israel is the heart of mankind, if we mean by heart the core of affection which binds a race and its families in dutiful love, and the reverence for the human body which lifts the needs of our animal life into religion, and the tenderness which is merciful to the poor and weak and to the dumb creature that wears the yoke for us”. [...].
Where else is there a nation of whom it may be as truly said that their religion and law and moral life mingled as the stream of blood in the heart and made one growth - [...]?”¹⁷⁰

Daniel Deronda’s commentary on Feuerbach’s claim that:

The necessary turning-point of history is therefore the open confession, that the consciousness of God is nothing else than the consciousness of the species; [...].¹⁷¹

provides its characters with an active strategy for raising individuals above their limitations and reconstructing their past and future. Qualls describes it as follows:

The novel is her last rewriting of that story she had told so often: the story of men and especially women seeking texts by which to live, sources in historical and cultural memory that would sustain the private life and allow one to be a part of a moral

¹⁶⁷ GE DD, VI. 42. pp.490, 491.

¹⁶⁸ LF EC, Ch.XXVII, p.271.

¹⁶⁹ LF EC, Ch.XXVII, p.271.

¹⁷⁰ GE DD, VI. 42. pp.492, 493.

¹⁷¹ LF EC, Ch.XXVII, p.270.

community. In the end she is still rendering characters who would discover in *human* history sources of the sacred, who would find in the historical past a vision of how to live.¹⁷²

Qualls emphasises the continuity of Eliot's perceptions and vision for the future, the interlocking of past with present and future which feature in the vision announced by both Mordecai and Deronda, discussed in the next chapter. However, I suggest that what is important in the novels is that moment when characters become aware that they must articulate a new understanding which revises their past and re-envision their future. Despite the support of the faith in them of others, in order to live they need a new faith articulated to themselves by themselves when all external supports seem to have gone. Dorothea has to find new ways to justify her devotedness, and Gwendolen has to find the resources to affirm that she will 'live. I shall be better.'¹⁷³ The internal dialogue of thought comes full circle from embracing a more just understanding of others to creating a new self out of the dialogue with humanity's 'essential nature.'¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Qualls, 'George Eliot and Religion', p.122.

¹⁷³ GE DD, VIII. 69. p.751.

¹⁷⁴ LF EC, p.2.

Chapter 3

Eliot And Spinoza: Emotion And Intellect

If Eliot's language in relation to her translation of David Strauss's *Leben Jesu* had satirised popular romantic illusions about relationships between young lady translators and male text creators, her project to translate Benedict (originally Baruch) de Spinoza's *Ethics* or *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* involved a different intensity of engagement with its subject. Her use of the word 'divorce' ('Spinoza and I have been divorced for several months') in an 1849 letter to Cara and Charles Bray, however ironically intentioned, indicates, if not an experience of love and hate, the personal intensity involved in the translating relationship, as well as the depth of the perceived problems between the potential translator and the translated. Chapter 1 has already considered the implications of the letter in some detail in relation to the best method of transferring the meaning of a text such as that of the *Ethics*. Eliot's conclusion that any translation of Spinoza's Scholastic Latin would then require a second, 'yet more difficult process of translation' on the part of any reader meant, in her view, abandoning any project of a 'faithful' or literal translation of his words and liberating his meaning through an account of 'a true estimate of his life and system'.¹ The phrase 'a true estimate' anticipates the language Eliot was to use in her essay on 'Translations and Translators' in relation to the hermeneutic responsibilities of a translator to interpret 'another man's mind'² with fidelity to the thoughts, as well as to the linguistic signs expressing them.

Her views about Spinoza's presentation of his arguments broadly reflect the conclusions of a number of other Victorian writers on Spinoza. J A Froude's 1854 essay for the *Westminster Review* provided an analysis and criticism of the argument of the *Ethics*, commenting on Spinoza's 'peculiar opinions',³ on the 'very beautiful' but 'elaborate and full'⁴ language used, and arguing that its thought 'addresses itself, not to the logical intellect, but to the imagination, which it affects to set aside'.⁵ The essay discusses Spinoza's determinism, and takes issue with his idea of evil as a subjective conception. Matthew Arnold wrote two essays on Spinoza. The first was an 1862 review of Robert Willis's translation,

¹ GEL.I, All quotations are from the letter to Charles and Cara Bray, 4 December, 1849, p.321.

² GE TT, p.342.

³ J A Froude, 'Spinoza' in *Short Studies on Great Subjects* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1867), p.223.

⁴ Froude, p.226.

⁵ Froude, p.231.

dwelling on the deficiencies of that translation rather than Spinoza's argument.⁶ The second essay (1863)⁷ pays tribute to the significance of the philosopher's achievement overall, in providing 'the central point of interest' 'in the history of modern philosophy', but emphasises the problems inherent in the chosen form of the *Ethics*:

In [...] spite of the repellent form which he has given to his principal work, in spite of the exterior semblance of a rigid dogmatism alien to the most essential tendencies of modern philosophy [...].⁸

The Challenges of Translating Spinoza

Spinoza's ideas have, in essence, to be translated out of three layers of language. The first, Latin, was the *lingua franca* of scholarly discourse, and remained so until the latter half of the nineteenth century. Particular Latin vocabularies had developed, as they have within contemporary languages, to express specialised scientific or philosophical ideas. Charles Jarrett argues that although Spinoza's Latin vocabulary was that of late medieval scholasticism, this vocabulary had developed 'a traditional seventeenth century use', and that Spinoza's re-understanding of contemporaries' usage was radical and contested.⁹ Alan Donagan summarises the subversion of language and idea Spinoza was introducing:

That diction is scholastic-Cartesian, - and, as he must have been aware, much of what he wrote, although not all, makes sense if his words are taken in their scholastic-Cartesian senses. However, he assigns new senses to many of the expressions he uses, sometimes explicitly, and sometimes implicitly by the structure of his reasoning or by his examples. Readers who have persuaded themselves that Spinoza is the last of the medievals or the first of the absolute idealists are apt to overlook the passages in which he does so.¹⁰

The second layer of language therefore arises from Spinoza's development of a very specific philosophic and still contested terminology to express his arguments. Examples of

⁶ Matthew Arnold, 'Tractatus Theologico-Politicus', in *Essays in Criticism, First Series in Vol 3: Lectures and Essays in Criticism*, ed. by R H Super, p.56.

⁷ Matthew Arnold, 'Spinoza and the Bible', in *Essays in Criticism, First Series in Vol 3: Lectures and Essays in Criticism*, in *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold* (10 volumes), ed. by R H Super (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1962), p.158.

⁸ Arnold, 'Spinoza and the Bible', p.159.

⁹ Charles E Jarrett, *Spinoza: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2007), pp.33, 34.

¹⁰ Alan Donagan, 'Spinoza's Theology' in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. by Don Garrett (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.344. Cambridge Companions Online.

this from Eliot's translation of the *Ethics* would include terms which Eliot translated as 'intuitive cognition'¹¹ ('scientiam intuitivam'), the need to see things 'under the form of eternity'¹² ('sub aeternitatis specie'), 'transitions'¹³ ('transitiones'), 'affection'¹⁴ (affectus), and terms identified by Jarrett including 'substance'¹⁵ ('substantia'), 'mode'¹⁶ (modus) and 'mind'¹⁷ ('mens').

The third is constituted through his method of analysis and argument. Spinoza chose to transmit his conception of the context and process of human thought, nature, emotion, relationships, conduct and purpose through a structure of dispassionate Euclidean scientific proposition and proof, a 'prolix geometrical method'¹⁸ in his own words. The *Ethics* proceeds from Part I's demonstration of the existence and attributes of an immanent God *sive Natura* [or Nature], through Part II's analysis of the process of human thought and knowledge (cognition in Eliot's translation) and Part III's analysis of human emotions, to Part IV's analysis of human 'servitude' to emotions and finally Part V's proposals for how to understand the forces at work and achieve the mind's 'highest happiness'.¹⁹

It was Spinoza's choice of a quasi-scientific, quasi-scholastic method and language which Eliot and others considered made the ideas inaccessible to a wide readership. The proposed alternative of 'a true estimate of his life and system', set out in the 1849 letter to Charles Bray, is significant because although Eliot ultimately produced a translation of the *Ethics*, completed in 1856, she also went on to provide, through her novels, a presentation of 'life[']s' interplay with 'system'. Her 1875 letter to Joseph Payne,²⁰ rejecting 'formula' in favour of a novel's 'experiments in life' casts some retrospective light on her 1849 intuition that the ideas confined to disembodied abstraction and schematisation, in the *Ethics*, needed to be tested and animated through other media, such as the capacity of novels, to explore the specificities of human experience.

¹¹ Eg BdeS Eth, 2p40, scholium 2, p.76.

¹² eg BdeS Eth, 5p29, p.233.

¹³ eg BdeS Eth, 3d2and 3, p.140.

¹⁴ BdeS Eth, 2a3, p.43.

¹⁵ BdeS Eth, 1d3, p.2.

¹⁶ BdeS Eth, 1d5, p.2.

¹⁷ BdeS Eth, 2p11, p.51.

¹⁸ BdeS Eth, 4p18, scholium, p.168.

¹⁹ BdeS Eth, 2 Preface, p.42.

²⁰ GEL.VI, (25 January 1876), pp.216, 217.

The Decision to Translate Spinoza

Eliot provided no introduction to her translation of the *Ethics* or any extended written reasons for her initial or continuing interest in Spinoza's thought. Letters to Sara Hennell, which are a rich resource in relation to Eliot's views on Strauss and Feuerbach, refer to Spinoza's works only in passing, such as with requests for copies of Spinoza's works. However, one letter to Sara, written eight months after her letter indicating an initial interest in translating Spinoza's ideas, seems to sum up Eliot's underlying attitude to intellect and emotion, perhaps indicating why she was drawn to both Feuerbach and Spinoza, with their interest in the interplay of these processes. It marks a personal watershed in her own espousal of radical ideas without any corresponding 'cautious weighing of consequences' - emotional and moral:

Speculative truth begins to appear but a shadow of individual minds, agreement between intellects seems unattainable, and we turn to *truth of feeling* as the only universal bond of union. [...]. It is the quackery of infidelity to suppose that it has a nostrum for all mankind [...].²¹

What may have attracted her to Spinoza was his reputation for radically heterodox views and a type of biblical criticism anticipating German Higher Criticism, a reputation which had also prompted G H Lewes's enthusiasm for him and that of Coventry's Rosehill Circle. Ashton identifies Spinoza as a significant influence on the thought of other influential contemporaries of Eliot and Lewes, such as John Stuart Mill and Auguste Comte.²² Joe Hughes points to the mid-century group of intellectuals writing for the *Westminster Review* while Eliot was working there as, effectively, its editor, whose interest in Spinoza stemmed from his influence on German Idealism.

William Hale White, a major figure in late-nineteenth century Spinoza criticism and translator of both the *Emendation* and the *Ethics*, worked at the *Review* from 1852 to 1854; George Henry Lewes published a series of anonymous essays on Spinoza for the *Review* and for other periodicals throughout the 1840s and 50s; and in 1854 Froude published an article for Eliot which Frederick Pollock described in 1880 as the "the best general view of Spinoza" in English. [...]. For all of these writers Spinoza

²¹ GEL.I, to Sara Hennell, 9 October 1843, p.162.

²² Rosemary Ashton, *G H Lewes: an Unconventional Victorian*, p.157.

appears not as an unrepentant atheist, but as a fearless thinker who intrepidly pursued truth.²³

Of all these influences, it is likely that Lewes' influence on Eliot was the most significant. Apart from purely intellectual sympathy, Rosemary Ashton²⁴ argues that Lewes felt a strong sympathetic bond with Spinoza because of the personal cost to him of his own radical ideas. Spinoza had lived as an outcast from his Jewish community, an 'outlaw', and 'a theological pariah' as Lewes described him,²⁵ and Lewes had tasted some of the bitter disadvantages socially and professionally of holding sceptical views and living an unorthodox personal life in a morally conservative society. Equally, Jane Irwin²⁶ points out that Eliot might have seen her own painful extrication of herself from the 'wretched giant's bed'²⁷ of Christian dogma as an echo of Spinoza's history of intellectual emancipation and excommunication from Amsterdam's Jewish Community.

While the interest and enthusiasm of intellectual friends may have exercised an influence, Valerie Dodd argues that Spinoza's ideas coincided with many of Eliot's own interests:

Spinoza's [...] stringent method of biblical criticism was tempered by piety; the doctrine of Substance allowed for scientific scrutiny [...]. He proposed freedom of thought and a theory of progress. [...]. Spinoza formulated a theory of the emotions which was akin to the project undertaken by Spencer, and which he discussed with Marian Evans.²⁸

Dodd's analysis of the areas of congruence between Spinoza's thought and Eliot's intellectual interests omits some of the areas of potential emotional and psychological interest for her. Spinoza's claim that his system could reduce emotional suffering through intellectual understanding may have offered Eliot an integration of her capacities for feeling and for thinking. What she continued to view critically was his method, the dispassionate analysis of

²³ Joe Hughes, "'The Impious Specter of Spinozism: Spinoza in England, 1738-1854', <<http://tems.umn.edu/pdf/Hughes-Spinozism.pdf>> p.1. [accessed 19 May 2017]

²⁴ Ashton, *G H Lewes*, p.16

²⁵ G H Lewes, 'Spinoza', *Fortnightly Review IV*, No.XXII, (1 April 1866), pp. 385-406, pp. 386-8 https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=938FAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA385&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false [accessed 16 June 2017].

²⁶ Jane Irwin, *George Eliot's Daniel Deronda Notebooks*, the 'Berg Notebook' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.105. Cambridge books online.

²⁷ GEL.I, to Sara Hennell, 9 October 1843, p.162.

²⁸ Valerie Dodd, *George Eliot: an Intellectual Life*, p.250.

the emotions, ‘human actions and appetites’, as though they were, in the terms of her own translation, ‘lines, surfaces or solids’.²⁹ She ultimately rejected Spinoza’s logical approach, which she described as the ‘unemotional intellect’. What she sought was a fuller human realisation of the ‘emotional intellect’,³⁰ which she suggested through characters such as Mordecai, and her fictions provide a direct critique of Spinoza’s view of the pointlessness of suffering. For Spinoza understanding limited the passivity, and therefore the pain, of suffering: for Eliot suffering builds understanding. But in *Daniel Deronda*, even her rejection of Spinoza’s idea is expressed through specifically Spinozan terminology, that of determinism and the antitheses of action and passivity. Suffering is viewed as constituting action not excluding it:

[...] the hidden pathways of feeling and thought which lead up to every moment of action, and to those moments of intense suffering which take the quality of action – like the cry of Prometheus [...].³¹

Eliot’s Translation of the *Ethics*

Despite the increasing interest in Spinoza’s ideas, there had been no translation of the *Ethics* into English until Eliot’s work. Later English translations by William Hale White and R H M Elwes were not published until 1883, with a further translation by Drake Smith in 1888. Apart from any considerations of heresy, Latin was still so widely used in scholarly writing until as late as the mid nineteenth century that the ideas would have been available to educated men. It is thought that Eliot’s initial work on Spinoza in 1843 was through a copy of a Latin edition of either Part I of the *Ethics* or the *Tractatus*, (according to Gordon Haight, it is ‘impossible to tell’ which work it was),³² borrowed from Dr Brabant’s library. Eliot claimed that she had first started this translation of ‘a part of Spinoza’s works’ in 1843 (before she started the translation of *Leben Jesu*) at the request ‘of a friend’, probably Cara Bray. After completing her translation of Strauss in 1846, and after returning this or a further

²⁹ BdeS Eth, 3 Preface, p.92.

³⁰ GE DD, VI. 41. p.478.

³¹ GE DD, II. 16. p.149.

³² GEL.I, to Rev. Francis Watts, February 1843, and footnote 8, p.158.

copy in 1847, she asked John Chapman to secure her a replacement copy.³³ Her letter to Sara Hennell stresses how important it was to her: ‘Mind, I really want this’.³⁴

In 1849, while nursing her dying father, she worked on a translation of the *Tractatus* which has never, so far, been found. Cara Bray had written to Sara Hennell in March 1849:

I suppose M.A. writes to you, and tells you her great desire to undertake Spinoza. She can find time now and the occupation is just what she longs for.³⁵

And a little later she wrote that ‘M.A. is happy now with this Spinoza to do; she says it is such a rest to her mind’.³⁶ Eliot had also written to Sara in April 1849 implying that she needed Sara’s role in seeing what ‘to praise or blame’ in a translation of the *Tractatus*, and needed:

[...] the satisfaction of feeling that another mind than your own sees precisely where and what is the difficulty – and can exactly appreciate the success with which it is overcome.³⁷

Nine months after the letter to Sara, the letter to the Brays of December 1849 makes it clear both that this work had gone into abeyance after her father’s death, and that, despite her reservations in principle about a translation, she felt that work on both the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus* could be finished within a ‘couple of months’.³⁸

However, it was not until her translation of Ludwig Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity* had been published in 1854, that she recommenced her earlier work on the *Ethics*, completing it in February 1856. The translation became one of the intellectual offspring of her travels in Europe with Lewes, confirming their unorthodox partnership to a socially conventional English public. ‘For reasons which it would be “too tedious to mention”’,³⁹ she was unwilling to have the name Marian Evans appear as the translator, possibly judging that it would be counterproductive to Spinoza’s cause, and would provide

³³ GEL.I, to Sara Hennell, 18 and 28 February 1847, pp. 231, 232.

³⁴ GEL.I, (28 February 1847), p. 232.

³⁵ GEL.I, footnote 6, letter to Sara Hennell, 18 April 1849, refers to a letter from Cara Bray to Sara Hennell, March 1849, p.280.

³⁶ GEL.I, footnote 6, letter to Sara Hennell, 18 April 1849, p.280.

³⁷ GEL.I, (18 April 1849), pp.280, 281.

³⁸ GEL.I, (4 December 1849), p.321.

³⁹ GEL.II, to Charles Bray, 26 March 1856, p.233.

further opportunities to those willing to be publicly scandalised by her relationship with a married man and her notoriety as the translator of *Leben Jesu*.

Her resumption of the translation appears to have stemmed from Lewes's entry, as he believed, into a contract with the publisher, Bohn, to provide a translation of the *Ethics*, although Bohn later denied any such understanding. Following an increasingly acrimonious debate, Lewes and Eliot accepted that the translation was to remain unpublished. Eliot's manuscript translation is held in Yale University Library⁴⁰ and was edited by Thomas Deegan and published in a limited edition by the University of Salzburg in 1981. According to Deegan, Eliot's manuscript shows evidence, although limited, of some continuing involvement by Lewes, perhaps editorially (his writing appears on the contents page and on each of the pages prefacing the five parts of the *Ethics*).⁴¹

As considered in Chapter 1, Eliot's 1855 essay on *Translations and Translators*, where she reviewed a translation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, was written just after she had finished revising her translation of Part IV the *Ethics*. The challenges of translating a text such as Spinoza's must have been vividly in her mind, and the essay obliquely reveals how challenging Eliot found the potential conflicts stalking a translation respecting 'rigid fidelity' to text, while also displaying an 'entire uninjured kernel of meaning'.⁴² Despite Eliot's 1849 letter, with its misgivings about the potential inaccessibility of a literal translation, Ruby Redinger argues that her early work on either the *Tractatus* or the *Ethics* had been governed by the intention:

[...] to render him (Spinoza) as literally as possible, as is suggested by Cara's early remark, 'I am sure I could understand his Latin better than her English'.⁴³

Apart from the discussion of the challenges of translation contained in the 1855 essay, and possibly because the translation was a project in partnership with Lewes, Eliot's *Journal* does not discuss any theoretical problems of fidelity versus accessibility in translation, it merely records that her translation is progressing and that she is reading books about Spinoza, such as *Briefe uber Spinoza* by Jacobi.⁴⁴ The Deegan edition of her manuscript cites a bibliography that includes a Dutch edition of Spinoza's correspondence, and translations into

⁴⁰ BdeS Eth, 'Preface' by Thomas Deegan, , p.v.

⁴¹ BdeS Eth, 'Preface' by Thomas Deegan, , p.v.

⁴² GE TT, pp.342, 340.

⁴³ Ruby Redinger, *George Eliot The Emergent Self*, p.146.

⁴⁴ John Walter Cross, *George Eliot's Life as related in her Letters and Journals*, p.190.

German (by Auerbach in 1841) and French (by Saisset in 1842). She predominantly referred to a German translation of the text (Bruder's from 1843-46), but she also used Latin editions from 1803 and 1830, as well as the Latin of the *Opera Posthuma* (containing the *Ethica*, the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* and *Epistolae*) of 1677.⁴⁵ Deegan's Preface tells us that the manuscript of her translation was 'substantially complete [...] with all but a few of the translation problems settled'.⁴⁶ His textual notes provide a commentary on the manuscript's omissions or variant translations of the Latin, on her 'significant choices of wording', and on variations between Eliot's translation and Carl Gebhart's translation, cited as Deegan's contemporary standard edition.⁴⁷

Spinoza's Life and Ideas

In the same 1849 letter to Charles and Cara Bray where she had made clear her doubts about Spinoza's intellectual accessibility and the public success of any translation, Eliot had written:

For those who read the very words that Spinoza wrote, there is the same sort of interest in his style as in the conversation of a person of great capacity who has led a solitary life, and who says from his own soul what all the world is saying by rote, but this interest hardly belongs to a translation.⁴⁸

Her words here do not suggest that identification with a source author's words which I have been discussing up to this point. They do however suggest the sympathy and judgement of a future novelist. They underline her interest in character, motivation and situation, contrasting paradoxically with Spinoza's own approach of strict rationality, emotional detachment, and impersonal analysis of the human condition. Through his stylistic mask of a geometrical logical method she found corroboration for those aspects of his personal circumstances and putative mental state which had elicited Lewes's personal sympathy and identification; his social and intellectual isolation. Her sympathetic yet ironic analysis of Spinoza's situation finds some exaggerated and unkindly distorted reflections, most obviously in *Middlemarch's* Casaubon, pursuing an idea in intellectual solitude while, unbeknown to him, the rest of the

⁴⁵ BdeS Eth, Deegan, 'Preface', p.xi.

⁴⁶ BdeS Eth, Deegan, 'Preface', p.vi.

⁴⁷ BdeS Eth, Deegan, 'Preface', pvii.

⁴⁸ GEL.I, to Charles and Cara Bray, 4th December 1849, p.321.

world repositions its context and relevance. I shall argue in this chapter that more kindly refractions appear in the characters of Mordecai and of Daniel Deronda himself.

Eliot's perception that the style betrayed the life of the man is her personal interpretation of the links that were made by Lewes and others such as Froude and Arnold between Spinoza's ideas and the way he lived his life. Garrett identifies Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697) as influential in propagating 'the image of an absurd and heretical metaphysician who nonetheless lived an exemplary life.'⁴⁹ While German and English Romanticism celebrated his pantheist theology, the nineteenth century celebrated his historicism, psychological and ethical teachings, and his exemplary life. Matthew Arnold's 1869 essay sets out this case:

Spinoza led a life the most spotless, perhaps, to be found among the lives of philosophers; he lived simple, studious, even-tempered, kind; declining honours, declining riches, declining notoriety.⁵⁰

Three of the significant areas of Spinoza's thought as set out in *Ethics* need to be considered in relation to any consideration of them within the texture of Eliot's novels. The first area relates to God's immanence in Nature, or the sum-total of knowable reality ('deus sive natura'), and to the nature of human understanding of God, possible only through the attributes of 'extension', or the material universe, and 'thought'. Since all that exists participates in this concept of Nature, reality, adequately considered through the reason and therefore 'under the form of eternity' ('sub specie aeternitatis'), reveals itself operating through necessity rather than contingency,⁵¹ and this perception of infinite causality precludes human free will.

The second area of argument concerns the processes of human thought. If everything is a reflection of the mind of an immanent God, then the human mind must, if it is to operate 'adequately',⁵² address reality as it perceives, experiences and understands it. Spinoza argued that human thought at its most unreliable is based only on the operation of the senses ('vague experience') or through responses to signs ('opinion or imagination'). Even though the

⁴⁹ Don Garrett, 'Introduction', *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.10. Cambridge Companions Online.

⁵⁰ Arnold, 'Spinoza and the Bible', p.180.

⁵¹ BdeS Eth, 2p44, corollary, pp.79 and 80.

⁵² BdeS Eth, 2d4, p.43.

imagineer may be aware that these imaginings do ‘not in fact exist’,⁵³ they produce ‘mutilated, confused, unorderedly’, and ultimately ‘inadequate’ conceptions, Spinoza’s first type of ‘cognition’.⁵⁴ The second kind of thinking or ‘cognition’ is based on reason derived from ‘adequate’ established knowledge. The third type of thinking, with which Eliot seems to have been intrigued, is what Spinoza terms ‘intuitive cognition’ (*scientia intuitiva*), where the mind can identify connections between ‘isolated specifics and the totality of existence’,⁵⁵ as Dodd describes it. Spinoza describes it as proceeding from:

[...] an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to an adequate cognition of the essence of things.⁵⁶

Spinoza’s explanatory example of the ways in which the mind can identify sequences of numerical ratios focuses on the ability of the third type of cognition to infer new examples of relationship based on an initial, adequate perception of the essential nature of the relationship.⁵⁷ Margaret Wilson describes the analogy and the distinction between the second and third type of thinking as follows:

The appropriateness of the mathematical example, I suggest, lies [...] just in the differences among the procedures. On this interpretation, the second kind of knowledge differs from the third both in requiring steps of reasoning, as distinct from direct mental vision, and in failing to arrive at the inmost essences of things.⁵⁸

She later argues that:

[...] the third kind of knowledge involves an intuitive grasp of the relation of things’ essential, individual force of persistence to God’s power.⁵⁹

Spinoza asserts that the second and third types of ‘adequate’ thinking are ‘necessarily true’.⁶⁰ Both Genevieve Lloyd⁶¹ and Jarrett⁶² emphasise that Spinoza’s concept of intuition as the

⁵³ BdeS Eth, 2p17, scholium, p.62.

⁵⁴ BdeS Eth, 2p40, scholium 2, p.76.

⁵⁵ Dodd, p.95.

⁵⁶ BdeS Eth, 2p40, scholium 2, p.76.

⁵⁷ BdeS Eth, 2p40, scholium 2, pp.76, 77.

⁵⁸ Margaret D Wilson, ‘Spinoza’s Theory of Knowledge’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. by Don Garrett (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.118. Cambridge Companions Online.

⁵⁹ Wilson, p.123.

⁶⁰ BdeS Eth, 2p41, p.77.

highest form of knowledge in Part II is understood as expressing the intellectual love of God (or Nature), the understanding of ourselves and reality in relation to God, in Part V. Sanem Soyarslan argues that Spinoza considered intuition the highest form of knowledge because:

[...] intuitive knowledge descends to a level of particularity, including the adequate knowledge of one's own essence as it follows directly from God. By attaining this superior form of self-knowledge, intuition also ascends to a higher level of affective power that reason cannot access.⁶³

Eliot's own definition of 'intuitive cognition', or intuition, in an 1875 letter to Mrs Ponsonby, could be interpreted as an understanding of Spinoza's conceptualisation. She identifies intuition as way of understanding sense impressions and their relationships in a way which leads to active thought:

The most thorough experientialists admit intuition – i.e. direct impressions of sensibility underlying all proof - as necessary starting points for thought.⁶⁴

The third area of argument, and perhaps the most radical part of Spinoza's work, is his redefinition of the concepts of good and evil, underpinning his revolutionary system of ethics. The *Ethics* replaces *a priori* ideas of good and evil with a subjective and intellectual process, a continuing transition in knowledge from inadequate ideas to adequate ideas– 'We know nothing certainly to be good or evil, except that which really conduces to understanding or which can impede understanding'.⁶⁵ His definition of 'good' is ultimately dependent on subjective assessments based on individual understanding. 'Good' is what is 'certainly' known 'to be useful to us', and, in turn, 'useful' means 'that which we know to be a means of approaching nearer and nearer to that exemplar of human nature which we propose to ourselves'.⁶⁶ Even the appeal to an external 'exemplar' is one that is chosen by a subjective process of proposal 'to ourselves', although as the *Ethics* progresses Spinoza provides more

⁶¹ Genevieve Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics*, pp. 67, 68, 110, 111.

⁶² Jarrett, pp. 68, 69, 85, 116.

⁶³ Sanem Soyarslan, 'Reason and Intuitive Knowledge in Spinoza's Ethics: Two Ways of Knowing, Two Ways of Living' (Department of Philosophy, Duke University, 2011), p.316, <http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/4961/Soyarslan_duke_0066D_11103.pdf?sequence=1> [accessed 19 May 2017]

⁶⁴ GEL.VI, Letter to Mrs Henry Frederick Ponsonby, 19 August 1875, p.167.

⁶⁵ BdeS Eth, 4p27, p.173.

⁶⁶ BdeS Eth, 4, Preface and d1, p.156.

detail about how a person achieves ‘salvation, or blessedness, or liberty’⁶⁷ and the ‘repose of mind’⁶⁸ derived from the adequate ideas arising to some extent from the second, but pre-eminently from the third types of cognition. ‘Evil’, for Spinoza, is based on a subjective assessment about what might ‘hinder’ or ‘impede’ an individual from achieving his – or her - ‘exemplar’ good:

By evil I understand that of which we certainly know that it hinders us from participating in some good.⁶⁹

In his conceptualisation of evil as an impediment to realising the good, Spinoza redefines Augustine’s concept which had emphasised evil as a ‘privation of some good’.⁷⁰

Spinoza’s analysis of emotion is also knowledge-based. Understanding the component dynamics of an emotion allows an active role in its management. Lack of understanding turns mankind into victims of their emotions, and those emotions into ‘passions’. He argued that:

[...] every one has the power, if not absolutely, at least in part, of clearly and distinctly understanding himself and his emotions and consequently of causing himself to suffer less from them.⁷¹

And earlier in Part V of the *Ethics* that:

An emotion which is a passion, ceases to be a passion, as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it.⁷²

Michael della Rocca characterises Spinoza’s ethical standpoint as ‘egoistic’: ‘preserving self’ was the ‘only foundation of virtue’.⁷³ The idea is founded upon the recognition that every being will strive to persist (conatus), and that to achieve this it ought to make rational, ‘adequate’ choices about those things and ideas useful to it, and avoid

⁶⁷ BdeS Eth, 5p36, scholium, p.237.

⁶⁸ BdeS Eth, 5p27, p.233.

⁶⁹ BdeS Eth, 4d2, p.156.

⁷⁰ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, Book VII (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998), p.124.

⁷¹ BdeS Eth, 5p4, scholium, p.220.

⁷² BdeS Eth, 5p3, p.219.

⁷³ Michael della Rocca ‘Spinoza’s Metaphysical Psychology’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*, ed. by Don Garrett (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.199. Cambridge Companions Online.

emotions which deplete its power of action.⁷⁴ In contrast with the relativism and subjectivity of much of his teaching, Spinoza proposed that memory of a ‘right theory’ or a ‘rule of life’ would support this endeavour, and constantly emphasised that one of his central ethical teachings must be part of this ‘rule’:

For example, we have laid it down among the rules of life [...] that hatred is to be conquered by love or generosity, and not to be met by reciprocal hatred.⁷⁵

The adoption of his theory of adequate knowledge and understanding allowed him to assert an optimistic vision of a society where all men exercise a rational understanding about a ‘common good’:

Hence there is nothing more useful to man than man; nothing [...] more appropriate [...] than that all men should agree in all things, that the minds and bodies of all should compose as it were one mind and body, all at once [...] striving to preserve their being, and all at once seeking for themselves what is a common good to all.⁷⁶

The *Ethics* proposes that as part of our process of gaining more adequate ideas, ‘[...] we desire to form the idea of a man, which we may contemplate as an exemplar of human nature’⁷⁷ and quotes with approval the proverb that the ‘God of man is *man*’,⁷⁸ a proverb that would resonate with both Feuerbach and with Eliot. A virtuous life must be founded on an intellectual process of increasingly clear understanding, one where human minds are in the process of becoming part of the ‘eternal and infinite intellect of God’,⁷⁹ and where ‘our salvation or blessedness or liberty’ consists in the intuitive thinking which represents ‘constant and eternal love towards God’.⁸⁰ This rational and intellectual approach to right conduct also emphasises that:

The intellectual love of the mind towards God is that very love wherewith God loves himself, not so far as he is infinite, but so far as he can be explained by the essence of the human mind considered under the form of eternity.⁸¹

⁷⁴ BdeS Eth 4p22, corollary, p.171.

⁷⁵ BdeS Eth, 5p10, scholium, p.224.

⁷⁶ BdeS Eth, 4p18, scholium, p.169.

⁷⁷ BdeS Eth, 4 Preface, pp.155, 156.

⁷⁸ BdeS Eth, 4p35, scholium, p.178.

⁷⁹ BdeS Eth, 5p40, scholium, p.241.

⁸⁰ BdeS Eth, 5p36, scholium, p.237.

⁸¹ BdeS Eth, 5p36, p.237.

Despite his clarity of presentation, and his attempt to analyse emotion and ethics as if they were ‘lines, surfaces or solids’, there is a tension between his objective, algebraic analyses of the relationships between different types of emotion and the subtleties of his demand for subjective judgement based on a process of intellectual understanding. In addition, Spinoza’s concepts intrinsically create areas of ambiguity as to his precise meaning. For example, the human aspiration outlined in Part V to achieve an understanding which is ‘our salvation or blessedness’, combines the book’s preceding advocacy of rationality and ‘intuitive understanding’ as the highest mode of mental life with concepts drawn from theology and scripture. Their ambiguity and the earlier search for clarity of exposition in the *Ethics* may reflect the essential ambiguities of language itself or, possibly, Spinoza’s wish to disconcert his audience by advocating a rational, intellectual route to a state whose analogies and previous conceptualisations were metaphysical.

The Views of Critics

A number of interventions in relation to the influence on Eliot of Spinoza’s thought are responses to Dorothy Atkins’s thesis (1977) tracing the influence of Spinozan ideas on *Adam Bede* and the characters’ movement towards more ‘adequate’ ideas about each other, and from feeling the passive victim of someone else’s wrong towards an understanding of how that other is affected in turn.⁸² Moira Gatens (2012) provides nuanced comment on Atkins’s claim that Eliot’s novels were secondary translations of texts such as the *Ethics*. She points out that Eliot’s ‘secular reinterpretation of the meaning and significance of religion’ although influenced by Spinoza, is critical of certain aspects of his thought,⁸³ and argues that, while Spinoza’s concept of the role of imagination in cognition ‘remains a site of interpretative disagreement’, for Eliot the intellect was crucial but dependent on imagination and memory.⁸⁴ Ted Zenziger (2012) supports Atkins’s view of the linkages between Eliot’s

⁸² Dorothy J Atkins, (1977) ‘George Eliot And Spinoza’ (Order No. 7732112) (unpublished doctoral thesis, University Nebraska, 1977). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (302850517).

⁸³ Moira Gatens, ‘Compelling Fictions: Spinoza and George Eliot on Imagination and Belief’, *European Journal of Philosophy*, 20(1), 74-90, 17 p. MAR 2012, p.8. Philosopher’s Index, EBSCOhost, [accessed 19 May 2017].

⁸⁴ Gatens, pp.11, 13.

and Spinoza's thought, but, like Gatens, suggests that Eliot is also offering 'a broader view of sympathy that [...] incorporates transformative pain and a key role for the imagination'.⁸⁵

V M Nemoianu considers Spinoza's concepts of adequate and inadequate ideas, of active or passive modes of thought and emotion, and hence with either freedom or bondage,⁸⁶ and the way that these ideas are developed in *Daniel Deronda*. In the contested area of identifying Spinoza's understanding of 'imagination' and 'intuition' in his theory of cognition, Nemoianu argues that intuition was intended to mean 'imagination brought into one current with reason in intuitive synthesis.'⁸⁷

Isobel Armstrong's intervention relates to Part III of the Ethics with its analysis of the emotions. She argues that this analysis is important 'not simply at the thematic level but as a structural and organizing principle of the novels.'⁸⁸ She cites Eliot's presentations of Dorothea's emotions after betrayal by Will, arguing that they have:

[...] the immediacy of a writer who has internalized and lived [Spinoza's] philosophical meaning, rather than abstracting it.⁸⁹

Armstrong concludes that Eliot's works are evidence both of her criticism and her fascination with Spinoza's 'intransigent understanding of the intensity of the passions and the logic of their formative violence.'⁹⁰

Critical attention has focused on the way the novels interpret or reinterpret for the reader Spinoza's ideas on determinism and on the adequacy or inadequacy of ideas and the transitions they make to more adequate knowledge. I will draw attention to the ways in which Eliot's fictions translate other aspects of his thought. These include his ideas about the immanence of God and human interrelationship with Nature, recognised by intuitive knowledge; the nature of good and evil as a process in dialogue with subjective exemplars; the pain of transitions from active understanding to passive experience; the nature of the will

⁸⁵Ted Zenziger, 'Spinoza, *Adam Bede*, Knowledge, and Sympathy: A Reply to Atkins', *Philosophy and Literature*, 2012 Oct; 36 (2): 424-440. [accessed 11 June 2017]

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=85515474&site=eds-live&scope=site>

⁸⁶V M Nemoianu, "The Spinozist Freedom of George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*." *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 34 no. 1, 2010, pp. 67-81, British Library Document Supply Centre Inside Serials & Conference Proceedings, EBSCOhost, [accessed 19 May 2017]

⁸⁷ Nemoianu, p.5.

⁸⁸ Isabel Armstrong, 'Spinoza and the Emotions', *Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture : Companion to George Eliot*, ed. by Anderson and Shaw, p.295.

⁸⁹ Armstrong, p.302.

⁹⁰ Armstrong, p.302.

and its relationship with causality. In addition I will explore the influence of Spinoza's own thematic language of concatenation, liberty and servitude, and of his own life as an expression of his intellectual system.

The Influence of Spinoza's Ideas on Eliot

As pointed out by critics, it is overly simplistic to attribute Eliot's novels about aspirations, mistakes, consequences, and maturing understanding to any one intellectual influence. My argument has been that the process of translation, in its demand for both empathy and judgement, created a particularly intense relationship with the ideas of the writer being translated. The immediacy of some of the transference of idea and language is shown through the close translations of Spinoza's own metaphors of concatenation and of bondage or servitude. In *Middlemarch*, concatenation, the chain of interconnectedness and causality, is translated into the recurrent metaphor of a web, the threads of each life woven into those of other lives, and determining their fates. In *Daniel Deronda*, it is translated into the metaphor of the invisible, interweaving pathways followed by stars and planets. Concerns with the interpretation of liberty, bonds and bondage pervade *Daniel Deronda*, reflecting the famous headings to Parts IV and V of *Ethics*, 'On the Servitude of Man and on the Power of the Passions' and 'On the Power of the Intellect, or, on Human Liberty'. Spinoza himself is a shadow presence in *Daniel Deronda*, as discussed later.

The influences of Spinoza, as well as of Feuerbach, on the formation of the most intimate voice representing that of the author – the narrator - are also significant. In Chapter 2, I argued that the voice of the narrator was the voice both of the translator behind the translation and also of the 'emotional intellect', Eliot's nuanced reversal of Spinoza's intellectualising of emotion. Spinoza's view of intuition also informs the narrator's apparently intuitive understanding of characters and of the patterns of interrelated experiences and events traced in the novels. The reader is prompted to make connections, through formal echoes between linked narratives, between seemingly disparate characters and events, reflecting Spinoza's vision of the interconnectedness of reality.

Other aspects of Spinoza's ideas in the *Ethics* permeate the psychological analyses of the novels. Eliot's recurring analysis of the self-destruction resulting from delusory imagination unfettered by rational analysis reflects Spinoza's ideas of its capacity to mutilate and confuse perceived reality. In *Adam Bede*, published only four years after her translation

of Spinoza, both Hetty and Arthur are in the grip of self-flattering or self-deluding visions of a possible future, and these prevent them from seeing clearly what consequences may flow from their actions. In *The Mill on the Floss*, the river journey's powerful image of passive surrender conveys Maggie's abandonment of her active moral intelligence to the lure of passive emotion. The language Eliot uses conveys the pain of passivity for characters whose inadequate ideas have resulted in the stifling of their characteristic mode of action. This will be explored in relation to both Lydgate and Dorothea.

I argue that the ideas of the *Ethics* were of great significance to her in her analysis of psychological states, and of their dynamics, what Spinoza called the 'transitions' of idea and feeling. By the time she wrote *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot's fascination with and reservations about Spinoza's conceptual approach had even woven themselves explicitly into the text of the novel. Deronda weighs 'formulas for thinking' produced by 'unemotional intellect' in the balance and finds them wanting in comparison with the ideas of Mordecai's 'emotional intellect'.⁹¹ The 'transition' to an 'emotional intellect' is exemplified in such lives as Dorothea's, Mordecai's and Daniel Deronda's. It represents a fusion of feeling and understanding in Feuerbach's terms, and of pleasure in the adequacy of intuitive knowledge in Spinoza's terms. In *Middlemarch*, her novel of realism, and in *Daniel Deronda*, her experiment with causality, her engagement with the ideas of the *Ethics* may be seen to be continuing and developing in complexity most clearly.

Spinoza's style of detached, mathematical precision and the translation of emotions into algebraic 'formulae' seems in tension with the ethical and emotional ambiguities of individual experience, and particularly with one of Eliot's much used and approving adjectives, 'ardent', which signifies for her the active, emotionally engaged operation of ethical conviction. His dispassionate method is the subject of Eliot's explicit critique in *Daniel Deronda*. But her 1849 analysis of the strengths of Spinoza's 'life and system', the fusion and interplay of a life well-lived, with its roots in intellectual understanding, also became a crucial creative force in her novels, which include explorations of the connections and discontinuities between the personal ideology and conduct of her characters. Characters such as Lydgate, Dorothea, and Deronda, the Spinozan secular Jew who retranslates Judaism into geo-politics, aim to live lives informed by clear intellectual or spiritual purposes, but have to address their inadequate ideas in other respects. Where Eliot creates characters who fail to uphold or have no integrity of intellectual purpose – Bulstrode or Grandcourt – their

⁹¹ GE DD, VI. 41. p.478.

implicit judgement by the narrative, as well as the explicit evaluations of the narrator suggest the novel judges their failure with Spinozan clarity and detachment.

I will focus first on *Middlemarch* and then on *Daniel Deronda* to demonstrate how pervasively Eliot has translated, and also transmuted, Spinoza's concepts, infusing them with her own ideas about the supremacy of the 'emotional intellect'.

Middlemarch and the Ideas of the Ethics

I have already noted Eliot's narrator's continual engagement in I-thou conversations with the reader. But as well as translating Feuerbachian lessons, as discussed in Chapter 2, the conversations demand that the reader's mind becomes conscious of its own cognition, amends 'inadequate' ideas, and makes a transition from the 'we' who are entertaining 'inadequate ideas' to a 'we' thinking more 'adequately' with the narrator. I will once again use *Middlemarch's* famous meditation about universal tragic experience:

Some discouragement, some faintness of heart at the new real future which replaces the imaginary, is not unusual, and we do not expect people to be deeply moved by what is not unusual. That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity.⁹²

Introducing the ideas is a sentence which, in ironic yet sympathetic language, translates into recognisably human terms Spinoza's objective psychological ideas, the replacement of the 'imaginary', inadequate mode of thought for a more adequate perception of reality, with its consequential transitional negative emotions and depletion of self. The narrator leads the reader on a voyage of intuitive understandings, where ideas are expanded and then qualified. Firstly, we are asked to embrace a comprehensive intuition about ourselves as part of and sharing in the natural world about us, as part of 'natura naturans', where unarticulated yet intense everyday human tragedy takes its place alongside – and as possibly no more important to an immanent understanding - other particular experiences veiled by silence, those of natural growth, 'hearing the grass grow', and the small fears and pains of other

⁹² GE M, II. 20. p.189.

creatures, 'hearing [...] the squirrel's heart beat'. The reader is being asked to feel themselves as a 'concatenated', interlinked part of Spinoza's 'Nature', but also to embrace something of the calm intuitive overview which Spinoza attributes to thinking 'under the form of eternity', a mode of thought he identifies with one of the attributes of God. Spinoza's concept of a common consciousness available to human beings in relation to the world they live in is being suggested.

As well as this Spinozan idea, Eliot is demanding that the reader consider whether they could or should engage their 'emotional intellect' in an act of sympathy for the universal occurrence of 'tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency'. The ambiguities of the narrator's demands are 'well-wadded' with irony, but seem both to aspire to a sympathy which is recognised as impossible to achieve, and to judge the human inability and 'stupidity' which prevents its achievement. In this, Eliot is scarcely endorsing either Spinoza's celebration of the 'human intellect' or his rejection of suffering as the pathways to an understanding of reality. Instead she seems rather to be suggesting that sympathy and suffering have intrinsic validity in driving the processes of change in human lives.

The disappointment lying at the heart of the transition made by Dorothea's mind from the imaginary future to an understanding of the real future parallels Spinoza's analysis of the need for a transition from an inadequate type of cognition (of the first kind) towards a rational cognition (of the second kind). Yet although it is possible to see this Spinozan conceptualisation at work, it becomes infused by Eliot's desire to make the reader share in the emotion involved in such a transition. Instead of dispassionate understanding, we are asked as readers both to share in the universal human suffering felt when imagination and ideals give way to a recognition of the infinite regression of causal constraints constituting reality, and also to realise our limited capabilities to do this.

Determinism

Spinoza frequently uses the word 'concatenare' (to link together) to describe the interconnectedness of the world, and the inexorable causality which imprisons people in a chain of action and reaction which they disguise as freewill. But Spinoza also uses a more organic metaphor of the interconnectedness of rationality, an optimistic vision of the possibilities for society arising from human understanding and co-operation:

[...] the minds and bodies of all should compose as it were one mind and body, all at once [...] striving to preserve their being, and all at once seeking for themselves what is a common good to all.⁹³

Darrel Mansell⁹⁴ argues that Eliot's essay, 'Notes on Form in Art', echoes Spinoza's metaphor, in its advocacy of an art which moved towards complexity, the disclosure of 'new and newer relations', and that:

[...] the most varied group of relations bound together in a wholeness which again has the most varied relations with all other phenomena' is 'the highest organism.'⁹⁵

The linkages, both negative and positive, between the thoughts and actions of one person and the thoughts and actions of another are considered throughout Eliot's narratives. Some of her metaphors reflect Spinoza's interest in organic economy, but her metaphors of weaving and webs suggest a more flexible entrapment than Spinoza's chains of causality. There has been critical interest in Eliot's extended metaphor of Middlemarch communities as a web or a piece of cloth:

I at least have so much to do in unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, [...].⁹⁶

The metaphor of unravelling a whole to understand its connections, the narrator's self-proclaimed task in writing, reflects not only the Spinozan idea of multiple causes or linkages, with its relevance for the fates of Lydgate, Rosamond, Fred and Bulstrode, but also suggests Eliot's own metaphors of linkages in 'Notes on Form in Art'. In addition, Spinoza's metaphor of concatenation also embraces the way in which humanity positively generates a store of adequate ideas and emotions, and its reverse transition of inadequate understanding of emotions driving suffering.

⁹³ BdeS Eth, 4p18, scholium, p.169.

⁹⁴ Darrel Mansell, 'George Eliot's Conception of Form' in *George Eliot; a collection of critical essays*, ed. by George Creeger (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970), pp. 68, 69,70.

⁹⁵ George Eliot, 'Notes on Form in Art' in *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, ed. by A S Byatt and Nicholas Warren (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), p.232.

⁹⁶ GE M, II. 15. p.139.

The ‘unravelling’ metaphor is reflected in the activities of a number of the novel’s characters. Both Lydgate and Casaubon are each attempting to ‘unravel’, or discover, first causes in hugely ambitious projects. In Casaubon’s case, he is seeking the ur-revelation of the divine: in Lydgate’s case his aim is to discover ‘the primitive tissue’, the elementary building blocks of physical life.

[Bichat] [...] first carried out the conception that living bodies [...] must be regarded as consisting of certain primary webs or tissues, out of which the various organs [...] are compacted. [...].

This great seer did not go beyond the consideration of the tissues as ultimate facts in the living organism, [...]; but it was open to another mind to say, have not these structures some common basis from which they have all started [...]. Of this sequence to Bichat’s work, [...], Lydgate was enamoured; he longed to demonstrate the more intimate relations of living structure, and help to define men’s thought more accurately after the true order. [...]. What was the primitive tissue?⁹⁷

Lydgate’s aim is the pursuit of rational knowledge (the second type of Spinozan cognition) of the ‘primitive tissue’ which underlies all living forms, so that it could be used to benefit humanity. The novel examines both these projects to identify ‘first causes’ and demonstrates how any such project becomes entangled in other webs of human causality operating in communities like Middlemarch, with its consistent failure ‘to agree in all things’, and its pursuit of less than ‘adequate’ purposes based on miscalculations and illusions.

Inadequate Ideas and Negative Transitions

Spinoza’s proposal in Part IV of the *Ethics* that an exemplary approach to living a life for one’s own good and that of others is attainable - ‘all at once seeking for themselves what is a common good to all’,⁹⁸ comes under scrutiny in *Middlemarch*. The narrative confronts the heavy dragnet of social, historical, and personal realities, where clarity of purpose becomes elusive and compromised by misjudgement, disillusion, grief, recrimination and doubt. Characters, such as Lydgate and Dorothea, with their noble aspirations, are shown to have failed to make ‘adequate’ allowance for the impacts on their lives of certain unalterable facts about human nature. The web of causality threatening Lydgate’s career stems from his miscalculation of Rosamond’s and Bulstrode’s essential natures. Eliot’s language shows how

⁹⁷ GE M, II. 15. pp.145, 146.

⁹⁸ BdeS Eth, 4p18, scholium, p.169.

Lydgate's 'inadequate' thinking has enforced a Spinozan transition to a sense of himself as the passive object of externalities rather than as an active subject.

Everything that had happened to him there [Middlemarch] seemed a mere preparation for this hateful fatality, which had come as a blight on his honourable ambition, and must make even people who had only vulgar standards regard his reputation as irrevocably damaged. In such moments a man can hardly escape being unloving. Lydgate thought of himself as the sufferer, and of others as the agents who had injured his lot. [...]. There are episodes in most men's lives in which their highest qualities can only cast a deterring shadow over the objects that fill their inward vision: Lydgate's tender-heartedness was present just then only as a dread lest he should offend against it, not as an emotion that swayed him to tenderness. For he was very miserable. Only those who know the supremacy of the intellectual life – the life which has a seed of ennobling thought and purpose within it – can understand the grief of one who falls from that serene activity into the absorbing soul-wasting struggle with worldly annoyances.⁹⁹

Lydgate perceives too late the chain of consequences grown out of his misjudgements. Because he sees himself as the object of the actions of others or of impersonal forces ('everything that had happened to him' and 'which had come as a blight'), a 'sufferer' rather than an actively reasoning agent, he can see no way out of the emotional suffering. For him the Spinozan negative transition has been a particularly bitter one; the calm of rational activity has been undermined by his discovery of his 'impotence', through imminent financial and marital ruin, and the possible loss of his reputation as a man of honour. Consistent with Spinoza's analysis of emotions in Books III and IV of the *Ethics*, even his virtues, such as his 'tender-heartedness', are under siege from the negations and pain of his emotions. Spinoza had argued that:

When the mind imagines its own impotence it feels pain.¹⁰⁰

and that:

The power of any passion or emotion may predominate over the other actions or power of a man, so that the emotion may pertinaciously adhere to him¹⁰¹.

⁹⁹ GE M, VIII. 73. p.727.

¹⁰⁰ BdeS Eth, 3p55, p.132.

¹⁰¹ BdeS Eth, 4p6, p.161.

Lydgate's experience is described in terms which give specific dramatic realisations of Spinoza's analyses of the pains of perceived passivity. His virtue of tender-heartedness is shown to be at the mercy of his other emotions and only his intellectual recall of it prevents him from even further self-destruction.

The inadequacy of Dorothea's early assessment of Sir James Chettam and Mr Casaubon as potential suitors, and the relation this has with Spinoza's first type of cognition, with its 'mutilated, confused, unordered' impressions is wittily presented through one of Celia's efforts to save Dorothea from choosing Mr Casaubon as her future husband:

"I thought it right to tell you, because you went on as you always do, never looking just where you are, and treading in the wrong place. You always see what nobody else sees; it is impossible to satisfy you; yet you never see what is quite plain."¹⁰²

Dorothea's short-sightedness is emphasised over and over again in the novel, as well as the clumsiness to which it gives rise. Even her 'ready understanding of high experience'¹⁰³ in her act of generosity, one of Spinoza's virtues, towards Lydgate is qualified by her ignorance of other types of experience, the inadequate ideas of mundane, selfish calculation:

(Of lower experience such as plays a great part in the world, poor Mrs Casaubon had a very blurred shortsighted knowledge, little helped by her imagination.)¹⁰⁴

Eliot's analysis of the connections between Dorothea's inadequate ideas and her sense of passive mental confusion on her honeymoon reflects Spinoza's analysis of the interplay of emotions. The disorientation of her ambitions for her marriage and their transition to confused disappointment is suggested through her initial fragmented perceptions of Rome in the descriptions already considered in Chapter 2.

[...] all this vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual, mixed confusedly with the signs of breathing forgetfulness and degradation, at first jarred her as with an electric shock, and then urged themselves on her with that ache belonging to a glut of confused ideas which check the flow of emotion. Forms both pale and glowing took possession of her young sense, and fixed themselves in her memory even when she

¹⁰² GE M, I. 4. p.36.

¹⁰³ GE M, VIII. 76. p.755.

¹⁰⁴ GE M, VIII. 76. p.755.

was not thinking of them, preparing strange associations which remained through her after-years.¹⁰⁵

There are a number of points of correspondence here with Spinoza's analysis of the emotions in Part III of the *Ethics*. One of these is the passive mood of its verbs. Dorothea was 'jarred' by the juxtaposition of lost ideals and a confused sense of 'degradation'. 'Impressions urged themselves upon' her, and 'forms [...] took possession of her [...].' In Propositions I and III of *Ethics*, Part III, Spinoza argues that:

Our mind is both active and passive; so far, namely, as it has adequate ideas, it is necessarily active, and so far as it has inadequate ideas, it is necessarily passive.¹⁰⁶

and:

The actions of the mind arise only from adequate ideas; its passions only from inadequate ideas.¹⁰⁷

Her inadequate idea about her marriage finds metaphors in her impressions of Rome, all described in terms of Spinoza's cognition of the first kind, the inadequacies of imagination and sensory impressions. The passage closes with a description of the mixture of feelings suggested by the conjunction of Rome's spiritual symbolic role with its contemporary decline. For Dorothea this conjunction and its echoes within her own experience were 'preparing strange associations which remained through her after- years'. In Part III's proposition XIV and in the demonstration of proposition XV, Spinoza analyses the ways in which parallel experiences haunt each other, so that the memory of one will elicit the memory of the other.

If the mind has once been affected by two emotions simultaneously, when it is afterwards affected by either of them, it will be affected by the other also.¹⁰⁸

and:

When the mind is [...] affected with the former emotion by its true cause, [...] it will always be affected with the other also [...], that is it will be affected by pleasure or

¹⁰⁵ GE M, II. 20. p.188.

¹⁰⁶ BdeS Eth, 3p1, p.93.

¹⁰⁷ BdeS Eth, 3p3, p.99.

¹⁰⁸ BdeS Eth, 3p14, p.104.

pain; and thus the former object, not in itself, but by accident, will be a cause of joy or sadness.¹⁰⁹

In addition, Dorothea's uncomprehending impressions of Rome and their apparent fusion with her emotions about her recent marriage, has resonances with several propositions set out in Part III. In the demonstration to proposition LIX, Spinoza argues that:

All emotions resolve themselves into desire, pleasure or pain, [...]. But by pain we understand that by which the mind's power of thought is diminished or restrained [...].¹¹⁰

The narrator's observation that the wreckage and confusion represented by Rome 'urged themselves on her with that ache belonging to a glut of confused ideas which check the flow of emotion' also suggests Spinoza's argument that it is the confusion of ideas about any emotion which causes suffering rather than the emotion itself, once clearly understood by the intellect.

Prop. III. An emotion which is a passion, ceases to be a passion, as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it.

Dem. An emotion which is a passion is a confused idea [...]. If therefore we form a clear and distinct idea of such an emotion, this idea is not distinguished from the emotion, so far as it belongs to the mind, except by reason [...]; and thus [...] the emotion ceases to be a passion; [...].¹¹¹

Eliot's analyses of the emotional and intellectual experiences of Lydgate and Dorothea, and also of Will and Rosamond, show the influence of Spinoza's argument about the inadequacy of non-rational ideas, and how inadequate thinking leads to a loss of active control over life. Characters' mental states move from 'self-contentment' towards a state of suffering or passion when external events reduce their ability to see themselves as active agents. Just as Eliot explored the constraints on achieving understanding of others through an I-thou relationship, she explores the practical difficulties of achieving an intellectual understanding of emotion, except through the experience of suffering. The lessons learnt this

¹⁰⁹ BdeS Eth, 3p15, Demonstration, p.105.

¹¹⁰ BdeS Eth, 3p59, Demonstration, p.137.

¹¹¹ BdeS Eth, 5p3, and Demonstration, p.219.

way, she seems to suggest, lead to a more effective recognition of the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of ourselves as a dependent part of a greater reality.

Good and Evil

Spinoza's radical teaching about what constitutes good and evil, (and consequently, what should be seen as Spinozan virtues) is examined and interrogated in a number of ways. 'Good' is for Spinoza a subjective, intellectual process of increasing understanding and using experience to approach 'nearer and nearer to that exemplar of human nature which we propose to ourselves'.¹¹² Above all, however, it is active, whereas evil, for Spinoza, consists in experiencing a hindrance to and limitation of active pursuit of an exemplar good. His language about evil in the *Ethics* emphasises this negativity; its vocabulary is one of 'limits' and 'impediments' to the achievement of adequate understanding and the activity which might flow from that:

By evil I understand that of which we certainly know that it hinders us from participating in some good.¹¹³

A number of *Middlemarch*'s characters are shown to have failed to reach an adequate understanding of themselves or of others. The narrator and the text of the novel judge their failings by Spinozan criteria. The weaknesses of Mr Brooke, Fred Vincy, and Mr Bulstrode are the result of their passivity, negativity and inaction. Fred Vincy's entanglement in speculation and debt provides an ironic commentary on the Spinozan model of knowing what you need and ought to do but allowing circumstances to override an inner judgement. Mr Brooke's ability to assent to just causes and ignore their implications for his own actions also falls within this ironic view of people's self-deceptions and wilful hypocrisies. However, Eliot's portrayal of the ethical dilemma facing Bulstrode in relation to Raffles' illness demonstrates a Spinozan typology of thought processes which lead to 'evil'. Bulstrode's inner decision not to rectify a failure in medication, and thus knowingly allowing a man to die, demonstrates both 'certain knowledge' and a failure to 'participate in some good'.

¹¹² BdeS Eth, 4 Preface, p.156.

¹¹³ BdeS Eth, 4d2, p.156.

Moreover, we, as the readers, understand that these decisions are the product of a desperate wish to hinder the truth about his past hypocrisies and deceptions being exposed.

In contrast to these analyses of evil as a failure to act well, Mr Farebrother's dealings with Mary Garth, whom he loves, and Fred Vincy, for whom, as his rival for Mary's love, he might feel envy, demonstrate two of Spinoza's highest 'active' virtues, 'strength of mind' demonstrated through courage and generosity.¹¹⁴

"If there is a likelihood of that youngster doing himself harm, why should you interfere? Aren't you worth as much as he is, [...]? If there's a chance of his going to the dogs, let him – perhaps you could somehow hinder it – and do you take the benefit."
"But I had once meant better than that, and I am come back to my old intention. I thought I could hardly *secure myself* in it better, Fred, than by telling you just what had been going on in me. And now do you understand me? I want you to make the happiness of her life and your own, and if there is any chance that a word of warning from me may turn aside any risk to the contrary – well, I have uttered it."
[...]. Fred was moved quite newly. Some one highly susceptible to the contemplation of a fine act has said, that it produces a sort of regenerating shudder through the frame, and makes one feel ready to begin a new life. A good degree of that effect was just then present in Fred Vincy.¹¹⁵

Farebrother's ability to think rationally about how best to make the woman he loves happy, and how also to have regard to his own 'exemplar of human nature' in seeking to do right, lead him to take the initiative not only to do his best to secure Mary's happiness, but also to prevent his rival, Fred, from indulging his 'passive' lack of determination to live up to, if not his own expectations and exemplar, then those of Mary Garth. In doing this, Farebrother becomes an active agent of his own self-sacrifice, but also an active agent in pursuing his own 'exemplar' of right conduct. In his own words, he refuses self-interested passivity and inaction because he 'had once meant better than that'.

In Spinoza's analysis of the emotions in Part III of the *Ethics*¹¹⁶, he dissects the tangle of emotions surrounding love and jealousy, and in Parts IV and V he provides the potential solutions which will enable a human being take control of his or her life as an active agent and to behave virtuously. He argues that pain, such as that implicit in jealousy and hatred, is a transition from one state of mental being to a lower.¹¹⁷ To counteract such negative

¹¹⁴ BdeS Eth, 3p59, Scholium, p.138.

¹¹⁵ GE M, VII. 67. pp.664, 665.

¹¹⁶ BdeS Eth, 3p25 and 3p35, pp. 111, 118,119.

¹¹⁷ BdeS Eth, 3p59, Demonstration, pp.137, 138.

transitions, human beings have to exercise their power to understand and then to act rationally on that understanding. In Part IV of the *Ethics* Spinoza sets out the case for combating painful emotions by reason. The Demonstration to Proposition XLVI is relevant.

All emotions of hatred are evil [...]; and therefore he who lives according to the guidance of reason strives, as far as he can, to prevent himself from <being> agitated by emotions of hatred [...], and consequently [...] he will strive to prevent another from suffering the same emotions [...].¹¹⁸

The paragraphs from *Middlemarch* quoted above depict Farebrother's rational (and dispassionate) analysis of his conflicting emotions, recognising his temptation to act jealously in his wish to have Mary choose him, and acting generously in showing Fred the depth of the obligation he is under to transform his understanding and life to win Mary. He makes clear the series of causes which have led to his decision so that Fred can think more adequately about the effect of his actions on both himself and on the lives of others.

Farebrother's self-sacrifice is designed to help Mary and Fred, but, despite its attention to a rational process, it demands Farebrother's recognition and acceptance of a painful reality. Self-sacrifice finds no place in the Spinozan ethical system, and neither does compassion. However, if action to transform the life of the object of compassion can be regarded as a rational action, then it may be seen as a virtuous action.

But the good we do in striving to free the man we commiserate from his misery we desire to do solely in obedience to the dictate of reason, and on no other ground than the dictate of reason can we do any thing which we certainly know to be good.¹¹⁹

The final sentence in the paragraphs from *Middlemarch* quoted above outlines the impact of Farebrother's transformative act on Fred's life, and imbues it with suggestions of that 'blessedness' or 'salvation' through rational conduct discussed in Part V of the *Ethics*.

¹¹⁸ BdeS Eth, 4p46, Demonstration, p.189.

¹¹⁹ BdeS Eth, 4p50, Demonstration, pp.190, 191.

Daniel Deronda* and the Ideas of the *Ethics* and the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus

Eliot's translation of the *Ethics* and of parts at least of the *Tractatus* would have made her aware of intellectual influences on Spinoza's thought. Genevieve Lloyd traces the way in which Spinoza used and transformed established philosophical concepts:

Themes from ancient thought – from the Stoics, Epicureans and Neoplatonists as well as from Plato and Aristotle – reverberate in the text. There are strong echoes too of medieval voices – of Maimonides, the twelfth century philosopher and commentator on biblical and Talmudic texts, and of St Thomas Aquinas's thirteenth century appropriations of Aristotelian thought – as well as of his contemporaries, Descartes and Hobbes.¹²⁰

This incidental introduction to Jewish philosophy in the 1840s and 1850s while translating Spinoza's works must have played its part in the gestation of *Daniel Deronda*, published in 1876, where the writings of Maimonides and the Kabbalah are mentioned, along with those of Jewish poets (Ibn-Gebirol, Judah Halevi), authors (Leopold Zunz), and philosophers (Salomon Maimon, Isaac Luria, Ben Azai). It is clear from Eliot's Berg Notebook that she had read these authors along with Talmudic, Mishnaic, and Midrashic texts and commentaries; and, from the Pforzheimer Notebooks, that she had made notes on Jewish practice including that of Cherem, the excommunication declared on the young Spinoza.¹²¹ Any personal motives for Eliot's profound immersion in 'Jewish history and literature' as evidenced by *Daniel Deronda* and her extensive research are unclear. In her 1876 letter to Abraham Benisch she alludes to a 'deep impersonal historic interest'¹²² in Judaism. Gertrude Himmelfarb has described Eliot's friendship from 1866 onwards with Emanuel Deutsch, a Talmudic scholar at the British Library, who gave her weekly lessons in Hebrew, Jewish philosophical writings and religion. Deutsch died in Alexandria on his way to Palestine/Israel in 1873,¹²³ and in the same year, Eliot began to keep comprehensive notes on Judaism for the novel that was to become *Daniel Deronda*. In an 1875 letter, Lewes wrote to their publisher, John Blackwood:

¹²⁰ Lloyd, p.6.

¹²¹ Jane Irwin, *George Eliot's Daniel Deronda Notebooks*, The Pforzheimer Notebook 710, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.384. Cambridge books online.

¹²² GEL.VI, to Abraham Benisch, editor of *The Jewish Chronicle*, 16th December 1876, p.317.

¹²³ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Jewish Odyssey of George Eliot* (New York: Encounter Books, 2009), pp. 65, 66. Proquest Ebook Central.

You are surprised at her knowledge of the Jews? But only learned Rabbis are so profoundly versed in Jewish history and literature as she is – [...].¹²⁴

The only concerns explicitly mentioned in Eliot's letters are those arising from a sympathy with the cultural disadvantages of minority groups, such as the Jews, in the face of English arrogance and ignorance of other cultures. After *Daniel Deronda*'s publication, Eliot wrote to Harriet Beecher Stowe:

[...] precisely because I felt that the usual attitude of Christians towards Jews is – I hardly know whether to say more impious or more stupid when viewed in the light of their professed principles, I therefore felt urged to treat Jews with such sympathy and understanding as my nature and knowledge could attain to. [...]. There is nothing I should care more to do, if it were possible, than to rouse the imagination of men and women to a vision of human claims in those races of their fellow-men who most differ from them in customs and beliefs. But towards the Hebrews we western people who have been reared in Christianity, have a peculiar debt and, whether we acknowledge it or not, a peculiar thoroughness of fellowship in religious and moral sentiment.¹²⁵

Eliot's aim of rousing a 'vision of human claims' and 'fellowship', set out in the letter to Beecher Stowe, echoes the Spinozan ideal of the essential interconnectedness of the 'one mind and body' of humanity when thinking and acting rationally to promote 'a common good to all'.¹²⁶ More obviously, the novel can be seen to be testing out on its readers the Spinozan idea that understanding and knowledge provide a clearer basis for judgement and action than 'confused and mutilated' conventional prejudices. In this novel, the reader is confronted with some of his or her own prejudices and failures to form adequate ideas about the practice and ideals of the Jewish community in their midst, and challenged to reformulate them to achieve a more sympathetic understanding of the 'other', and a more rational and objective understanding of 'self'. Spinoza, the first recorded secular European Jew, an advocate of religious tolerance, and his exemplary, humane life, provided her with a model for the establishment of a society based on a Spinozan vision of mutual co-operation detached from the particularity of religious dogma. Deronda finds himself a Jew by birth, albeit a secular one, combining a Christian cultural sensibility with sympathies for Jewish religious history and Jewish political aspirations for the establishment of a Jewish state.

¹²⁴ GEL.VI, G H Lewes' letter to John Blackwood, 1 December 1875, p.196.

¹²⁵ GEL.VI, to Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe, 29 October 1876, pp.301, 302.

¹²⁶ BdeS Eth, 4p18, Scholium, p.169.

Described in its early stages by William Blackwood¹²⁷ as a further ‘perfectly charming’ novel about ‘English Ladies and Gentlemen’, it is, in contrast, a novel where English upper class life, contrasted with other European and non-European cultures, is shown to be narrow, materialistic and Philistine. Gwendolen’s dismissive and hypocritical perception of Jews when trying to pawn her necklace in Leubronn after her losses at the casino (‘these Jew pawn brokers were so unscrupulous in taking advantage of Christians unfortunate at play’¹²⁸) is overturned dramatically by her enforced recognition of superior talent in Mirah and Klesmer, and her final realisation that the man she had looked to for wisdom, sympathy and perhaps love had discovered his identity as a Jew, and, during the course of the novel made a transition from the perspective of an English gentleman to that of an aspirant Jewish leader:

“A *Jew!*”, Gwendolen exclaimed, in a low tone of amazement, with an utterly frustrated look, as if some confusing potion were creeping through her system. [...] “What difference need that have made?”¹²⁹

Eliot’s misgivings about Spinoza’s method and ideas are more explicitly articulated in this novel than in *Middlemarch*. Similar Spinozan motifs occur - the inexorable interconnectedness of cause and effect, the impossibility of alternative might-have-beens, the illusions and delusions of free will, utility to self and the formation of goodness, and the inadequacy of conceptions deriving from imagination. Rationality and its limitations and the capacity to deflect and transform hatred are amongst other Spinozan ideas examined more critically by the novel, and there is an explicit rejection of Spinoza’s conception of remorse and suffering as negative.

Mordecai: Spinoza’s Alter-Ego

Apart from her evaluation of the validity of Spinoza’s ideas, it is clear that the model provided by Spinoza’s way of living his life continued to haunt Eliot’s imagination. In Mordecai she creates an alternative Spinoza, and the parallels and contrasts are consistently underlined. When Deronda first meets him he receives an impression of a:

¹²⁷ GEL.VI, Letter from William Blackwood to John Blackwood, 21 April 1875, p.136.

¹²⁸ GE DD, I. 2. p.15.

¹²⁹ GE DD, VIII. 69. p.746.

[....] consumptive-looking Jew, apparently a fervid student of some kind, getting his crust by a quiet handicraft, like Spinoza [....].¹³⁰

If Mordecai represents Emmanuel Deutsch's learning and vision, as argued by Gertrude Himmelfarb,¹³¹ he is also presented to the reader as a variant of Eliot's perception of Spinoza set out in her 1849 letter to the Brays. He is an isolated intellectual, driven through that isolation into an alternative visionary world expressed only through an idiosyncratic language.¹³² Mordecai is described as feeling his own 'spiritual banishment' and 'sentence of exclusion',¹³³ and expresses himself in a private, archaicised, visionary language, echoing the constructions of Hebrew syntax as well as the cadences of biblical prophecy. The antithesis of the rarefied, dispassionate language of the *Ethics*, it forms just as much a barrier to realist recognition and sympathy. The *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* had famously attributed an 'unusually vivid imagination and not [....] unusually perfect minds'¹³⁴ to biblical prophets, but argued that 'in regard to the intellect and true virtue, every nation is on a par with the rest'.¹³⁵ Mordecai therefore represents an effort to both embody and redress that assessment of prophets. Deronda's initial concerns that Mordecai's 'visionary excitement'¹³⁶ could be a form of 'monomania' give way to a judgement which seems explicitly to invoke and then reject Spinoza's method of geometrical logic, his vocabulary of concatenation, and his intellectualisation of emotion, and to replace these with 'the emotional intellect' and its 'possibilities'.

The driest argument has its hallucinations, too hastily concluding that its net will now at last be large enough to hold the universe. Men may dream in demonstrations, and cut out an illusory world in the shape of axioms, definitions, and propositions, with a final exclusion of fact signed Q.E.D. No formulas for thinking will save us mortals from mistake in our imperfect apprehension of the matter to be thought about. And since the unemotional intellect may carry us into a mathematical dreamland where nothing is but what is not, perhaps an emotional intellect may have absorbed into its passionate vision of possibilities some truth of what will be [....].¹³⁷

¹³⁰ GE DD, V. 38. p.439.

¹³¹ Himmelfarb, p.66.

¹³² GEL.I, to Mr and Mrs Charles Bray, 4 December 1849, p.321.

¹³³ GE DD, V. 38. p.441.

¹³⁴ Benedict de Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, trans. by R H M Elwes, (London and New York: Routledge and Sons, 1895), Ch.2, p.27.

¹³⁵ Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Ch.3, p.56.

¹³⁶ GE DD, VI. 41. p.477.

¹³⁷ GE DD, VI. 41. p.478.

In its explicit rejection of Spinoza's method and universalising aspiration, Deronda's analysis also reflects Lewes's 1866 description¹³⁸ of Spinoza as 'a mystic whose mind moved in geometrical processes'. In the place of such geometrical intellectual processes, Mordecai is presented as the embodiment of a political mystic and of the 'emotional intellect'.

Through the debate in the Philosopher's Club at the Hand and Banner, Eliot explores different interpretations of 'rationality'. Gideon, a member of the club, advocates a pragmatic future, where Jews make their 'expectations rational',¹³⁹ gradually assimilating into Gentile culture. Mordecai's response to Gideon's pragmatism is to claim for himself an alternative rationality which draws explicit and implicit comparisons with that of Spinoza.

"I too claim to be a rational Jew. But what is it to be rational – what is it to feel the light of the divine reason growing stronger within and without? It is to see more and more of the hidden bonds that bind and consecrate change [...]: the past becomes my parent, and the future stretches towards me the appealing arms of children."¹⁴⁰

His question about the nature of rationality reinterprets Spinoza's arguments that the rationality of adequate ideas enables men and women to view reality increasingly adequately and intuitively, but dispassionately 'under the form of eternity'. Mordecai's excited, insistent questions produce a very different view of the 'light of divine reason'. His 'emotional intellect' reinterprets how human beings relate to and perceive reality. Spinoza's advocacy of the highest knowledge being the intuitive perception of the relationships connecting all aspects of reality, and rationally working towards mutual co-operation, is reinterpreted as the specific bonds of human relationship, linking generations together. Spinoza's 'highest knowledge' is translated into the acceptance of a sacramental linkage of a historical past with its future, and a consecration of human relationship. Mordecai finally invokes Spinoza as one of the ultimate justifications of his vision of a Jewish state to provide a home for the cultural and religious life of Jews. As he does so, he examines that separation of intellect and feeling, heart and head, which Eliot herself had rejected, and identifies tradition as the vehicle for emotional and intellectual continuity:

¹³⁸ G H Lewes, 'Spinoza', *Fortnightly Review IV*, No. XXII, (1 April 1866), pp. 385-406, p.405. https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=938FAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA385&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false [accessed 16 June 2017].

¹³⁹ GE DD, VI. 42. p.490.

¹⁴⁰ GE DD, VI. 42. pp.490, 491.

“Baruch Spinoza had not a faithful Jewish heart, though he had sucked the life of his intellect at the breasts of Jewish tradition. [...]. Yet Baruch Spinoza confessed, he saw not why Israel should not again be a chosen nation.”¹⁴¹

Eliot depicts Mordecai, not as a stern prophet of righteousness, but as the ‘emotional intellect’ fusing reason, vision and conviction, and issuing a call to Jewish people to provide the ‘heart of mankind’.¹⁴²

“But it is true, as Jehuda-ha-Levi first said, that Israel is the heart of mankind, if we mean by heart the core of affection which binds a race and its families in dutiful love, and the reverence for the human body which lifts the needs of our animal life into religion, [.....].”¹⁴³

In this, Eliot drew on a sentence of Jehuda Halevy, which she had noted in her research for the novel: ‘That Israel is the heart of Humanity & therefore feels more keenly’.¹⁴⁴ Mordecai’s vision combines the imagery of mankind as an interdependent body found in Spinoza with that of transformative and sacramental ‘bonds’ between generations. The emphasis on bonds rather than bondage, also suggesting Feuerbach’s emphasis on sacred relationship, highlights the novel’s debate about Spinoza’s conceptions of servitude and bondage, embodied in the experience of characters such as Gwendolen and the Princess Halm-Eberstein.

Determinism and Freewill

In *Daniel Deronda*, as in *Middlemarch*, Eliot insisted on the entangled nature of cause and effect, which Spinoza had argued precluded any human pretensions to freedom of will:

There is no absolute or free will in the mind, but it is determined to will this or that by a cause which is also determined by another cause, and this again by another, and so on *in infinitum*.¹⁴⁵

The much discussed motto for Chapter 1 of *Daniel Deronda* includes the following:

¹⁴¹ GE DD, VI. 42. pp.497,498, referring to Ch.iii, *Tractatus Theologico- Politicus*, p.56.

¹⁴² GE DD, VI. 42. p.492.

¹⁴³ GE DD, VI. 42. p.492.

¹⁴⁴ George Eliot, *Berg Notebook*, p.168.

¹⁴⁵ BdeS Eth, 2p48, pp.82, 83.

Men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning. Even Science, the strict measurer, is obliged to start with a make-believe unit, and must fix on a point in the stars' unceasing journey when his sidereal clock shall pretend that time is at Nought. [...]. No retrospect will take us to the true beginning; [...].¹⁴⁶

The analogy between the origins of human actions and emotions and the movement of stars is developed later in the novel to describe the complexity of causality at work.

Men, like planets, have a visible and an invisible history. The astronomer threads the darkness with strict deduction, accounting so for every visible arc in the wanderer's orbit; and the narrator of human actions, if he did his work with the same completeness, would have to thread the hidden pathways of feeling and thought which lead up to every moment of action, and to those moments of intense suffering which take the quality of action [...].¹⁴⁷

The replacement of the earth-bound metaphor of webs and threads in *Middlemarch* for the metaphors drawn from astronomy, suggests from the beginning of the novel that there are stricter laws governing the interweaving of human destinies, and that *Middlemarch*'s human frame of reference has been replaced by a cosmic apprehension of reality. Conflicting understandings of reality as either driven by chance, or necessity, or freewill, or as directed by a more mysterious sacred source of good, provide a major thematic shaping. Deronda speculates on the dual perceptions of reality that he and Mordecai represent:

What I can be to him, or he to me, may not at all depend on his persuasion about the way we came together. To me the way seems made up of plainly discernible links.¹⁴⁸

Events can be seen variously or simultaneously as accident, the convergence or divergence of characters' own worlds of causality, or as the mysterious weaving together of destinies. The beginning of *Daniel Deronda* catapults the reader into the midst of the chronological events of its narrative 'arc', through the 'hidden pathways of feeling and thought', into the disorientating, alienated world of the Leubronn Casino, a world dedicated to the triumph of chance over necessity, and a world of detached, evaluating observation and misunderstanding, primarily of women by men. The novel proceeds to re-examine the

¹⁴⁶ GE DD, I. 1. p.3.

¹⁴⁷ GE DD, II. !6. p.149.

¹⁴⁸ GE DD, VI. 41. p.478.

‘hidden pathways of feeling and thought’, the concatenation of thought and action in Spinozan terms, which led to the afternoon in the casino. The sequence of the narrative draws attention to the chain of causation, so that the reader is allowed to amend his or her understanding of both Gwendolen and Deronda, placing the reader in a position to appreciate the chasm of inadequate ideas between a character’s view of their own actions and behaviour and the view of it taken by the characters surrounding them. The narrator herself exclaims against the imperceptible yet remorseless linking of cause and effect, which undermines men and women’s perceptions of a supposed freedom of action and destiny:

And thinking of them [...] one is tempted to that futile sort of wishing – if only things could have been a little otherwise then, so as to have been greatly otherwise after!¹⁴⁹

In particular, the novel focuses on the antitheses between acts of will envisaged by characters as a way of shaping their own destiny and that of others, and their very different results in practice. Deronda’s mother sees her act of renunciation, both of her Jewishness and her bond with her child, as an assertion of her own strength of will, as her freewill rebelling against the ‘servitude’ of being a Jewish woman.

“I meant to have my will in the end, but I could only have it by seeming to obey. [...]. And I never would risk failure.”¹⁵⁰

When asked for the reasons for her action, she uncovers a different and more complex truth, that of the difficulty of disentangling the significance of external pressures from the unique force of an individual nature:

“Oh - the reasons for our actions!” said the Princess, with a ring of something like sarcastic scorn. “When you are as old as I am, it will not seem so simple a question – “Why did you do this?”. People talk of their motives in a cut and dried way. Every woman is supposed to have the same set of motives, or else to be a monster. I am not a monster, but I have not felt exactly what other women feel – or say they feel, for fear of being thought unlike others.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ GE DD, I. 7. p.61.

¹⁵⁰ GE DD, VII. 51. p.589.

¹⁵¹ GE DD, VII. 51. p.586.

Persevering in Existence

The presentation of the actions of Gwendolen, the Princess Halm-Eberstein, and Grandcourt explores not only Spinoza's world of necessity and causality, but also reflects a preoccupation with 'will'. Spinoza defines will as the striving of 'every thing [...] to persevere in its existence',¹⁵² and argues that 'mind strives [...] to imagine those things which increase [...] the power of action of the body'.¹⁵³ An 1875 letter from Eliot to Mrs Henry Ponsonby, written while Eliot was writing *Daniel Deronda*, deals with the difficulties of 'conciliating' ideas of necessity and of will:

I shall not be satisfied with your philosophy till you have conciliated necessitarianism – I hate the ugly word- with the practice of willing strongly, willing to will strongly, and so on, that being what you certainly can do and have done about a great many things in life [...].¹⁵⁴

The relationship between will and the chain of necessity is explored in a much more equivocal way in *Daniel Deronda*. The hero discovers an ability to will 'strongly' and to act 'strongly' himself only once he understands his past and feels part of a chain of causality, experienced not as bondage but as human bonds of relationship. In contrast, both Gwendolen's and the Princess Halm-Eberstein's assertions of individual will are transformed from a striving to 'persevere in existence' into a belief in their ability to manipulate the fate of others. Their attempts to step outside their inherited 'causalities' unravel for each into either disappointment or discovery of their own servitude.

Gwendolen, who imagines she can manipulate others to do as she requires, discovers in both *Deronda* and, particularly, Grandcourt, that her abilities have limits, and that, while she is judging their utility to her existence, she herself is being evaluated by them:

Any romantic illusions she had had in marrying this man had turned on her power of using him as she liked. He was using her as he liked.¹⁵⁵

The parallels between Gwendolen's actions and consequential predicament and those of *Deronda*'s mother, the Princess Halm-Eberstein, are strongly suggested by Eliot. Both

¹⁵² BdeS Eth, 3p6, p.100.

¹⁵³ BdeS Eth, 3p12, p.103.

¹⁵⁴ GEL.VI, (19 August 1875), p.166.

¹⁵⁵ GE DD, VI. 48. p.556.

women adapt their behaviour to the 'reality' of their father's or husband's wills through concealing both their rejection of it and their determination to remain unsubdued in some inner area of their soul. In describing the predicament of both women, they or the narrator frequently use the terms as 'bondage', 'servitude', 'slavery', 'tyranny',¹⁵⁶ terms used by Spinoza in analysing the hold of the passions over the reason, and in particular the sensations of victimhood which stem from an inability to take command of feelings and situations. In describing Gwendolen's behaviour, the narrator assertively yet ambiguously demands the reader's judgement of such a guilt-fuelled victimhood:

Can we wonder at the practical submission which hid her constructive rebellion? The combination is common enough, as we know from the number of persons who make us aware of it in their own case by a clamorous unwearied statement of the reasons against their submitting to a situation which, on inquiry, we discover to be the least disagreeable within their reach.¹⁵⁷

Deronda's mother analyses the cultural domination of men and the necessity for covert rebellion as she describes her relationship with Deronda's orthodox Jewish grandfather:

"A man [...], with an iron will. [...]. But such men turn their wives and daughters into slaves. They would rule the world if they could; but not ruling the world, they throw all the weight of their will on the necks and souls of women.[...]. And when a woman's will is as strong as the man's who wants to govern her, half her strength must be concealment."¹⁵⁸

The exercise of will displayed by Deronda's grandfather is an austere and rigid realisation of Mordecai's description of his own rationality: 'the past becomes my parent, and the future stretches towards me the appealing arms of children.'¹⁵⁹ Thus Mordecai's emotional intellect and rationality, his advocacy of emotional bonds through generations is also revealed as one which implicitly demands submission or self-sacrifice of women. Women are the devalued 'makeshift links'¹⁶⁰ in the concatenation of men's theories of rationality and causality. In telling Mirah the story of the Gentile king and the Jewish maiden, Mordecai suggests that:

¹⁵⁶ GE DD, VI. 48. p.564, VII. 51. pp.584, 588.

¹⁵⁷ GE DD, VI. 48. p.562.

¹⁵⁸ GE DD, VII. 51. p.589.

¹⁵⁹ GE DD, VI. 42. pp.490, 491.

¹⁶⁰ GE DD, VII. 51. p.589.

‘women are specially framed for the love which feels possession in renouncing, [...]’¹⁶¹ Eliot demonstrates that men’s self-defined rationality implies self-sacrifice or submission from women, just as Deronda sacrifices Gwendolen to Mordecai’s vision of rationality and to his own will at the end of the novel.

For both Gwendolen and the Princess, their vision of women’s lives as victims to the exercise of men’s wills or rationalities, capricious or principled, fills them with horror and distaste. Gwendolen’s perception of Lydia Glasher’s, and possibly her own, future as victims of Grandcourt’s capricious will to dominate is described in words which emphasise that she feels herself a passive object and that she has become dislocated from any active relationship with reality - ‘as if some ghastly vision had come to her in a dream and said, “I am a woman’s life.”’¹⁶² Eliot’s language in such passages, with its emphatic passive tenses, echoes the relationship with Spinoza’s analysis of passive and active thought,¹⁶³ considered earlier in relation to *Middlemarch*. Her portrayal of this battle between wills competing to extinguish each other provides a disconcerting subversion of Spinoza’s vision of the rational society where human beings envisage their continuing existence as a symbiotic relationship with others, ‘all at once [...] striving to preserve their being, and all at once seeking for themselves what is a common good to all.’¹⁶⁴

The nature of Gwendolen’s ‘ghastly vision’, that sudden moment of imaginative perception, also recalls Eliot’s definition of intuition –‘direct impressions of sensibility underlying all proof’,¹⁶⁵ her parallel interpretation of Spinoza’s ‘intuitive cognition’, the third and highest type of thinking. Here Eliot infuses Spinoza’s intellectual understanding of the ‘essence’ of reality with her own comprehension of the inherent emotional consequences of such thinking. The operation of the imagination which Spinoza was at pains to treat with discrimination, rejecting it where it failed to hold an awareness that it was unreal, receives a new evaluation by Eliot as part of the operation of the ‘emotional intellect’. Gwendolen’s dream-like warnings and Mordecai’s prophetic expectations function ambiguously as intuitive knowledge about consequences and as rejections of the rational world of appearance.

¹⁶¹ GE DD, VIII. 61. p.683.

¹⁶² GE DD, II. 14. p.137.

¹⁶³ BdeS Eth, 3p1 and 3p3, pp. 93, 99.

¹⁶⁴ BdeS Eth, 4p18, Scholium, p.169.

¹⁶⁵ GEL.VI, to Mrs H F Ponsonby, 19 August 1875, p.167.

The limits of the activity of human will, particularly of women's wills, are explored throughout the book. Deronda's role is to overturn his mother's strategy of freeing him from what she perceived as the 'bondage' of the web of Jewish cultural enforcement.

"And the bondage I hated for myself I wanted to keep you from. What better could the most loving mother have done? I relieved you from the bondage of having been born a Jew."¹⁶⁶

Instead, he embraces his vision of Jewish identity in words and ideas which echo Mordecai's words about the 'hidden bonds that bind and consecrate change [...].'¹⁶⁷ Deronda's language invokes a metaphor of organic growth in relation to the purposes of a 'stronger Something', and suggests not Spinoza's metaphor of concatenation but his immanent 'Deus sive Natura':

"[...] my grandfather's trust [...] - what you call his yoke – is the expression of something stronger, with deeper, farther-spreading roots, knit into the foundations of sacredness for all men. [...]. But that stronger Something has determined that I shall be all the more the grandson whom also you willed to annihilate."¹⁶⁸

As the Princess shrewdly points out his embrace of a Jewish identity is dependent on loving a woman who 'is not given to make great claims,'¹⁶⁹ who is likely to be submissive in any loving relationship.

Good and Evil

Throughout *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot interrogates Spinoza's definition of good as that which is useful in helping us to realise 'that exemplar of human nature which we propose to ourselves.'¹⁷⁰ Characters assess each other for their possible usefulness, and are forced to learn to redefine what they might or ought to mean by usefulness to self. In the case of Gwendolen, the sense of someone's usefulness is initially bound up in a crude understanding of it. In her own quest for liberty, she has to discover, through a cataclysmic readjustment of her earliest 'inadequate' ideas, that materialistic 'liberty' is bondage when it is based on

¹⁶⁶ GE DD, VII.51. p.584.

¹⁶⁷ GE DD, VI. 52. p.490.

¹⁶⁸ GE DD, VII. 53. p.618.

¹⁶⁹ GE DD, VII. 53. p.619.

¹⁷⁰ BdeS Eth, 4 Preface, p.156.

mistaken, inadequate ideas. Her expectation of using Grandcourt ‘as she liked’ founders before her husband’s intention to use ‘her as he liked.’¹⁷¹ Her earliest moral equivocations between her mother’s needs and Lydia Glasher’s rights become her destroyer. In her dependence on Deronda’s combination of judgement and sympathetic understanding, she sees him as offering her an exemplar to emulate, so that ‘she would be continually assimilating herself to some type that he would hold before her,’¹⁷² the process of moral transformation advocated by Spinoza. She eventually discovers that she has to resign all claims to him, but still accept his demands of her as these are essential to her reclamation of her humanity:

Mighty Love had laid his hand upon her; but what had he demanded of her? Acceptance of rebuke - the hard task of self-change – confession – endurance.¹⁷³

By the close of the novel, Gwendolen has been completely transformed. She is no longer a charming egotist who feels entitled to the worship of others, but a woman who has, with difficulty, sacrificed selfish desires and realised that her role must be to live so that other people’s lives are enriched.

“You have been very good to me. I have deserved nothing. I will try – try to live. I shall think of you. What good have I been? Only harm. Don’t let me be harm to *you*.”¹⁷⁴

Other characters exemplify differing understandings of usefulness to self, and the moral consequences of those understandings. Grandcourt, Lush, and Lapidoth use other people unscrupulously, whereas Deronda finds himself questioning how far he is merely using Mordecai without considering his purposes and needs. Eliot’s description of Deronda’s understanding uses terms which suggest Spinoza’s definitions of intuitive knowledge and of good, and also a Feuerbachian consciousness of another human being:

[...] he experienced, as was wont with him, a quick change of mental light, shifting his point of view to that of the person whom he had been thinking of hitherto chiefly as serviceable to his own purposes, [...].¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ GE DD, VI. 48. p.556.

¹⁷² GE DD, VIII. 69. p.740.

¹⁷³ GE DD, VIII. 65. pp.717, 718.

¹⁷⁴ GE DD, VIII. 69. p.750.

Equally the novel interrogates what could be understood as evil, and how that understanding relates to the Spinozan concept of evil set out in *Ethics*, as anything ‘which can impede understanding’,¹⁷⁶ or ‘of which we certainly know that it hinders us from participating in some good.’¹⁷⁷ Spinoza’s definition strongly suggests the passivity of evil, a failure to counteract forces ‘hindering’ the achievement of a subjective good through ‘that exemplar of human nature which we propose to ourselves.’ The opening of the novel introduces Gwendolen through a series of questions which interrogate Spinoza’s categorisation and the links he made between activity, passivity and ethics.

[...] what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams? Probably the evil; else why was the effect that of unrest rather than of undisturbed charm?¹⁷⁸

From the start of the book, Gwendolen is associated with action and dynamism, with the ability to exercise a power and fascination over others, but Eliot also creates the sense that her activity is ethically dubious, producing ‘unrest’ and ‘disturbance’. Her nemesis, Grandcourt, is also described as enjoying the exercise of power. The power he loves is a peculiarly Spinozan negativity or ‘evil’. It takes arbitrary forms but all are designed to hinder others in the achievement of their aspirations, or disabuse them of any sense that he has any bonds of obligation towards them; ‘there was no telling what might turn up in the slowly churning chances of his mind’,¹⁷⁹ judges his aide, Mr Lush, emphasising Grandcourt’s freedom from causality or necessity. The narrator identifies Grandcourt’s will to hinder as even greater than any sensation of jealousy in relation to Gwendolen and Deronda:

He would have denied that he was jealous: because jealousy would have implied some doubt of his own power to hinder what he had determined against.¹⁸⁰

His initial allure for Gwendolen, apart from his wealth and position, is based on a wilful and doubly negative judgement that ‘there is less to dislike about him than about most

¹⁷⁵ GE DD, V. 40. p.458.

¹⁷⁶ BdeS Eth, 4p27, p.173.

¹⁷⁷ BdeS Eth, 4d2, p.156.

¹⁷⁸ GE DD, I.1. p.3.

¹⁷⁹ GE DD, II. 15. p.142.

¹⁸⁰ GE DD, VI. 48. p.543.

men’,¹⁸¹ a judgement which ironically comes back to haunt her and eventually fan her hatred of the ‘refined negations’¹⁸² which had attracted her earlier. She discovers that the man she had married had a capricious and undeflectable will, apparently bound by no causality or bonds with others:

Grandcourt had become a blank uncertainty to her in everything but this, that he would do just as he willed, and that she had neither devices at her command to determine his will, nor any rational means of escaping it.¹⁸³

Both he and Gwendolen justify their acts of capricious will not only by the public pretension that any other way would lead to ennui, but also, in Grandcourt’s case, to disconcert those around him . Grandcourt’s final action in taking out a small sailing boat is presented as a way of demonstrating this inexorable will whose only objective was to subdue and discomfort others:

[...] he [...] carried out his purpose as something that people might not expect him to do, with the gratified impulse of a strong will which had nothing better to exert itself upon.¹⁸⁴

Proscription of Hatred

Despite the fact that most of the *Ethics* is devoted to an emphasis on clearer understanding and more rational thought processes leading to more adequate subjective evaluation, Spinoza makes a memorable exception in providing a ‘rule of life’ in relation to the emotion of hatred which is so closely linked to an understanding of good and evil. This ‘rule’ sets down how to attain a rational understanding of hatred and how to conquer it, ‘by love or generosity, and not [...] with reciprocal hatred’¹⁸⁵. It is an almost uniquely specific moral command within the *Ethics*, and *Daniel Deronda* explores the passion of hatred far more extensively than any other of Eliot’s novels. Gwendolen’s hatred of Grandcourt is partly a hatred of herself and the self-deceptions which led to her agreeing to marry him:

¹⁸¹ GE DD, II. 13. p.124.

¹⁸² GE DD, VII. 54. p.624.

¹⁸³ GE DD, V. 35. p.396.

¹⁸⁴ GE DD, VII. 54. p.634.

¹⁸⁵ BdeS Eth, 5p10, Scholium, p.224.

The embitterment of hatred is often as unaccountable to onlookers as the growth of devoted love, and it not only seems but is really out of direct relation with any outward cause to be alleged. [...]. And the intensest form of hatred is that rooted in fear, which compels to silence and drives vehemence into a constructive vindictiveness, an imaginary annihilation of the detested object [...]. The vision of her past wrong-doing, and what it had brought on her, came with a pale ghastly illumination over every imagined deed that was a rash effort at freedom, such as she had made in her marriage.¹⁸⁶

In describing the effects of her hatred of Grandcourt, Eliot identifies two possible accompanying emotions which transform hatred from an active emotion into a covert passive state of suffering – fear and self-reproach. The difficulties of securing a transition of this type of feeling from a passive to an active state - to use Spinoza's terminology - are examined in detail, and Gwendolen's narrative becomes an alternative version of *Crime and Punishment* where actual crime and its aftermath are replaced by intention, imagination, guilt and their repercussions. In contrast to Spinoza's objective and detached prescriptions for a 'rule of life', Eliot describes the impossibility of changing Grandcourt, and how impervious to 'love and generosity' he might be if made the subject of such a Spinozan experiment:

She might as well have made angry remarks to a dangerous serpent ornamentally coiled in her cabin without invitation.¹⁸⁷

She also describes the intensity of spiritual suffering caused by hatred, where the self becomes the object of its own negations, and acts only to intensify pain:

“I want not to get worse. [...]. I feel as if I should get wicked with hating people. [...].”

She was hurting herself with the jewels that glittered on her tightly-clasped fingers pressed against her heart.¹⁸⁸

The descriptions of Gwendolen's state of mind corroborate Spinoza's analysis of the pain of passivity, (“Since then I have been wicked. I have felt wicked. And everything has been a punishment to me ”¹⁸⁹) but they also make clear that escape from that state is not possible through a rational recall of a 'rule of life' with its generosity towards the object of hatred.

¹⁸⁶ GE DD, VII. 54. pp. 626, 627.

¹⁸⁷ GE DD, VII. 54. p.626.

¹⁸⁸ GE DD, VI. 48. p.567.

¹⁸⁹ GE DD, VII. 56. p.644.

From *Deronda*, Gwendolen accepts ‘rebuke - the hard task of self-change – confession – endurance’.¹⁹⁰ Eliot suggests that what makes this regime endurable for Gwendolen is both her love for Deronda, and her repulsion from her imaginative identification with a murderous impulse.

Elsewhere in the novel, Eliot evaluates the application of Spinoza’s ‘rule of life’ with ambiguous results. While Mirah and Mordecai show ‘generosity’ to their feckless father, towards whom they could justifiably feel hatred, this secures no amendment of Lapidoth’s mind or conduct. The experiments of the novel seem to indicate that Eliot was more convinced of the power of suffering to effect change than she was of Spinoza’s belief in the power of generosity to transform.

Abstraction and Negation

One other aspect of the novel seems to be enmeshed with the analysis of Spinozan thought considered earlier in relation to the character of Mordecai. As *Deronda*’s musings about Mordecai become fused with the narrator’s voice, Spinozan abstraction is depicted as a negation of reality:

And since the unemotional intellect may carry us into a mathematical dreamland where nothing is but what is not, perhaps an emotional intellect may have absorbed into its passionate vision of possibilities some truth of what will be - [...].¹⁹¹

The characters of *Daniel Deronda* are fascinated by ‘what is not’. Gwendolen and Grandcourt inhabit a world where ‘nothing is but what is not’, living lives driven by a desire for purposeless control and equally empty evasion of control. Grandcourt’s lack of human connection with others is summed up in Gwendolen’s moment of intuition during their ‘courtship’:

Grandcourt met her laughing eyes with a slow, steady look right into them, which seemed like vision in the abstract, [...].¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ GE DD, VIII. 65. p.718.

¹⁹¹ GE DD, VI. 41. p.478.

¹⁹² GE DD, II.14, p.132.

Elsewhere Mr Gascoigne resigns himself to Grandcourt's aloofness by considering that 'You would not expect him to be on intimate terms even with abstractions.'¹⁹³ Deronda himself exists in the novel as an influence detected and demonstrated by the other characters but difficult for the reader to observe. To adapt Eliot's own astronomical metaphors he is like a planet whose existence has to be hypothesised because of its impact on other observable planetary bodies.

Daniel Deronda moves from *Middlemarch*'s exploration of Spinoza's ideas towards a profound conversation with them. Their illuminations of the processes at work in human emotion and understanding penetrate the book, but Eliot explores the issues which arise from Spinoza's model of human amelioration. His influence can be traced in the portrayal of psychological change, and particularly in the analysis of those states of mind where human beings are trapped and unable to extricate themselves. His view of humanity as a whole of which individuals are the parts and of human responsibility to strive for the good are echoed by Eliot, but she differed markedly from him in her judgements of how to achieve the 'good', to deal with hatred, and of the necessary role of suffering and remorse. The models of redemptive action which men hypothesise for society and individual alike are shown to demand boundaries on women's aspirations and will, and their expression leaves them, like Gwendolen and the Princess, outside the net of interrelationship and fulfilment. However, while the novel distinguishes Mordecai's emotional intellect from Spinoza's abstract intellectualising of emotion, Deronda himself follows a path to self-discovery which is haunted by variant understandings and rejections of Spinoza's ideas. Spinoza is possibly the first widely known example of a secular Jew, and his intellectual preoccupations with the establishment of a new kind of political society where there was greater religious freedom and tolerance is transformed through the character and ultimate purpose of Deronda into a search for a new fusion of religious tradition and communal loyalty. Deronda himself becomes a secular Jew, but one bound by intense respect for the traditions and religio-political visions of Judaism and of his mentor, Mordecai. The novel presents Eliot's own vision of the ways in which religious tradition and culture can still inform the creation of a secular, just and tolerant society. Equally it reveals her sympathy for the multiple ways of understanding the world opened up by religious sensibility. Mordecai's visionary perception of a world neither determined by chance nor by inexorable causality but by some more

¹⁹³ GE DD, VI. 44. p.513.

mysterious intersection of the beyond-human with the human is never disputed either by Deronda's awareness of contemporary religious debate or by the structure of the novel. It remains as a possible vision of reality. Deronda assents not only to Mordecai's vision of a society bound by sacramental bonds where a 'too [...] diffusive sympathy'¹⁹⁴ can be channelled into purposeful living, but also to a refinement of Spinoza's vision of a blessed human society where:

[...] all men should agree in all things, [...], striving to preserve their being, and all at once seeking for themselves what is a common good to all.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ GE DD, IV. 32. p.336.

¹⁹⁵ BdeS Eth, 4p18, Scholium, p.169.

Chapter 4

Ward's *Robert Elsmere*: Amiel's Language for 'States of Soul'

In his dialogue, *The Decay of Lying – An Observation*, Oscar Wilde's imaginary spokesmen caricature the ideas explored in Mary Ward's second and most widely-read novel, *Robert Elsmere* (1888), as belonging to 'the sort of conversation that goes on at a meat tea in the house of a serious Nonconformist family',¹ and go on to dismiss them as 'simply Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* with the literature left out', or Green's philosophy, which 'very pleasantly sugars the somewhat bitter pill of the author's fiction'.²

Wilde's satirical deflation of Ward's impassioned polemic is typical. But for Ward, the choice between differing ideas about Christianity, far from providing a worthy tea-time topic, had torn apart her parents' marriage and, with it, her experience of childhood security. Her later life in Oxford reinforced her view of the drama and significance of ideas and an intellectual life, and the potentially devastating effects of their translation into everyday experience and relationships. Many of her novels, not just the early popular success, *Robert Elsmere*, explore the impacts of intellectual change, attitudes and choices on previously established relationships and careers: in Ward's words, the ways in which 'an intellectual process' can provoke a 'story' and a 'human and emotional crisis'.³

Irony aside, Wilde's point about her debt to *Literature and Dogma* is a serious one, and one to which she readily admitted in her *Recollections*.⁴ Her novels show her proud indebtedness to her uncle's ideas and to his literary expression of them, and she made clear that Matthew Arnold's humanist deconstruction of the Old and New Testaments in *Literature and Dogma* (1873), 'threw out in detail much of the argument suggested in *Robert Elsmere*'.⁵ Arnold's extended essay had dismissed the eschatological, messianic aspects of both Judaic and Christian beliefs as 'aberglaube', superfluous narratives which would wither, and had argued that the essential lasting messages of both testaments were Judaism's love of right

¹ Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying – An Observation' in *Intentions*, ed. by Percival Pollard, p.13.

² Wilde, pp.16, 17.

³ MW Rec, Ch.XII, p.231.

⁴ MW Rec, Ch.XI, see pp. 209, 210.

⁵ MW Rec, Ch.XII, p.235.

conduct and Jesus's 'method and secret',⁶ that of 'self-examination, self-renouncement, and mildness'.⁷

In addition to this influence, Ward was indebted to a different discovery, that of Frédéric Amiel. The following chapters explore the ways in which Ward translated into fiction the ideas she had absorbed through the Arnold family's engagement with religious issues, filtering it through Amiel's sensibility and portrayal of the emotional ebb and flow of doubt, as it emerges from her translation of his *Journal Intime*. Ermarth describes *Amiel's Journal* as a 'painful, uncompromising expression of unrelieved religious despair', and as 'far more radical than any of the English novels of doubt'.⁸ Although the *Journal* is far from merely a record of entirely unrelieved spiritual despair, Arnold's 1888 essay on 'Amiel' also objected to Amiel's preoccupation with the infinite and his 'morbid' introspection.⁹ However, in many ways, they espoused similar attitudes theologically, although expressing them differently. Where Arnold's essays were rational, witty, provocative and resolutely avoided his poetry's exploration of personal doubt and uncertainty, Amiel is passionate, uncertain, introspective, oscillating between moods and ideas, fascinated by the 'abyss' as he termed it, the 'buried life' as Arnold might term it, of the subconscious and how it impinges on emotional and intellectual consciousness. Ward's debt is to both of them, to Matthew Arnold's more robust management of doubt and proposals for what should compose the enduring elements of human belief, but also to Amiel's language and psychology, his more passionate, plangent self-analyses of the 'molecular whirlwind'¹⁰ of his life, and its translation of the emotional struggle involved in relinquishing religion's structuring of experience.

The Influence of her Translation

Chapter 1 considered how and why Mary Ward was drawn to the translation of Frédéric Amiel's *Journal Intime*. The language she used about it strongly suggests that she saw the act of translation as a contest of equals between the translator and the translated. The

⁶ Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, Vol VI, *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, Dissent and Dogma*, (10 Vols.) ed. R H Super (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1960), p.395.

⁷ Arnold, p.220.

⁸ Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, *The English Novel in History, 1840 – 1895*, p.43.

⁹ MA Am, pp.271, 273.

¹⁰ HFA JI, 23 December, 1866, p.126.

‘spell’ it ‘laid on’¹¹ her suggests an intense fascination with its matter and expression. Because the process of translation overlapped with the gestation of *Robert Elsmere*, the influence of the *Journal Intime* on the novel is profound and has been underestimated. Amiel’s psyche, psychological predicaments, and philosophical questionings were used as models for her own explorations of the emotional impacts of doubt and irreconcilable faiths. Amiel’s vocabulary, his psychological landscapes, his self-aware, questioning sensibility, his portrayal of the flux of ideas and ideology, and his depiction of a European intellectual hinterland are drawn into Ward’s imaginative armoury to portray the emotional dimensions of an intellectual process. An article Ward wrote for *Macmillan’s Magazine* alludes to Amiel’s combination of mysticism and intellectualism with approval:

Whereas a mind like Amiel’s, while intellectually it feels the force of the arguments urged by science, is yet practically persuaded that beyond and below phenomena there is a ‘deepest depth’ in which love and duty have their source, a Divine consciousness which is the root of ours.¹²

In translating Amiel she found the epitome of the contemporary spiritual dilemma, ‘so widely representative of the modern mind - of its doubts, its convictions, its hopes’,¹³ the experience of losing a religious faith and searching for a new set of symbols through which to experience the indissoluble emotions of a former faith and maintain a belief in human conscience. In the essay for *Macmillan’s Magazine* she also wrote:

Many of his confessions of faith may well stand for typical utterances of that modern spirit which, in the midst of doubt, will neither sacrifice its knowing nor its believing, but clings passionately to both.¹⁴

Peterson records one of Mary Ward’s confessions to a friend, Frances Power Cobbe, that she ‘had never quite recovered from the strain of *Robert Elsmere*’, linking its emotional and psychological impact on her to the fact that Elsmere’s ‘religious dilemma’ was ‘the inner

¹¹ MW Rec, Ch.XI, p.209

¹² M. A. W. (1884) [Mary Ward], ‘The Literature of Introspection: Amiel’s Journal Intime.1.’ *Macmillan’s Magazine*, 1859-1907, 49(292), Feb 1884, pp.268-278.
<<http://search.proquest.com.liverpool.idm.oclc.org/docview/5751774?accountid=12117>> [accessed 19 May 2017]

¹³ HFA JI, Mary Ward, ‘Introduction’, p.xliii

¹⁴ M.A.W, [Mary Ward], p.275.

struggle of her own conflicting tendencies towards rationalism and mysticism'.¹⁵ It is in the intersection of this conflict, which she had identified in Amiel's *Journal Intime*, that Ward recognised the creative tensions and possibilities of her own irreconcilable needs 'to know and to believe'.

Amiel provided a prototype, or, because of his own sense of his variousness, a variety of prototypes, for a novel about the psychological, emotional and intellectual impact of contemporary thinking about religion; how it felt to experience doubt, lose a former faith, and struggle to find a way to live on the basis of new understandings. The *Journal's* power over her moral imagination was such that she returned to it to find a quasi-religious authority and source of spiritual encouragement, as evidenced in a letter to her dying mother, Julia Arnold:

I am *so* sorry, dearest, for your own suffering. This is a weary world, - but there is good behind it, 'a holy will', as Amiel says, 'at the root of nature and destiny,' and submission brings peace because in submission the heart finds God and in God its rest. There is no truth I believe in more profoundly.¹⁶

Summary of the *Journal Intime*

Amiel's book is a spiritual and intellectual journal covering his life from his late twenties in 1848 until his death in 1881, thirty three years later. Amiel's attitude to the future status of the *Journal* is equivocal, sometimes emphasising that it is the record of a private internal dialogue, sometimes allowing the possibility of its worth to a world beyond:

This mass of written talk, the work of twenty-nine years, may in the end be worth nothing at all; for each is only interested in his own romance, his own individual life.¹⁷

Despite his ambiguity about whether his self-explorations were to be published or not, they are written in a poetic, lucidly expressive style. Edmund Scherer, his French editor, and Ward, his English translator, effusively described the expressiveness of his writing as

¹⁵ William S Peterson, *Victorian Heretic: Mrs Humphry Ward's Robert Elsmere*, p.121.

¹⁶ Janet Penrose Trevelyan, *The Life of Mrs Humphry Ward*, p.39.

¹⁷ HFA JI, 26 July 1876, p.231.

‘wonderful’,¹⁸ displaying a ‘magic of style’ and a ‘glow and splendour of expression’.¹⁹ Ward’s introduction praises:

[...] its poetical quality, its beauty of manner - that fine literary expression in which Amiel has been able to clothe the subtler processes of thought, [...] and Amiel, in spite of all his Germanisms, has style of the best kind.²⁰

Matthew Arnold, who had resolutely refused to fall under Amiel’s spell, other than as a literary critic, conceded that Amiel developed his ideas:

[...] with great subtlety, but also with force, clearness, and eloquence, making it both easy and interesting to us to follow him.²¹

Scherer’s introduction to the French edition of the posthumous *Journal* identifies the contrast between Amiel’s scanty published work and the style and contents of the *Journal*, and wrestles with the enigma Amiel posed to his friends and colleagues. He presents Amiel as a conjunction of opposing elements, yet as evading categorisation:

[...] l’extrême objectivité de la pensée s’unissait en lui à l’extrême subjectivité du sentiment.²² [[...] extreme objectivity of thought united in him with extreme subjectivity of feeling.]

Il [...] appliquait rarement les catégories vulgaires du bon et du mauvais, du vrai et du faux.²³ [He [...] rarely applied the vulgar categories of good and bad, of truth and falsehood.]

Notre ami n’est ni orthodoxe, ni hérétique, j’allais dire ni croyant, ni incrédule; il se meut dans un région où ces oppositions n’ont point de place.²⁴ [Our friend is neither orthodox nor heretic, I was going to say neither a believer nor an unbeliever; he inhabits a region where these oppositions have no place.]

The *Journal*’s entries themselves reveal a mind responsive to the natural world and sensitive to its effect on moods and thoughts. Ward’s article in *Macmillan’s Magazine*

¹⁸ HFA JI, ‘Introduction’ by Mary Ward, p.ix.

¹⁹ HFA JI, ‘Introduction’ by Mary Ward, p.xxxiii.

²⁰ HFA JI, ‘Introduction’ by Mary Ward, pp.xxxvi, xxxvii.

²¹ MA Am, p.270.

²² Edmund Scherer, ‘Introduction’ to *Fragments d’un Journal Intime* by Henri-Frédéric Amiel, ed. by Edmund Scherer (Geneva: Georg, 1884), p.xxxiv.

²³ Scherer, p.lxxi.

²⁴ Scherer, p.lxxi.

commends their ‘Wordsworthian charm’.²⁵ Amiel’s interior world of shifting moods, emotions and ideas, his consciousness of his consciousness is analysed. Most importantly for Ward, the book charts the changes in Amiel’s religious position as well as his views on the future of Christianity. He clung to beliefs in the primacy of conscience, and in the Christian conceptions of pardon, self-renunciation and the reconciliation of the individual soul with God, despite his fascination with a more pessimist philosophy of resignation of personal desire and search for annihilation of self. While he never relinquished his veneration for the figure of Jesus, his conception of God and human relationship with the divine were gradually transformed into an internal debate between binary oppositions:

Are these oscillations between the personal and the impersonal, between pantheism and theism, between Spinoza and Leibnitz, to be regretted? No, for it is the one state which makes us conscious of the other. And as man is capable of ranging the two domains, why should he mutilate himself?²⁶

Throughout his life, Amiel returned to the theme of his first statement in the *Journal* in July 1848: ‘There is but one thing needful - to possess God.’²⁷ By 1863, he was exploring a position more focused on enduring human psychological needs than those of Church teaching, stating that:

My creed is in transition. Yet I still believe in God, and the immortality of the soul. [...]; I believe in the redemption of the soul by faith in forgiveness. [...]. I believe even in prayer. I believe in the fundamental intuitions of the human race, and in the great affirmations of the inspired of all ages.²⁸

In 1868, he further explored his rejection of church and dogma, yet his reverence for the figure of Jesus:

We may be suspicious of the clergy, and refuse to have anything to do with catechisms, and yet love the Holy and the Just, who came to save and not to curse.²⁹

²⁵ M.A.W [Mary Ward], ‘The Literature of Introspection.1’, p. 276.

²⁶ HFA JI, 18 February 1881, p.292.

²⁷ HFA JI, 16 July 1848, p.1.

²⁸ HFA JI, 2 September 1863, p.95.

²⁹ HFA JI, 12 April, 1868, p.140.

His later exploration of mystical and nihilistic conceptions of the Universe remained interpenetrated with a sense of a 'holy will':

My creed has melted away, but I believe in good, in the moral order, and in salvation; religion for me is to live and die in God, in complete abandonment to the holy will which is at the root of nature and destiny.³⁰

As he was dying however, his belief was in an immanent rather than a transcendent God.³¹ In the last weeks of his life, he affirmed both a sense of 'universal metamorphosis' within which 'all particular convictions, all definite principles, all clear-cut formulas and fixed ideas, are but prejudices, [...]',³² where 'religious psychology has become a simple phenomenon, and has lost its fixed and absolute value [...].'³³ But these continuing intellectual revaluations were combined with a continuing religious sensibility which could pray to retain faith in 'ta volonté sainte'³⁴ [your holy will] a month before his death.

His *Journal* provided Ward with a model for contemporary attempts to distinguish between Christian dogma and spirituality, for intellectual doubt combined with religious sensibility, and a consideration of how ethical and psychological needs should continue to be met. Despite the metamorphoses of his own perceptions, Amiel identified the broad terms of the contemporary religious debate in an early 1851 entry as one between the competing values of 'moral love' and science:

Now all that science gives is the *amor intellectualis* of Spinoza, light without warmth, [...]. Moral love places the centre of the individual in the centre of being. [...].³⁵

An 1869 entry restates the issue:

The transference, however, of Christianity from the region of history to the region of psychology is the great craving of our time. What we are trying to arrive at is the *eternal* gospel.³⁶

³⁰ HFA JI, 11 September 1873, pp. 209, 210.

³¹ HFA JI, 4 February 1881, p.291.

³² HFA JI, 4 February 1881, p.291.

³³ HFA JI, 4 February 1881, p.290.

³⁴ HFA JI, 16 March 1881, p.294.

³⁵ HFA JI, 7 April 1851, p.11.

³⁶ HFA JI, 27 January 1869, p.148.

The journal form allowed him to record the internal ‘drama’ of thought, which he describes as ‘a monologue, or rather an intimate debate between God, our conscience, and ourselves’.³⁷ His phrases recall both Arnold’s ‘dialogue of the mind with itself’,³⁸ and also Feuerbach’s definition of thought: ‘Man thinks - that is, he converses with himself’.³⁹ The *Journal* analyses the ways in which thought and perception shift endlessly, although, below this shifting, changing conscious self, Amiel was fascinated by and feared ‘the abyss’ and disintegration of the human unconscious:

I am a spectator, so to speak, of the molecular whirlwind which men call individual life; I am conscious of an incessant metamorphosis, an irresistible movement of existence, which is going on within me.⁴⁰

and:

For this abyss is within us; this gulf, open like the vast jaws of an infernal serpent bent on devouring us, is in the depth of our own being, and our liberty floats over this void, which is always seeking to swallow it up. Our only talisman lies in that concentration of moral force which we call conscience [.....].⁴¹

The *Journal* explores his views on current political and scientific development, and offers a scrupulously written and carefully judged analysis of other writers and the impact of their ideas upon him, as well as an unblinking analysis of his own failure to produce any work of worth. The names and ideas of other iconic European philosophers – including Spinoza and Feuerbach - critics, novelists, dramatists, poets, and historians spill out of the *Journal*’s pages, their ideas refracted through Amiel’s reactions to them. His enthusiasms anticipated some of Ward’s own. He was an enthusiastic reader of early Spanish poetry, and mentions both the *Cid* and *Rodogune*, on which she had worked at an earlier stage in her career. Some of the *Journal*’s introductions and cross-fertilisations blossomed for her into longer lasting relationships of translation and reimagining, such as the 1898 translation of Joubert’s *Pensées*, considered in Chapter 5.

³⁷ HFA JI, 27 October 1856, p.58.

³⁸ Matthew Arnold, ‘Preface to First Edition of *Poems, 1853*’, in Vol I of *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, On the Classical Tradition*, ed. R H Super, p. 1.

³⁹ LF EC, Ch.I, p.2.

⁴⁰ HFA JI, 23 December 1866, p.126.

⁴¹ HFA JI, 23 May 1855, p.48.

In relation to Amiel's writing and its relationship to his cultural context, her introduction to *Amiel's Journal* argues that he was a contemporary intellectual 'everyman':

He speaks for the life of to-day as no other single voice has yet spoken for it; in his contradictions, his fears, his despairs, and yet in the constant straining towards the unseen and the ideal which gives a fundamental unity to his inner life, he is the type of a generation universally touched with doubt, and yet as sensitive to the need of faith as any that have gone before it; [...].⁴²

The Genesis of *Robert Elsmere*: Crisis, Translation and Creation

As outlined in Chapter 1, the process of translation was intertwined with 'the germ' of a project which became *Robert Elsmere*, a project that had begun developing after Ward heard John Wordsworth's 1881 Oxford sermon on the 'present unsettlement in religion'. Ward described the sermon in the *Recollections*. It connected:

[...] the 'unsettlement' definitely with 'sin'. The 'moral causes of unbelief', said the preacher, 'were (1) prejudice; (2) severe claims of religion; (3) intellectual faults, especially indolence, coldness, recklessness, pride and avarice.'⁴³

Her reaction to it is also described:

[...] it was the shock of indignation excited in me by the sermon which led directly - though after seven intervening years - to 'Robert Elsemere'.⁴⁴

Her *Recollections* describe her first thoughts about how to combat the argument and prejudice of the sermon:

How could one show England what was really going on in her midst? Surely the only way was through imagination; through a picture of actual life and conduct; through something as 'simple, sensuous, passionate' as one could make it.⁴⁵

⁴² HFA JI, 'Introduction' by Mary Ward, p.xliii.

⁴³ MW Rec, Ch.IX, p.168.

⁴⁴ MW Rec, Ch.IX, p.168.

⁴⁵ MW Rec, Ch.IX, p.168.

Her first attempt at such a picture, appearing soon after the sermon, was a pamphlet called 'Unbelief and Sin: a Protest addressed to those who attended the Bampton Lecture of Sunday, March 6th'.⁴⁶ In her *Recollections*, Ward recognised the pamphlet as a forerunner of *Robert Elsmere*. It presented opposing ideas dramatically as a 'sketch' of 'two types of character' - A, an early version of Robert Elsmere, the character that fights its stormy way to truth, and C, who 'knows no doubts or has suppressed them'.⁴⁷

Ward wanted to find a written medium which would reach a wider public than the spontaneous Oxford 'anti-Tract'. The tradition which she aspired to join was that of earlier Victorian novels of spiritual experience and of doubt, which had focused on either the process of loss or discovery of faith by the central character:

There were great precedents - Froude's 'Nemesis of Faith', Newman's 'Loss and Gain', Kingsley's 'Alton Locke' - for the novel of religious or social propaganda. And it seemed to me that the novel was capable of holding and shaping real experience of any kind, as it affects the lives of men and women. It is the most elastic, the most adaptable of forms.⁴⁸

She was unapologetic about her desire to write a novel of ideas, of 'propaganda', emphasising the novel form's adaptability, its capacity to translate 'propaganda' into a satisfying artistic form.⁴⁹

The development of such a novel was interrupted in 1884 by her 'strong wish'⁵⁰ to translate Amiel's *Journal Intime*, as described in Chapter 1. Her *Recollections* identify the moment in March 1885 when her translation metamorphosed into a plan of how to write *Robert Elsmere*:

[...] I had nearly finished the translation of Amiel, which appeared in 1885, and in March of that year some old friends drove me up the remote Westmoreland valley of Long Sleddale, [...]; and from that day onward the early chapters of 'Robert Elsmere' began to shape themselves in my mind. [...]. Elsmere was to be the exponent of a freer faith; Catherine had been suggested by an old friend of my youth; while Langham was the fruit of my long communing with the philosophic charm and tragic impotence of Amiel.⁵¹

⁴⁶ MW Rec, Ch.IX, p.169.

⁴⁷ Quotations are from MW Rec, Ch.IX, p.169.

⁴⁸ MW Rec, Ch.XII, p.229.

⁴⁹ MW Rec, Ch.XII, p.230.

⁵⁰ MW Rec, Ch.XI, p.209.

⁵¹ MW Rec, Ch.X, pp.196,197.

She began work on *Robert Elsmere* during the summer of 1885, and its conceptualisation and composition thus grew organically out of the translation of the *Journal Intime*, completed in April 1885.⁵² Her work over this period therefore brought together her intention to respond to Wordsworth's sermon, her translation of the journal of a man in the grip of an agonising process of loss of faith, and a book which could portray the loss of a traditional faith as an evolution into an ethically driven, secular, humanist creed. To do this she created a character who would, in combining his loss of faith in traditional religion with continuing commitment to a human Jesus and his ethics, demonstrate that John Wordsworth's equation was invalid. The book would also show that relinquishing a faith was no facile or 'sinful' experience, but the culmination of a complex emotional and intellectual struggle. In February 1888, almost three years after the publication of *Amiel's Journal*, *Robert Elsmere* was published.

Reviews of the *Journal Intime*

Chapter 1 analysed Arnold's review of *Amiel's Journal*, published almost two years after the appearance of the book. The review made it clear that the translation had made Amiel's life and ideas better known in England:

In speaking of Amiel at present, after so much has been written about him, I may assume that the main outlines of his life are known to my readers: [...].⁵³

Despite his personal misgivings about Amiel's psychology, Arnold's essay pays tribute to Ward's translation, 'at once spirited and faithful'.⁵⁴ In her *Recollections*, Ward quotes Benjamin Jowett's appreciation of her translation of *Journal Intime*. It identifies some of the qualities which had made Amiel's book so appealing to her, as well as suggesting the advantages of portraying a life compared with an analysis of ideas:

It catches and detains many thoughts that have passed over the minds of others, which they rarely express, because they must take a sentimental form, from which most thinkers recoil. It is all about "self," yet it never leaves an egotistical or affected impression. It is a curious combination of scepticism and religious feeling [...].

⁵² John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian, Pre-eminent Edwardian*, p.99.

⁵³ MA Am, p.266.

⁵⁴ MA Am, p.267.

But, after all, commentaries on the lives of distinguished men are of very doubtful value. There is the life; - take it and read it who can.

Amiel was a great genius as is shewn by his power of style..... His *Journal* is a book in which the thoughts of many hearts are revealed [...].⁵⁵

His emphasis on its ‘combination of scepticism and religious feeling’, on its expression of the process of thinking (‘catches and detains many thoughts’), and on its portrayal of emotion without sentimentality were all aspects of Amiel’s writing significant to Ward and, as I will show, used by her in her novels.

Other later reviews of the work, such as H W Mabie’s, were appreciative of the skill of the translator, and of the aspects of Amiel’s writing which Ward herself had valued, his emotional articulacy and variousness:

The translation of Amiel’s “*Journal Intime*”, [...], was of such admirable quality that it effected a real transference of thought and feeling from one language to another, and added a work of deep and permanent interest to the literature with which this generation lives and by which it has been deeply influenced. The introduction gave Amiel a welcome which was at once gracious, and, in a rare degree, interpretative of his temper and spirit. There were moods in the meditations of the Swiss professor which were more significant of his temperament and of his age than were his thoughts, and these moods Mrs Ward divined and defined with sympathetic insight and skill.⁵⁶

Peterson singles out Walter Pater’s *Guardian* review of *Robert Elsmere* as ‘part of a curious dialogue between the authors of the two most famous religious novels of the Victorian period’. Ward’s earlier review of *Marius the Epicurean* had argued that Marius should not have paid ‘lip service to a creed which he rejected intellectually’. Pater’s response was to criticise Elsmere’s rash decision to leave the Church of England’.⁵⁷ Their conflict was resolved by Ward’s later novel, *The Case of Richard Meynell*, where the eponymous hero stays within but seeks to change the Church.

However, *Robert Elsmere* received one further significant, dissenting review. Gladstone’s review in *The Nineteenth Century* focused on the novel’s aim:

⁵⁵ MW Rec, Ch.XI, pp. 209, 210.

⁵⁶ Hamilton W Mabie, ‘The work of Mrs Humphry Ward’, *North American Review*, April 1903, p.483.

<<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25119382>> [accessed 14 June 2017]

⁵⁷ Peterson, p.99.

To expel the preternatural element from Christianity, to destroy its dogmatic structure, yet to keep intact the moral and spiritual results.⁵⁸

In particular, he attacked what he saw as Ward's inadequate presentation of any Christian defence:

There are abundant signs in the book that the negative speculatists have been consulted if not ransacked; but there is nowhere a sign that the authoress has made herself acquainted with the Christian apologists, old or recent; or has weighed the evidences derivable from Christian history [....]. If such be the case, she has skipped lightly [....] over vast mental spaces of literature and learning [....].⁵⁹

So gravely did he view the possible impact of the book that he and Ward had a private audience in Oxford, where she was staying as her mother was dying. She sent Humphry Ward an account of their meeting and concluded that:

[....] the new lines of criticism are not familiar to him [Gladstone], & they really press him hard. He meets them out of Bishop Butler & things analogous but there is a sense I think that the question and answer don't fit, & a vast development of interest & sometimes irritation produced by it.⁶⁰

She also noted the emotional impact upon Gladstone of the intellectual issue which they were debating:

He was very charming personally, though at times he looked stern & angry & white to a degree, so that I wondered sometimes how I had the courage to go on – the drawn brows were formidable.⁶¹

The publicity which the disagreement secured may have been one factor in the book securing a far wider audience than that which could be reached through a propagandist tract. As a

⁵⁸William Ewart Gladstone, 'Robert Elsmere and the Battle of Belief', *The Nineteenth Century*, 23/135 (1888):766-88.

⁵⁹Gladstone, 'Robert Elsmere and the Battle of Belief'.

⁶⁰MWL.Els, to Mr Humphry Ward, April 9th 1888.

⁶¹MWL.Els, to Mr Humphry Ward, April 9th 1888.

novel exploring the emotional dimension of radical thought it became a ‘best seller’, with translation into ‘most foreign tongues’ and international publication.⁶²

A Language for the Experience of Doubt

In the introduction, I considered Davis’s argument that in shedding the old religious ideas:

[...] the old ways have to linger, and have to be banished, alternately, until a new language of symbols and associations can serve as a replacement.⁶³

Davis goes on to argue that:

Nowhere is this complicated process of learning a new language better shown than in Mrs Humphry Ward’s *Robert Elsmere*. Published in 1888, it stands as the great culminating recapitulatory novel of the century’s religious experience.⁶⁴

In writing *Robert Elsmere*, Ward set herself a number of formidable theoretical tasks. She wanted to move towards a language which could translate new ideas but find an emotional equivalence to that associated with the former ideas. To do this she had to find a language resembling a translation between a way of thinking and a way of feeling. It would have to demonstrate how an abstract, ‘intellectual process’ can irreparably alter the emotions and events of human lives. The novel’s characters and narrative would focus on the ‘human and emotional crisis’ resulting from thought, imagining, as it were, the never-provided ‘back story’ of Amiel’s meditations on the various manifestations of his psycho-spiritual experience:

But in my case, what provoked the human and emotional crisis - what produced the *story* – was an intellectual process.⁶⁵

⁶² MW Rec, Ch.XII, p.252.

⁶³ Philip Davis, *The Victorians, Oxford English Literary History, Vol. 8*, p.126.

⁶⁴ Davis, p.130.

⁶⁵ MW Rec, Ch.XII, p.231.

Stephen Gwynn identifies Mary Ward's approach to the creation of a novel as follows: 'She plans the thing in terms of spiritual anatomy, and then proceeds to clothe them with flesh'.⁶⁶ Ward saw herself as working backwards from a conflict which would dramatically expose an intellectual position towards a moment, such as that in *Long Sleddale*, where she had found or created suitable protagonists to explore or resolve that conflict. She herself argues in the *Recollections* that her fiction had to encompass the scope and stages of intellectual analysis through 'suggestion' both to provide the essential basis of an argument but also to explore the force of its human impacts:

The problem then, in intellectual poetry or fiction, is so to suggest the argument, that both the expert and the popular consciousness may feel its force. And to do this without overstepping the bounds of poetry or fiction; without turning either into mere ratiocination, and so losing the 'simple, sensuous, passionate'⁶⁷ element which is their true life.⁶⁸

Amiel's *Journal* was important to her in securing this 'simple, sensuous and passionate' account of thought, rather than 'mere ratiocination'. If *Robert Elsmere* partly translated the ideas of Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* into a re-understanding of religious conviction, the language Ward used for that translation was Amiel's passionate, introspective language rather than Arnold's witty, ironic, urbane intellectuality. What she achieves is the translation of ideas into the variety of emotional and psychological states to which they give rise, the emotional corollaries of thought.

The Influence of Amiel's Style and Language

After her death in 1920, Ward's friend, André Chevrillon, wrote appreciatively of her work:

I do not know of any novelist that gives one to the same degree the feeling that Ideas are living forces, more enduring than men, and in a sense more real than men – forces that move through them, taking hold of them and driving them like an unseen, higher Power.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Stephen Gwynn, *Mrs Humphry Ward*, p.65.

⁶⁷ John Milton, 'Of Education', in *The Student's Milton*, ed. F A Patterson (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1961), p.729.

⁶⁸ MW Rec, Ch.XII, p. 232.

⁶⁹ Trevelyan, p.309.

The sense that Ward's characters are the victims, willing or not, of ideas that seize their minds and shake their lives, and that this is the intellectual and emotional undertow of a ceaseless process of change and renewal, echoes a number of Amiel's themes and recurrent images. Some of his most characteristic words are 'metamorphosis', 'whirlwind' and 'abyss', each conveying that sense of constant change, the power and physical intensity of thought processes and the lure and menace of the sub-conscious world. I argue that Ward identified with Amiel's style and psyche to such an extent that not only his style but his vocabulary, as translated by her, influenced her own style. Her novels continued to be haunted by it so that the occasional direct echo is still traceable in *Eleanor* (1900), the latest novel considered in this thesis.

One of Amiel's recurrent images is of the abyss. Amiel himself used the word 'abîme' [abyss] twenty seven times in his *Journal*, but he also used the word 'gouffre' [gulf] eighteen times. On a number of occasions he uses the phrase 'l'abîme insondable' (measureless abyss, or, as translated by Ward, 'fathomless abyss'). The image of an abyss is used in a number of ways. It is used of the hidden depths of the subject's unconscious mind:

[...] in my theory of the inner man, I placed at the foundation of the Self, [...], a lowest depth of darkness, the abyss of the Unrevealed [...].⁷⁰

It is used of the process of surrendering life, finite and individualised, to the infinite and eternal:

We are spectators of the eternal duel between the two great forces, that of the abyss which absorbs all finite things, and that of life which defends and asserts itself [...].⁷¹

It is also used in connection with the religious emotion experienced when confronted with the immeasurable:

By the vastness of the abysses into which she penetrates, in the effort – the unsuccessful effort – to house and contain the eternal thought, we may measure the greatness of the divine mind.⁷²

⁷⁰ HFA JI, 27 October 1856, p.58.

⁷¹ HFA JI, 17 December 1856, p.60.

⁷² HFA JI, 7 January 1866, p.112.

Ward draws on Amiel's usage of 'abyss' to convey the incomprehensible forces which surround men and women, and which lie within them. Like his, her usage emphasises the mystery and irrationality of the unconscious mind and the unknowability of the universe and those powers which seem to impinge on men's lives. Amiel sometimes uses other words in conjunction with words such as 'abyss'. Such words include 'vast' or 'vastness', which the *Journal* uses forty seven times, and 'veil' or 'veiled', used nine times, three of those in conjunction with the image of Isis, the mystery of reality.

Ward's recognition that her response to Amiel's fusion of 'conflicting tendencies towards rationalism and mysticism'⁷³ echoed her own influenced her transference of Amiel's language for his mystical apprehensions of the 'beyond-human' and the unknowable; even when Amiel's original usage is part of a physical description, it acquires in Ward's reuse of it some of the mystical suggestiveness of his use of the word in other contexts. I have used examples from both *Robert Elsmere* and from *Eleanor*, written almost fifteen years later, to show how closely Ward echoed the phrases and ideas of the *Journal*. The following are parallels from *Robert Elsmere*. Each is compared with a passage it echoes from *Amiel's Journal*.

Newcombe, the priest who has refused to entertain more liberal ideas, attempts to warn Elsmere against the Squire's ideas by describing a path through metaphysical temptations – 'I see life always as a threadlike path between abysses along which man creeps.'⁷⁴ The image itself can be traced back to Amiel's description of a day climbing the Sparrenhorn, along a 'path which runs between two abysses'.⁷⁵ A word, which in the particular context of the *Journal* provided only a romantic description of mountainscape, is infused by Ward with the understanding of 'abyss' as Amiel used it elsewhere in his *Journal*, as a description of precarious psychological or spiritual states, transforming it into an allegory of the menacing temptations besetting the religious life.

Ward's descriptions of the ways in which both Robert and Squire Wendover face their deaths, without any religious faith, uses Amiel's mystical vocabulary of abyss, vastness and veil. Mortality is described as the 'common abyss', and it is combined with the image of the rending of the 'veil' which had protected men from too much knowledge:

⁷³ Peterson, p.121.

⁷⁴ MW RE, II. 12. pp.165,166.

⁷⁵ HFA JI, 20th July 1870, p.173.

The veil which hides the common abyss, in sight of which men could not always hold themselves and live, is rent asunder, and he looks shuddering into it.⁷⁶

It reflects one of Amiel's uses of the image of the veiled Isis to describe the mysteries of death, resignation and ultimate knowledge:

[...] the old belief that to raise the veil of Isis or to behold God face to face brought destruction on the rash mortal who attempted it.⁷⁷

Ward had described Wendover's initial apprehension of his death's inevitability in terms reminiscent of Amiel's conjunction of 'abyss' and 'vastness' ('the vastness of the abysses') noted earlier:

His eye seems to be actually penetrating the eternal vastness which lies about our life. [...]. The awe, the terror which are at the root of all religions have fallen even upon him at last.⁷⁸

Ward's use of Amiel's terminology carries with it the associations with psychic terror of the infinite found in Amiel's usage of it elsewhere. The immensity of death's mystery negates Wendover's lifetime commitment to rational inquiry, which is left impotent before the vastness and the abyss, Ward's and Amiel's words for those processes which swallow human life or reduce its significance.

Ward also uses the word abyss to describe moral horror. Robert's shock at the infidelity he is invited to by Mme de Netteville is described as a 'moral abyss' over which he hangs on a 'single thread':

The sensitive optimist nature [...] felt itself wrestling in the grip of dark implacable things, upheld by a single thread above that moral abyss which yawns beneath us all [...].⁷⁹

Elsewhere, in the novel, a similar image is used of an emotion produced by a purely physical response of human insignificance compared with the inhuman sublime of Nature:

⁷⁶ Mrs Humphry (Mary) Ward, *Robert Elsmere*, (The Project Gutenberg Ebook), VII. 50. p.591 <<http://www.searchengine.org.uk/pdfs/4/90.pdf>> [accessed 14 June 2017]

⁷⁷ HFA JI, 9 June 1870, p.172.

⁷⁸ MW RE, IV. 30. p.373.

⁷⁹ MW RE, VI. 43. p.508.

[...] the sense it produced in the spectator of hanging dizzily above the lake, with the infinite air below him, and [...] leav[ing] the eye of the watcher face to face across the fathomless abyss with the majestic mountain mass, and its attendant clouds, as though they and he were alone in the universe.⁸⁰

Both seem to owe their impact, either emotional or moral, to Amiel's originating image of human nullity compared with the enormity and mystery of the universe, where human individuality seems irrelevant:

What is our life in the infinite abyss? [...]. It seems to me that I am hanging by a thread above the fathomless abyss of destiny. Is this the Infinite face to face, an intuition of the last great death?⁸¹

Even in *Eleanor*, written fifteen years after the translation of *Amiel's Journal*, Lucy's unwitting wish to create an air of normality during a dinner where Manisty's unstable sister, Alice, is spreading a natural sense of gothic disquiet, is described as follows:

But her pleasant girlish talk seemed to float above an abyss of trouble and discomfort, which threatened constantly to swallow it up.⁸²

Lucy's sense of an abyss is, apparently, trivial compared with Amiel's originating, much darker, and more fatalistic image of the abyss within:

For this abyss is within us; this gulf, open like the jaws of an infernal serpent bent on devouring us, is in the depth of our own being, and our liberty floats over this void, which is always seeking to swallow it up.⁸³

The allusion to Amiel's image acquires a premonitory power as the narrative unfolds the hidden abysses of the insanity of one member of the diners and the heartbreak and incurable illness of another.

The image of a whirlwind occurs thirteen times in total in the *Journal Intime*. Amiel uses it in relation to the violent flux of ideas,⁸⁴ feelings,⁸⁵ and impressions.⁸⁶ He describes his

⁸⁰ MW RE, V. 32. p.388.

⁸¹ HFA JI, 22 July 1870, p.174.

⁸² MW EI, Ch.9. p.190.

⁸³ HFA JI, 23 May 1855, p.48.

⁸⁴ HFA JI, 23 December 1866, p.125.

own sense of inner disintegration through its suggestion of random violence: ‘Instead of being single, [...] I become legion, multitude, a whirlwind – a very cosmos’.⁸⁷ He uses it to describe his sense of being caught between the will to live and his expectation of death:

To live is to die partially - to feel oneself in the heart of a whirlwind of opposing forces – to be an enigma.⁸⁸

Ward uses ‘whirlwind’ in two significant places in *Robert Elsmere*. The first is in her description of Robert’s reaction to reading the Squire’s book, where it is used to suggest the destructive power of his new ideas and the way in which they have swept up and absorbed previous impressions:

Over the young idealist soul there swept a dry destroying whirlwind of thought. Elements gathered from all sources [...] entered into it, and as it passed it seemed to scorch the heart.⁸⁹

The second incidence is during Robert’s fevered anticipation of his own death after that of the Squire, thus reflecting Amiel’s use of it in facing up to his death:

The strangest whirlwind of thoughts fled through him in the darkness, [...]. Death here! Death there!⁹⁰

I suggest that Amiel’s metaphorical language was an influence on Ward’s own descriptions of certain states of mind. She used it to suggest the penumbra of emotions which Amiel’s own use of it had established in his own particular context, as if it were also a private language between herself and him, where she understood the imaginative loading of the word and transferred that loading to her own descriptions of emotional states. The private language of an intimate *Journal* which Ward translated becomes her own private language for particular psychological and emotional experience, and adds an intensity and dynamism to her descriptions.

⁸⁵ HFA JI, 18 July 1858, p.69.

⁸⁶ HFA JI, July 1864, p.99.

⁸⁷ HFA JI, 28 April 1871, p.184.

⁸⁸ HFA JI, 26 July 1878, p.252.

⁸⁹ MW RE, III. 20. p.275.

⁹⁰ MW RE, VII. 50. pp.564, 565.

The Influence of Amiel's Language for Thinking and Feeling

Jowett's response to Mary Ward's translation of Amiel's *Journal Intime* singled out the Journal's achievement of 'catch[ing] and detain[ing] many thoughts that have passed over the minds of others, [...]'.⁹¹ Amiel's own assessment of what the journal form could offer was as follows:

Or sometimes it is the idea itself which has to be turned over and over, that I may know it and apprehend it better. [...]. Evidently the corresponding form of style cannot have the qualities which belong to thought which is already sure of itself, and only seeks to communicate itself to others. The function of the private journal is one of observation, experiment, analysis, contemplation; [...].⁹²

Elsewhere Amiel described the circumscriptions of thought and its articulation:

The chief part of the drama is a monologue, or rather an intimate debate between God, our conscience, and ourselves. Tears, griefs, depressions, disappointments, irritations, good and evil thoughts, decisions, uncertainties, deliberations, all these belong to our secret, and are almost all incommunicable and intransmissible, even when we try to speak of them, and even when we write them down. What is most precious in us never shows itself, never finds an issue even in the closest intimacy. Only a part of it reaches our consciousness, it scarcely enters into action except in prayer, and is perhaps only perceived by God, for our past rapidly becomes strange to us.⁹³

Amiel's analyses emphasise the inconclusiveness and tentativeness of the experience of thought, its emergence into consciousness and then its submergence back into half-articulable or unconscious processes. He confronts his:

[...] habit of watching myself feel and live, with my growing incapacity for practical action, with my aptitude for psychological study.⁹⁴

His sense that the truth about belief was provisional and mutable was reflected in his style and in his choice of form. His practice has an impact on the way in which Ward 'demonstrates' the experience of thinking, its internal dialogue and its mysterious

⁹¹ MW Rec, Ch.XI, p.209 .

⁹² HFA JI, 18 July 1877, pp.244, 245.

⁹³ HFA JI, 27 October 1856, p.58.

⁹⁴ HFA JI, 17 June 1857, p.62.

subconscious under-life. Her descriptions of Robert's thought patterns include his explorations of his emerging beliefs through self-interrogations, whose answers change as his traditional faith gives way, and those moments where subconscious processes become conscious and clear.

The *Journal* also influenced Ward's depictions of inner experience through its use of metaphor and description drawn from Nature to suggest parallel processes of thought and emotion taking place in the mind. Amiel's perception that 'every landscape is, as it were, a state of soul',⁹⁵ expresses the romantic fusion of idea, mood and description which he achieves.

Once more I feel the spring languor creeping over me, the spring air about me. This morning the poetry of the scene, the song of the birds, the tranquil sunlight, the breeze blowing over the fresh green fields - all rose into and filled my heart. Now all is silent. O silence, thou art terrible! - terrible as that calm of the ocean which lets the eye penetrate the fathomless abysses below. Thou showest us in ourselves depths which make us giddy, inextinguishable needs, treasures of suffering. Welcome tempests! - at least they blur and trouble the surface of these waters with their terrible secrets. Welcome the passion blasts which stir the waves of the soul, and so veil from us its bottomless gulfs! In all of us, children of dust, sons of time, eternity inspires an involuntary anguish, and the infinite, a mysterious terror. We seem to be entering a kingdom of the dead.⁹⁶

The sequence of description and thought moves from that of a familiar, life-filled spring landscape, rendered ambiguous by the writer's 'languor', to its ultimate transformation by silence into an experience of psychological terror and an anticipation of death. Amiel reverses the conventional associations of spring, of silence, and of the calm of an ocean to find through them intimations of the 'fathomless abysses' of the human mind, and the need for movement, for tempests to 'blur and trouble' the surface to conceal their 'terrible' ocean depths, and its psychic corollary of 'mysterious terror.' These descriptions and ideas are linked together by intimations of their emotional source in the writer's moods, which shift from languor to the demand for passion 'to veil the bottomless gulfs' of the psyche.

Ward made use of these two aspects of Amiel's writing, his sense of hesitation and provisionality in the experience of thought, combined with descriptions or metaphors rooted in Nature, to suggest the emotional corollary of thought, and their function in signifying a

⁹⁵ HFA JI, 31 October 1852, p.30.

⁹⁶ HFA JI, 28 April 1852, p.21.

‘state of soul’. Robert’s journey from Christian conviction to renunciation of his faith is depicted by Ward as a series of irreconcilable assertions at war within him and with the emotional bedrock of his life. The pendulum of intellectual challenge is followed by emotional retreat as Robert’s loss of faith slowly stalks him:

“The fairy tale of Christianity” - “The origins of Christian Mythology.” [....]. Could any reasonable man watch a life like Catherine’s and believe that nothing but a delusion lay at the heart of it? [....], he seemed to hear Mr Grey’s answer: “All religions are true, and all are false. [....]. The spirit in them all is the same, [....]; it is but the letter, the fashion, the imagery, that are relative and changing.”

He turned and walked homeward, struggling, with a host of tempestuous ideas as swift and varying as the autumn clouds hurrying overhead. And then, through a break in the line of trees, he caught sight of the tower and chancel window of the little church. In an instant he had a vision of early summer mornings – [....] all the soft stir of rural birth and growth, of a chancel fragrant with many flowers, [....], of the kneeling form of his wife close beside him, [....]. The emotion, the intensity, the absolute self-surrender of innumerable such moments in the past - [....] - came flooding back upon him.⁹⁷

Robert’s internal tension between intellectual doubt and emotional faith is externalised and translated by the language and ideas of one revered figure, Mr Grey, and the life of faith of his wife, Catherine. Grey’s imputed argument begins with a dismissal of Christianity’s supernatural aspects as a work of the imagination, of ‘fairy tale’ or ‘myth’; Robert counters this by his perception of the reality as well as the intensity of his wife’s faith. This small emotional victory is again countered by imagining a fuller, more finely argued response from Grey which no longer attacks the very foundation of Catherine’s faith, but considers it as one amongst many human translations of the religious impulse. The urgency and violence of Robert’s internal debate and its involuntary, unpredictable movement towards some sort of final dissolution is then suggested through natural imagery, emphasising its restless, evanescent and autumnal aspects: ‘tempestuous ideas as swift and varying as the autumn clouds hurrying overhead’. The landscape of change ‘hurrying’ to a close is interrupted by his glimpse of his church and a reassertion of a train of feeling which merges his vocation and his love for his wife into a natural cycle of growth and fertility. However, the words identify this vision of natural, spontaneous religious fellow-feeling, of ‘self-surrender’, as a moment ‘in the past’. The movement of metaphor swings backwards and forwards from underlining

⁹⁷ MW RE, III. 19. pp. 261, 262.

chaotic change and dissolution, to emphasising serenity and natural regeneration, and then finally an equivocal, rational withdrawal from emotion to face its loss.

The earlier analysis of Amiel's use of landscape and metaphors drawn from nature demonstrated the complex movements of thought and feeling which it traces. I will use two more examples which show how Amiel uses description of nature to suggest shifts of thought and feeling, as well as a steady infiltration and elucidation of the nature of ideas by feeling. In two sequential entries, Amiel uses the idea of spring to emphasise two contradictory movements of thought and feeling. The first records:

The vulture of regret gnawed at my heart, and the sense of the irreparable choked me like the iron collar of the pillory. It seemed to me that I had failed in the task of life, and that now life was failing me. - Ah! how terrible spring is to the lonely!⁹⁸

The slow cadences of the earlier sentences, and the repetition of the metaphor and simile of Promethean suffering, reflect his sense of exclusion from life's opportunities and the bitterness of his life's disappointments, but distanced, objectified by its literary expression. The brevity and simplicity, the sudden and lateral switch to a contra-conventional perception of Spring as a hostile and hope-negating force, intensifies and dramatises the inner experience of being excluded from the normal course of annual regeneration.

In the subsequent entry, however, he uses the idea of spring to dramatise an urgent sense of unanticipated renewal, and uses the same type of modification of idea and metaphor, from assertion of a response through increasingly self-distrusting modifications of it.

The Alps are dazzling under their silver haze. Sensations of all kinds have been crowding upon me; the delights of a walk under the rising sun, the charms of a wonderful view, [...] and a thirst for joy, hunger for work, for emotion, for life, dreams of happiness and love. [...]. O ye passions, a ray of sunshine is enough to rekindle you all! The cold black mountain is a volcano once more, and melts its snowy crown with one single gust of flaming breath. It is the spring which brings about these sudden and improbable resurrections, the spring [...], sending a thrill and tumult of life through all that lives, [...].⁹⁹

The initial sentences, with their simple repetitions, convey an uncomplicated response to the delights of springtime nature. Only as the passage progresses do the hints of self-doubt and cynicism begin to reassert themselves – 'a ray of sunshine is enough to rekindle you'. Instead

⁹⁸ HFA JI, 18 March 1869, p.150.

⁹⁹ HFA JI, 6 April 1869, pp.151, 152.

of likening himself to Prometheus, his image of the changes being wrought in himself is violent, disturbing and inhuman. He is the 'cold black mountain' which 'is a volcano once more'. In the final sentence, the idea of 'spring' has accumulated not only the conventional ideas of joy in the resurgence of life, but also a sense of its recurrent battle against violence and difficulty. The language is dynamic, violent, emotional ('gust', 'thrill', 'tumult'). The phrase 'these sudden and improbable resurrections' links the reader back to the recent association with bitter regret, but also reinforces Amiel's constant oscillation between faith and doubt, intimating that such resurrections and possibly the idea of the Resurrection itself are evanescent and scarcely to be trusted.

As well as charting the movements of his mind between faith and despair, Amiel uses descriptions of landscape and the emotions it symbolises as a basis for a meditation that reveals 'a state of soul'.¹⁰⁰ In the following entry from the *Journal* the pattern he creates is complex, full of ambiguous suggestions and readjustment of significance, the combination of descriptive adjectives in the first sentence modifying the effect of the subsequent sentences, and being modified in turn by the amendments to an anticipated process of thought:

What message had this lake for me, with its sad serenity, its soft and even tranquillity, in which was mirrored the cold monotonous pallor of mountains and clouds? That disenchanted, disillusioned life may still be traversed by duty, lit by a memory of heaven. - I was visited by a clear and profound intuition of the flight of things, of the fatality of all life, of the melancholy which is below the surface of all existence, but also of that deepest depth which subsists forever beneath the fleeting wave.¹⁰¹

The description of the lake contrasts its 'sad serenity' and 'soft and even tranquillity' with what it reflects, a 'cold monotonous pallor' of the mountains and sky above. Yet, in his meditation on the image's significance for him, the metaphors shift ambiguously. The lake's 'sad serenity' metamorphoses into an analogy for a 'disenchanted, disillusioned life' and its 'cold monotonous' reflections are transformed into 'duty, lit by a memory of heaven'. The final sentence introduces a further metaphorical adjustment, transforming the initial mood of 'sad serenity' and 'even tranquillity' into a piercing perception of the 'melancholy' lying below the appearances of the world, and of the depths of the subconscious 'the deepest depth' below the shifting world of appearance.

¹⁰⁰ HFA JI, 31 October 1852, p.30.

¹⁰¹ HFA JI, 16 March 1854, p.46.

The ways in which *Amiel's Journal* represents complex and sometimes oppositional thought processes and their emotional dimension through nature imagery are adopted by Ward to analyse what is happening within Robert's mind during the intellectual upheaval of his loss of faith. The language she uses in relation to the processes of intellectual change and growth show how she followed Amiel in 'catching' and 'detaining' the experience of thinking, and suggesting the subconscious forces at work. This is how she describes Robert's first encounter with Squire Wendover's iconoclastic ideas in his notorious book, *The Idols of the Market-place*:

Robert began to read vaguely at first, then to hurry on through page after page, still standing, seized at once by the bizarre power of the style, the audacity and range of the treatment.

Not a sound in the house. Outside the tossing moaning December night; inside, the faintly crackling fire, the standing figure. Suddenly it was to Robert as though a cruel, torturing hand were laid upon his inmost being. His breath failed him; the book slipped out of his grasp; he sank down upon his chair, his head in his hands. Oh, what a desolate intolerable moment! Over the young idealist soul there swept a dry destroying whirlwind of thought. Elements gathered from all sources [...] entered into it, and as it passed it seemed to scorch the heart.¹⁰²

The writing emphasises the concentrated suddenness and violence of the process of intellectual struggle and conviction ('hurry on', 'seized at once', 'bizarre power', 'audacity', 'suddenly', 'torturing'), the physical and emotional effect of thought through the contrasts of standing and sinking ('standing', 'he sank down', 'torturing', 'seemed to scorch the heart'), the fusion of imagery of wildness and disorder, the tempest within mirroring the tempest without, with imagery of silence and the almost-suspension of life's or faith's processes at the moment of intellectual upheaval ('outside the tossing moaning December night, inside the faintly crackling fire, the standing figure'). The narrator switches from portraying how Robert appeared from the outside to a series of metaphors which portray the processes taking place within 'his inmost being', from being the object of a 'cruel torturing hand' to experiencing himself the crisis of thought and feeling where a 'dry destroying whirlwind of thought' 'seemed to scorch the heart'. The syntax of this passage begins in a conventional narrative style, which gradually transforms its rhythm and structure to become a series of impressions or images flashing by, and then reverts to a series of short statements about action, which intimate that Robert has been convinced by the arguments of Wendover's book.

¹⁰² MW RE, III. 20. pp.274, 275.

The Tensions between New and Old Languages

‘How are sensitiveness of feeling, the sense of sin, the desire for pardon, the thirst for holiness, to be preserved among us [...]?’¹⁰³ asked Amiel. A similar clinging to the old language of Christian belief and its recognisable emotional resonances can be seen at work in the way that Ward clothes the new religion, of a human Jesus rather than a divine Christ, in the allusive language of orthodox devotional writing, transforming Robert’s journey towards disbelief in orthodox Christianity into a type of spiritual pilgrimage, and then martyrdom, through her text’s allusions to the alternative Christian journeys of Bunyan, Dante and to the thoughts of St Augustine.

As well as this sense of personal displacement from a symbolic framework and language for enduring human emotions, Amiel also felt himself excluded from a community sharing a language of emotion and value. He saw himself as the outsider forever waiting for the ideal Church to come into being. ‘Ah! when will the Church to which I belong in heart rise into being?’¹⁰⁴ he asked in an 1852 entry in the *Journal Intime*. Ward herself had felt a personal need to reconcile her need for intellectual honesty with her need for communal devotion. A letter to Stopford Brooke, whose career outside the Church resembled Elsmere’s, apart from in its fashionable location, expresses this sense of exclusion:

I feel with you the loss of old association, of connexions with the great past of the whole of the ancient church and its formulary.¹⁰⁵

Her aspiration for a transformation of the national Church, rather than a gradual obliteration of the religious impulse, was also reflected in her equivocal approach to the symbols and sacraments of religion. Elsmere replaces communion with a ritual meal of remembrance,¹⁰⁶ and Friedland, in *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, demands that the new religion of the free mind find a symbol of equivalent power to the Mass. For Ward, words expressing intellectual apprehension had to change; but an equivalent sacramental language of symbols had to be re-instituted.

¹⁰³ HFA JI, 27 December 1880, p.283.

¹⁰⁴ HFA JI, 26 April 1852, p.20.

¹⁰⁵ Sutherland, p.193, quotes the letter of 25 August 1895.

¹⁰⁶ MW RE, VII. 49. pp.554, 555.

In her introduction to *Amiel's Journal*, Ward had presented Amiel as the translator of his generation's religious needs and intellectual doubts, comparing him with earlier religious, psychological and spiritual writers who represented the ideas and feelings of their generation:

Both as poet and as psychologist, Amiel makes another link in a special tradition; he adds another name to the list of those who have won a hearing from their fellows as interpreters of the inner life, as the revealers of man to himself. He is the successor of St Augustine and Dante; he is the brother of Obermann and Maurice de Guérin.¹⁰⁷

A fictional exploration of the new religious language, expressing an equivalent passion and emotional commitment to that of the beliefs being displaced, a language for a church to which her characters 'could belong in heart',¹⁰⁸ as Amiel had wanted, takes place in novels such as *Robert Elsmere*, and its later sequel, *The Case of Richard Meynell*,¹⁰⁹ which imagines ministers and congregations giving the lead in rethinking forms of worship. Robert's experience of doubt, followed by conversion to a humanist rethinking of the teachings of Christianity, and commitment to living out its moral implications, are all described and presented through the vocabulary of the Christian literature of religious experience, devotion, faith, and eventual martyrdom.

Chapter 1 considered how Eliot's use of metaphor to analyse the relative values of translation and origination betrays an inability to resolve the relationship between the two acts. Mary Ward's aims in writing *Robert Elsmere* and *Helbeck of Bannisdale* also reflect a simultaneous search for both equivalence and difference; and the interplay of language and structure within the novels reflects the tensions which she was trying to resolve. Ward wanted to portray the 'modern spiritual problems' of doubt and discouragement, the agonised internal fluctuations of hope and despair which she had recognised in Amiel's writing, the 'catching' and 'detention' of 'the dialogue of the mind with itself', but she also intended to 'dignify' – one of her favourite words - and portray the human spiritual and emotional victories possible once faith in the old creeds had been rethought and re-imagined, as in the case of Amiel. Her need to affirm the elevated ethical and spiritual validity of the new faith of the free mind is a measure of the depth of her sense of loss of the consolations of the old language.

¹⁰⁷ HFA JI, Introduction by Mary Ward, p.xxxvii.

¹⁰⁸ HFA JI, 26 April 1852, p.20.

¹⁰⁹ Mrs Humphry (Mary) Ward, *The Case of Richard Meynell*, (London: Smith, Elder, 1912).

Pilgrimage

Amiel describes his *Journal* as ‘the itinerary of an obscurely conditioned soul’, and, in the same entry, declares that ‘the pilgrim has marked his stages in it; he is able to trace by it his thoughts, his tears, his joys’.¹¹⁰ He represents it as the contemporary religious journey and as the *Journal* proceeds it emerges that it is a journey from faith to doubt. *Robert Elsmere*’s narrative also draws heavily on established metaphors for and allusions to pilgrimage and temptation, but searches for a redefinition and retranslation of faithfulness and the search for truth. In place of the traditional religious journey, where temptations are resisted and spiritual peace and enlightenment are achieved, it becomes a narrative of self-discovery, an intellectual ‘bildungsroman’, in which Elsmere works out his own beliefs and their relationship with tradition. Its parallels with traditional hagiography underline Elsmere’s self-sacrifice and martyrdom in order to establish a demythologised, humanist Christianity.

Amiel’s concept of his *Journal* as the record of a spiritual pilgrimage, his depictions of the hesitation of thought between the language and feeling of faith and its slow eradication by intellect, and his use of use of natural imagery to convey the emotions accompanying the experience of thought, influence Ward’s description of a crucial scene in the process of Robert’s loss of traditional faith. These movements in thought take place as Robert returns home through the woods from the Squire’s house, having realised he no longer felt convinced by the apologetics of faith. It fuses the conventions of pilgrimage literature with descriptions of landscape which become an allegory for his internal experience.

As he gained the shelter of the wooded lane beyond the gate it seemed to Robert that he was going through, once more, that old fierce temptation of Bunyan’s – [...]. Was this what lay before the minister of God now in this *selva oscura* of life? The selling of the Master [...] for an intellectual satisfaction, the ravaging of all the fair places of the heart by an intellectual need! And still through all the despair, all the revolt, all the pain, which made the summer air a darkness, and closed every sense in him to the evening beauty, he felt the irresistible march and pressure of the new instincts, the new forces, which life and thought had been calling into being. The words of St Augustine which he had read to Catherine, taken in a strange new sense, came back to him [...]. Was it the summons of Truth which was rending the whole nature in this way? Robert stood still, and [...] went through a desperate catechism of himself.

Do I believe in God? [...]. Do I believe in Christ? [...].

¹¹⁰ HFA JI, 3 March 1852, p.19.

But in the Man-God, the Word from Eternity, [...]?

He waited, conscious that it was the crisis of his history, and there rose in him, as though articulated one by one by an audible voice, words of irrevocable meaning.

“Every human soul in which the voice of God makes itself felt, enjoys, equally with Jesus of Nazareth, the divine sonship [...].”

All these years of happy spiritual certainty, of rejoicing oneness with Christ, to end in this wreck and loss! Was not this indeed “*il gran rifiuto*” – the greatest of which human daring is capable? The lane darkened around him. [...]. The only sounds were the sounds of a gently-breathing nature, sounds of birds and swaying branches and intermittent gusts of air rustling through the gorse and the drifts of last year’s leaves in the wood beside him. He moved mechanically onward, and presently, after the first flutter of desolate terror had passed away, with a new inrushing sense which seemed to him a sense of liberty – of infinite expansion.¹¹¹

Ward translates the debate between the liberating new ideas and the lost faith through the language and experience of the rejected former faith. Layers of literary allusion and suggestion – ‘translations of translations’ in Paz’s phrase - create an emotional context for Elsmere’s experience of mental transformation, and suggest its part in a historical religious tradition. Both explicitly, and by suggestion and echo, Ward invokes the great works of European Christian literature to describe how Robert might view his moment of decision, both as a loss of a traditional Christian perspective, and also as a continuation and development of it, rather than its negation. The allusions to Bunyan draw parallels between his journey and that of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, those to St Augustine to a re-understanding of his injunction to the primacy of Truth. Dante’s images of spiritual confusion and revolt (*selva oscura, il gran rifiuto*) also recall Ward’s argument that Amiel’s depiction of his spiritual and psychological experience made him ‘the successor of St. Augustine and Dante’.

The language, like Amiel’s, emphasises the violent and dynamic nature of the processes of mental change and spiritual loss, of intellectual and emotional struggle. They are represented through the juxtaposition of the phrases ‘intellectual satisfaction’ and ‘intellectual need’ with his recall of the former twin emotional certainties of his faith and his marriage, and through the violence of the judgement he considers delivering on himself in words such as ‘ravaging’ and ‘revolt’. The violence of this vocabulary modulates to that emphasising the power rather than violence of his innate response in its description of the ‘irresistible march and pressure’ of the new ‘instincts’ and ‘forces’ generated by thought. This language in turn modulates into descriptions of the gentler movements and sounds of

¹¹¹ MW RE, IV. 26. pp.331-333.

nature, of ‘swaying’, ‘rustling’, and then to the inspiration and liberation of ‘a new inrushing sense which seemed to him a sense of liberty – of infinite expansion.’

Elsmere’s transition from traditional belief to a new form of living without any transcendent authority, emphasises the dialogue taking place in his mind, through questions he sees as an alternative ‘desperate catechism’, not of faith but of its loss.¹¹² (Was this [...]? Was it [...]? Do I believe [...]?) To these questions he provides a number of types of answer, some relating to his past faith, some to his emerging intellectual convictions. Interwoven with Elsmere’s self-questioning are descriptions of the natural world beyond but reflective of the interior world of intellectual ferment. As in the passages about Spring from Amiel’s *Journal Intime* considered earlier, the descriptions emphasise the transition taking place in his thoughts, and underscore the translation of the old mental language into new. Nature at first exacerbates his mental struggle or reinforces his sense of loss. Its beauty is closed to him (‘closed every sense in him to the evening beauty’) and his pain cuts him off from it, making ‘the summer air a darkness’. But Ward goes on to describe the transformation of these earlier categorisations of the emotional impact of loss of faith into the new categorisation of experience which flows from the ‘irresistibility’ of ‘intellectual need’ as one aspect of the calm and harmony of ‘gently breathing nature’. Rather than as temptation, it is described as what makes us human – ‘new instincts, [...] new forces, which life and thought had called into being’, an assertion of the inevitability, rather than the culpability, of mankind’s thirst for knowledge, understanding, and ‘search for truth’. The ‘new forces’ are affirmed through the changes they are effecting amongst his old ideas (‘intermittent gusts of air rustling through [...] the drifts of last year’s leaves). ‘Gently breathing nature’ finally ushers in ‘a new inrushing sense [...] of liberty- [...].’

The final descriptions of nature emphasise their parallels with the religious experience of tradition. The transformation taking place within Robert’s mind is from an external source, a contemporary, scholarly, ‘Pentecostal’ experience, ‘a new inrushing sense which seemed to him a sense of liberty – of infinite expansion’, translating the language and emotions of the former faith into the language and emotions of the new. The ‘new inrushing sense [...] of liberty’ echoes the ‘sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind’¹¹³ described in the account of Pentecost in Acts, Chapter 2. Elsmere’s state of ‘desolate terror’ at the loss of his belief in the ‘Man-God’ and its transformation into a new ‘sense [...] of infinite expansion’

¹¹² MW RE, IV. 26. p.332.

¹¹³ Acts 2. 2.

take place, not in a house as with the first Pentecost, but in a 'selva oscura', a 'darkened' wood, as in the start of Dante's spiritual journey out of crisis. The ecstatic nature of his sense of intellectual freedom, its verbal parallels with the Pentecostal transformation and gift of expression, and the consequential promise of a language which can translate the experience and ideas to others, is held in tension beside the poetic conception of an interplay between the human mind and the world of nature, emphasising the natural sequence of renewal, and recalling the fusion of mood, idea and nature in Amiel's writing. Ward's transition from reinterpretation of the older language and literature of faith to a sensitive awareness of the continuous natural processes taking place around Robert suggests that a new language for the new religious understanding may surround him and be effecting its own irresistible Pentecostal language.

Amiel and the Characters of *Robert Elsmere*

In his *Journal*, Amiel offered Ward a complex palette of perceptions from which she repeatedly borrowed to construct characters who were to face similar psychological and intellectual dilemmas to those he had described. Amiel experiences personality as an infinite range of possibility, a flux of experiences over time rather than a single entity. He is also continuously conscious of a detachment from his own life, and of watching as a 'spectator' as experience happens:

I feel myself a chameleon, a kaleidoscope, a Proteus; changeable in every way, open to every kind of polarization; fluid, virtual, and therefore latent - latent even in manifestation, and absent even in presentation. I am a spectator, so to speak, of the molecular whirlwind which men call individual life; I am conscious of an incessant metamorphosis, an irresistible movement of existence, which is going on within me.¹¹⁴

His sense of his own variousness, his lack of a finite self, and the depth and terror of his self-analysis also suggests his personality as source material for many possible human types:

There are ten men in me, according to time, place, surrounding, and occasion; and in their restless diversity I am forever escaping myself. Therefore, whatever I may reveal of my past, of my *Journal*, or of myself, is of no use to him who is without the poetic

¹¹⁴ HFA JI, 23 December 1866, p.126.

intuition, and cannot recompose me as a whole, with or in spite of the elements which I confide to him.¹¹⁵

Ward saw him as a prototype of modern doubting man.

What, then, do I believe in? I do not know. And what is it I hope for? It would be difficult to say.¹¹⁶

In her introduction to the *Journal Intime*, she described him, without identifying her own position, as ‘the type of a generation universally touched with doubt, and yet as sensitive to the need of faith as any that have gone before it’,¹¹⁷ but she also made use of the opportunities presented by his ‘plurality’, his analyses of differing psychological states and differing intellectual and spiritual dilemmas, and rather than intuitively reaggregating them into a complex whole, she disaggregated them to provide the psychological profiles of many of her characters. The variety of the manifestations of doubt and despair, described by Amiel, but with alternative, hypothetical ‘human and emotional crises’ supplied by Ward, helped to produce characters as various intellectually as Langham, Elsmere, Wendover, and Grey. In her *Recollections*, Ward had identified T H Green’s ‘traits [...] of thinker and teacher’¹¹⁸ as important in her depiction of Grey,¹¹⁹ but his liberal and tolerant views could equally well be identified with some of Amiel’s musings about the need for a humane religion detached from the specificities of dogma. Indeed, Ward makes the connection between Amiel and Green explicit in her introduction to *Amiel’s Journal*:

In many respects there was a gulf of difference between the two men. [...]. But the ultimate creed of both, the way in which both interpret the facts of nature and consciousness, is practically the same.¹²⁰

The character of Langham, in *Robert Elsmere*, is closely modelled on Ward’s description of Amiel’s life in her introduction to *Journal Intime*. The descriptions of his character and its failings are reflections of those of Amiel, both ‘his philosophic charm and

¹¹⁵ HFA JI, 23 December 1866, p.126.

¹¹⁶ HFA JI, 31 August 1869, p.161.

¹¹⁷ HFA JI, ‘Introduction’ by Mary Ward, p.xliii.

¹¹⁸ MW Rec, Ch.VII, p.132.

¹¹⁹ MW Rec, Ch.VII, p.132.

¹²⁰ HFA JI, ‘Introduction’ by Mary Ward, p.xl.

tragic impotence,' as she summarised it in the *Recollections*.¹²¹ Langham re-embodies Amiel's distrust of emotional involvement with women, his constant self-destructive analysis of motive, and his intellectual solitariness. Here she sets the scene for the 'tragi-comedy' of Langham's intellectual and psychological history:

[...] one would have thought that a brilliant and favourable mental development was secured to him. Not at all. [...]. The uselessness of utterance, the futility of enthusiasm, the inaccessibility of the ideal, the practical absurdity of trying to realise any of the mind's inward dreams; these were the kind of considerations which descended upon him, slowly and fatally, crushing down the newly springing growths of action or of passion.¹²²

He could not be simple, he could not be spontaneous; he was tormented by self-consciousness. [...]. His lectures, which were at first brilliant [...] became gradually mere dry, ingenious skeletons, without life or feeling.¹²³

The biographical notes on Amiel's life which she provided in her introduction compare closely with her outline of Langham's character set out above, in the early brilliant expectations, the failure to live up to them, and the self-distrust and isolation:

[...] he wore his knowledge lightly, his looks were attractive, his conversation animated, [...] – the whole effect, indeed, was of something brilliant and striking. [...]; one would have said that the future was all his own.¹²⁴

In Geneva itself he had been commonly regarded as a man who had signally disappointed the hopes and expectations of his friends, whose reserve and indecision of character had in many respects spoiled his life, and alienated the society around him; while his professional lectures were generally pronounced dry and unattractive, [...].¹²⁵

[...] he proudly resigned himself to an isolation and a reserve which, reinforcing, as they did, certain native weaknesses of character, had the most unfortunate effect upon his life.¹²⁶

The introduction to *Amiel's Journal* goes on to elaborate the paralysis that Amiel inflicted on himself, analysing the essence of his own and Langham's tragedy:

¹²¹ MW Rec, Ch. X, p.197.

¹²² MW RE, I. 5. p.55.

¹²³ MW RE, I. 5. p.56.

¹²⁴ HFA JI, 'Introduction' by Mary Ward, , quoting Edmund Scherer, p.xix.

¹²⁵ HFA JI, 'Introduction' by Mary Ward, p.viii.

¹²⁶ HFA JI, 'Introduction' by Mary Ward, p.xxi.

[...] this tyranny of ideal conceptions, helped by the natural accompaniment of such a tyranny, a critical sense of abnormal acuteness, - stood between him and everything healing and restoring. 'I am afraid of an imperfect, a faulty synthesis, and I linger in the provisional, from timidity and from loyalty.'- 'As soon as a thing attracts me I turn away from it; or rather, I cannot either be content with the second-best, or discover anything which satisfies my aspiration. The real disgusts me, and I cannot find the ideal.'¹²⁷

How did Ward transform Amiel's characteristic modes of thinking about himself and about the great contemporary religio-philosophic questions into a narrative where those intellectual processes became aspects of a narrative exploring the 'human and emotional crisis' which gave rise to them? Langham and Robert Elsmere are each antitheses of the other. The narratives of their intellectual and spiritual choices, as well as their love stories, are interwoven by the novel so that they highlight the variety of reactions human beings can entertain in relation to similar external forces and internal predicaments. Langham sows the first seeds of scepticism about the historical validity of Christian sources in Robert's mind. But it is his disbelief in himself and the possibility of his providing anything of value, including love, which contrasts with Robert's self-belief, and makes Langham into so close a fictional realisation of Amiel. In contrast, even though he becomes a man stricken by doubt, Robert averts the collapse of meaning in his marriage and goes on to transform his doubts into humanitarian convictions.

The self-destructive, nihilistic power of Langham's personality is explored through his rejection of Rose's love for him, who feels that 'like David, she was pitting herself and her gift against those dark powers which may invade and paralyse a life'.¹²⁸ The narrative of Rose's failure to retrieve Langham from his emotional 'paralysis' is contrasted with Robert and Catherine's capacity to recreate their love despite the loss of their earlier spiritual unity. Like Amiel, Langham renounces his human instincts, whereas Catherine overcomes her spiritual distress to assert the primacy of her human instinct to continue to love her husband despite the spiritual division that faced them; 'He kissed her, and in that kiss, so sad, so pitiful, so clinging, their new life was born.'¹²⁹ It was, of course, the opposite of what had happened in Ward's parents' marriage.

¹²⁷ HFA JI, 'Introduction' by Mary Ward, p.xxvi.

¹²⁸ MW RE, II. 18. p.238.

¹²⁹ MW RE, IV. 29. p.362.

The ‘protean’ spiritual and intellectual possibilities of Amiel’s memoir informed Ward’s depiction of other characters in *Robert Elsmere*. The debate between faith and doubt, between feeling and rationality, internalised by Amiel, is externalised in the characters of Robert and Squire Wendover. ‘I say *know*, you say *feel*,¹³⁰ says the Squire in his last conversation with Elsmere. Wendover’s intellectual position is representative of European historical and theological scholarship, and his yet-to-be-completed magnum opus ‘A History of Testimony’ offers uncanny echoes of Ward’s own work on the West Goths for Wace’s *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, work which generated her own interest in ‘*sources-testimony*’,¹³¹ and led to her loss of faith. *The Recollections* link her own work on sources with Robert and Langham’s discussion of ‘what is the nature and virtue of testimony at given times’¹³² and the implication this has for religious orthodoxy, with Langham arguing that ‘the whole of orthodoxy’ depends on the historical context of assertions.

Wendover himself represents both the influence of German Higher Criticism and of Renan.

Fresh from the speculative ferment in Germany and the far profaner scepticism of France, he had returned to a society where the first chapter of Genesis and the theory of verbal inspiration were still regarded as valid [.....].¹³³

Ward’s *Recollections* publicly repudiated suggestions that Mark Pattison, the Rector of Lincoln College and another mentor, was the basis for Wendover’s character, apart from in ‘a few personal traits, and two main facts of great learning and a general impatience of fools’.¹³⁴ Elsewhere in the *Recollections*, however, shades of Wendover hover round her description of Pattison as ‘learned, critical, bitter, fastidious’.¹³⁵ Pattison had written to Scherer early after the publication of the French edition of the *Journal Intime* claiming his empathy with Amiel’s psychological self-portrait:

[...] I can vouch that there is in existence at least one other soul which has lived through the same struggles, mental and moral, as Amiel.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ MW RE, VII. 50. p.560.

¹³¹ MW Rec, Ch.IX, p.165.

¹³² MW Rec, Ch.IX, p.166.

¹³³ MW RE, Ch.XX, p.274.

¹³⁴ MW Rec, Ch.VI, p.111.

¹³⁵ MW Rec, Ch.VI, p.103.

¹³⁶ HFA JI, ‘Introduction’ by Mary Ward, p.x.

The Squire's grim, detached character, rejecting human ties and responsibilities, horrified by his sister's loss of sanity and fearing that his own fate may echo that of his father, suggests a further darker interpretation of Amiel's reluctance to forge close ties of relationship and strongly recalls the darker aspects of *Amiel's Journal's* mental voyage and his interpretation of one of his Protean manifestations as a self-protective detachment, possibly from madness:

[....]; I am *depersonalized*, detached, cut adrift. - Is this madness? No. Madness means the impossibility of recovering one's normal balance after the mind has thus played truant among alien forms of being, and followed Dante to invisible worlds.¹³⁷
Independence has been my refuge; detachment my stronghold. I have lived the impersonal life, - in the world, yet not in it, thinking much, desiring nothing. It is a state of mind which corresponds with what in women is called a broken heart; and it is in fact like it [....].¹³⁸

Like Amiel, Wendover has a horror of commitment to any belief which may prove unfounded. At the dinner party where he first crosses swords with Robert's idealistic religion, he says, 'The one thing necessary in life [....] is - not to be duped'.¹³⁹ In his *Journal Intime*, Amiel returns repeatedly to his fear of being 'duped' by life:

The deepest reason for my state of doubt is that the supreme end and aim of life seems to me a mere lure and deception. The individual is an eternal dupe, who never obtains what he seeks, and who is forever deceived by hope.¹⁴⁰

This rational detachment and refusal to be the 'dupe' of feeling precipitate human tragedy for those who depend on the squire, and reveal a character resembling, in his pride and apparent indifference, Amiel's own assessment of his contemporary thinker, Schopenhauer. Just as Robert Elsmere is both intrigued and repelled by Wendover, Amiel describes the mixture of admiration and distaste he feels for Schopenhauer and his writings:

What I still like in the misanthrope of Frankfort, is his antipathy to current prejudice, [....]. Schopenhauer is a man of powerful mind, who has put away from him all illusions, who professes Buddhism in the full flow of modern Germany, and absolute detachment of mind in the very midst of the nineteenth-century orgie. His great defects are barrenness of soul, a proud and perfect selfishness, an adoration of genius

¹³⁷ HFA JI, 8 July 1880, p.275.

¹³⁸ HFA JI, 19 May 1880, p.268.

¹³⁹ MW RE, II. 17. p.232.

¹⁴⁰ HFA JI, 31 August 1869, p.161. See also pp.50, 77, 128, 250.

which is combined with complete indifference to the rest of the world, in spite of all his teaching of resignation and sacrifice. He has no sympathy, no humanity, no love.¹⁴¹

The ideas and fictional life of Robert Elsmere himself intersect with those of Amiel. Elsmere has none of Amiel's self-doubt, but his intellectual position in relation to the renewal of the church and the strands of miraculous narrative within Judaeo-Christianity echoes such words as these in the *Journal*:

The whole Semitic dramaturgy has come to seem to me a work of the imagination. The apostolic documents have changed in value and meaning to my eyes.¹⁴²

Robert's search for a church based neither on miracle nor mystery, but revering the ethical teachings and compassion of Jesus, reflects Amiel's search for a church based on the unchanging essence of Jesus' teaching, what he called 'the Eternal Gospel'.¹⁴³

We may hold aloof from the churches, and yet bow ourselves before Jesus. We may be suspicious of the clergy, and refuse to have anything to do with catechisms, and yet love the Holy and the Just, who came to save and not to curse. Jesus will always supply us with the best criticism of Christianity, [...].¹⁴⁴

Robert's ministry to the people who came to hear him speak at Elgood Street reflects Amiel's search for a Church. He offers what Amiel sought, the veneration of the example of Jesus' life, his embodiment of love combined with justice, an absence of traditional dogma:

"A little while ago scores of these men either hated the very name of Christianity or were entirely indifferent to it. To scores of them now the name of the teacher of Nazareth, the victim of Jerusalem, is dear and sacred; his life, his death, his words, are becoming once more a constant source of moral effort and spiritual hope."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ HFA JI, 16 August 1869, p.159.

¹⁴² HFA JI, 4 February 1881, p.290.

¹⁴³ HFA JI, 27 December 1880, p.282.

¹⁴⁴ HFA JI, 12 April 1868, pp.140, 141.

¹⁴⁵ MW RE, VI. 41. p.486.

Ward's use of the *Journal* in scene setting

A number of other aspects of the *Journal* were clearly useful to Ward in her creation of a complex background to the main dramatic action of the novel. Amiel's emphasis on books, their ideas and their impacts on lives finds a parallel world in Ward's novels where characters read, write and expect books to change people. Elsmere's project of writing a book on 'a history of Gaul during the breakdown of the Empire and the emergence of modern France'¹⁴⁶ introduces him to the Squire's library and, inevitably, to the Squire's two 'famous books',¹⁴⁷ *Essays on English Culture* and *The Idols of the Market-place*, the latter shattering his faith. The title is taken from Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* (1620), which addressed the errors of thought which could result from using words without understanding the imprecision of their range of meaning, their roots in fallacious theory, or how far they function as substitutes for thought.¹⁴⁸ Adopting this title for Wendover's work reflects Ward's own sense of the importance of rationality, the pivotal role of context in informing understanding of words, and her sense of their untrustworthiness as signifiers of meaning. The Squire's library encloses and preserves scholarly European thought; he has spent time in Germany and France acquainting himself with the Higher Criticism and undertaking his own major work on testimony, which is intended to make a significant addition to the weight of argument against supernatural religion.

As well as the depth of Amiel's psychological portrait of the agonies of a wavering faith in God and self, and the breadth of his picture of the intellectual ferment of nineteenth century Europe, Ward used her own experience of a European intellectual milieu to give subtlety and shade to her depictions of a society of thinking people, who respond to ideas and make life-changing choices. Her admiration for and absorption into a European intellectual world, is reflected in a number of ways in her early novels. In *Robert Elsmere* the characters of Squire Wendover and Mme de Netteville create the connections between Robert's English orthodoxy and the European ideas which were threatening it. Mme de Netteville, who had been the 'centre of a small salon, admission to which was one of the social blue ribbons of Paris',¹⁴⁹ and who has recreated a venue for intellectual discussion in her London Friday

¹⁴⁶ MW Rec, Ch.IX, p.166.

¹⁴⁷ MW RE, III. 20. p.273.

¹⁴⁸ Stephen Gaukroger, *Francis Bacon and the Transformation of Early Modern Philosophy*, (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.125, 126. Cambridge Books Online.

¹⁴⁹ MW RE, V. 33. p.404.

evenings, creates, like the Squire, feelings of fascination and repulsion. Intellectually daring and morally damaged, they are Mary Ward's concessions to John Wordsworth's arguments linking 'unsettlement in religion' with moral corruption and emotional bankruptcy.

The geography of *Amiel's Journal* is also imported into *Robert Elsmere*, along with its personal significances for life and death. Much of the *Journal* was written in Geneva and that is where Elsmere and his wife retreat to explore how their lives should change after his loss of faith. They stay at Les Avants, a village above the lake and above Clarens, where Amiel received the diagnosis of the illness from which he died and where he was buried. The novel's association of Clarens with death is confirmed by the Squire's visit there before his death.

Amiel's variousness, his depictions of intellectual and emotional upheaval, were translated into Ward's novels. I have already referred to André Chevrillon's appreciation of her literary heritage, referred to earlier. It identifies the restlessness of intellectual portrayal in her novels and their sense that the most important human obligation is towards intellectual honesty:

The events in her novels were those of the soul [...]. The main forces that drove the characters like Fate were Ideas. She could *dramatise* ideas. I do not know any novelist that gives one to the same degree the feeling that Ideas are living forces, more enduring than men, and in a sense more real than men – forces that move through them, taking hold of them and driving them like an unseen, higher Power.¹⁵⁰

His metaphors of ideas as 'living forces', driving humans 'like an unseen, higher Power' recall Ward's own metaphors of Pentecostal transfigurations of thought in *Robert Elsmere*. His estimate recognises how far Ward fulfilled her early ambitions of showing how 'an intellectual process' can provoke a 'human and emotional crisis'.¹⁵¹ *Robert Elsmere's* array of men and women struggling with doubt in the traditions of their faith and its culture reflect not only the earnest and intellectual milieu of her life, but also draw on Amiel's sense that:

There are ten men in me, according to time, place, surrounding, and occasion; and in their restless diversity I am forever escaping myself.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰Trevelyan, p.309.

¹⁵¹ MW Rec, Ch.XII, p.231.

¹⁵² HFA JI, 23 December 1866, p.126.

His fluctuating moods, his reversals of feeling, his examination or rejection of different ways of thinking about the individual, and about how that individual recognises in their lives a sense of the depths of their consciousness and the infinitely unexplored beyond them, and the implications of these sensibilities for their ethical or religious lives provided her with a model of that sense of intellectual response, growth, and change with which she endows her characters.

Chapter 5

Ward's *Helbeck Of Bannisdale And Eleanor: Intransmissible Thoughts And Unorthodox Confessions*

Amiel's *Journal Intime*, with its depiction of an idealist's failure to compromise, express his deepest longings, construct a life, or find a liberal community of belief, continued to influence Mary Ward's earlier novels specifically focused on religious ideas, *Helbeck of Bannisdale* (1898) and *Eleanor* (1900). The *Journal* is also a record of refuges from disappointment; an analysis of the ideas of major contemporary writers, together with a pursuit of meaning in the natural world. Ward's early works chart a similar engagement on behalf of her characters: they encounter the revolutionary world of ideas through reading, and work them out within landscapes which mirror and interact with their thoughts. Squire Wendover's encyclopaedic library and iconoclastic books in *Robert Elsmere* (1888) may be reduced in scale in David Grieve's printers and bookshop (*The History of David Grieve*, 1892), but the radical books are still there.

Eleanor retains as its milieu a literate, intellectual world. Two of the principal characters, Eleanor and Manisty, have the latest European books of philosophy, theology and politics at their disposal as they work on his project to defend Catholicism's moral bastion against free-thinking, liberal decadence. However, their own individual and irreconcilable emotional needs enforce another type of confrontation, one with their own moral natures. Manisty is obsessed with Lucy Forster, with her distaste for Catholicism and her emphasis on the primacy of the individual conscience. Eleanor has to find a way of accepting her displacement from his affections, and a faith, as she faces death, which is able to provide her with a reconciliation of her intellectual needs and her emotional losses. Her despair and her search for value and meaning reflect those of Amiel, but the faith she ultimately finds resembles the faith in self-renouncement of Arnold's *Literature and Dogma*. The gains and losses to the individual of the irreconcilable struggle between rational secularism and the demands, traditions and authority of the Catholic Church, and the personal struggles involved in finding a new faith, are explored through the lives of the main characters, Eleanor, Lucy, Father Benecke and Manisty.

Though not substantively considered in this thesis, *The History of David Grieve* considers the development of liberal religious ideas as just one of a range of emotional and political influences on the life of her protagonist, where David's religious understanding is a

fusion of Arnold's and Amiel's ideas about the essence of a reformed Christianity. Like Amiel, David discloses his shifting, developing religious perceptions to the reader through entries in a Journal. His reactions to personal crisis are, like Eleanor's, expressed through Amiel's words in his last entry in the *Journal* before his death: 'Que vivre est difficile, ô mon coeur fatigué!' [how difficult it is to live, o my exhausted heart!].¹

Only in *Helbeck of Bannisdale* (1898), have the books of philosophy and liberal thinking, the academic world of Dr Friedland's Cambridge and of Laura Fountain's dead father, been set to one side, excluded from Bannisdale's austere spiritual environment in favour of books of devotion. The austerities of Bannisdale's landscape and way of life provide no escape from the narrative's focus on the conflict between human love and a demanding faith, between emotional loyalty to an intellectual principle and sexual passion. The agnostic Laura Fountain fails to reconcile herself to a marriage to Alan Helbeck, or rather to his passionate Catholicism, choosing death instead. The novel focuses on the gulf between the symbols of faith and the absence of symbolic structure to the 'new faith' held by Laura, one celebrating sacrifice, the other rejecting the language but ultimately embracing sacrificial action.

The reading and writing of books may both be fraught with dangers, but so too, is a lack of intelligent engagement with their ideas. Laura Fountain, just like Catherine Elsmere, is cut off from any but a limited understanding of her role in the nineteenth-century intellectual religious debate, and Ward shows the tragic impact of her ignorance on her own and other lives.

This chapter will consider the influence of *Amiel's Journal* and Ward's other shared translation project, Joubert's *Pensées* on both *Helbeck of Bannisdale* and *Eleanor*.

Symbols

The replacement of the Gospel narrative sequence, vulnerable to the deconstructive efforts of the Higher Criticism, by an exploration of the emotional and psychological significance of those events viewed symbolically preoccupied Amiel, as it had done Strauss and Feuerbach. In the *Journal*, he wrote:

¹ HFA JI, p.296.

The transference, however, of Christianity from the region of history to the region of psychology is the great craving of our time. What we are trying to arrive at is the *eternal* gospel.²

The translation, or transference as Amiel termed it, of history into symbol, and symbol into its emotional and psychological significance was one of Ward's key concerns. Her pursuit of the emotional significance of an intellectual process is, in *Robert Elsmere*, invested with symbolic 'pentecostal' significance through her descriptions of the natural cycles of death and rebirth. Both *Helbeck of Bannisdale* and *Eleanor* continue to explore how intellect and emotion interact, and to analyse the human crises that result.

Reversing the process, retranslating human psychological need into symbols which resonate with human need and express new intellectual understandings, is at the heart of both Amiel's search and Dr Friedland's analysis of the inadequacies of the 'religion of the free mind'³ in *Helbeck of Bannisdale*. Amiel had written that:

The new faith must have its symbols too. [...] How are sensitiveness of feeling, the sense of sin, the desire for pardon, the thirst for holiness, to be preserved among us, when the errors which have served them so long for support and food have been eliminated?⁴

Friedland is both spokesman for and constructive critic of the 'new faith', the 'religion of the free mind'. His challenge to the emerging religion to provide for 'the needs of the soul'⁵ through a symbolic representation equivalent in emotional significance to the sacrifice of the Mass ('[...] that brings God to Man, that satisfies the deepest emotions of the human heart!'⁶) is central to the novel. The importance of symbolic structure to belief, to living, and to communication is explored through the contrast between Helbeck's life, based on his response to the imperative sign of Christ's Crucifixion, and Laura's ambivalence towards the constraints and power exercised by signs.

Related to this exploration of the human need for symbols is Amiel's analysis of the mismatch between the signs of his outward life and his deepest longings:

² HFA JI, 27 January 1869, p.148.

³ MW HB, V. 1. p.332.

⁴ HFA JI, 27 December 1880, p.283.

⁵ MW HB, V. 1. pp.332, 333.

⁶ MW HB, V. 1. p.332.

But, as always happens, the appearance is exactly the contrary of reality, and my outward life the reverse of my true and deepest aspiration [...].⁷

He offers the following reasons for deflecting or disguising his emotional needs:

[...] I have always avoided what attracted me, and turned my back upon the point where secretly I desired to be.⁸

The perception anticipates Laura's actions, where her 'signs' at critical moments are designed to withhold any translation of her shifting emotions and decisions, whose conflict can only be expressed through death. Her suicide letter, the clearest explanation or 'sign' of her decisions, reflects Amiel's perception that human words at death take on a symbolic importance, illuminating the life of the dying person:

Such words and looks are a kind of testament. They have a solemn and sacred character which is not merely an effect of our imagination. For that which is on the brink of death already participates to some extent in eternity.⁹

Laura's letter assumes just such a symbolic importance for the reader, and the letter itself explores how far signs born out of human relationship continue to conceal as well as expose the truth. Its significance is withheld from Helbeck, but guide the reader towards an understanding of her death as a symbolic self-sacrifice arising from her internal conflict between human love and intellectual loyalty.

Biographical Influence

The potential variations of Amiel's oscillations between faith and doubt, and what might replace faith, is a recurrent theme of Ward's religious novels. But in *Helbeck of Bannisdale* and *Eleanor*, there is a further thread of religious conflict to unpick, one with biographical resonance. The engagement of these books with Catholicism's demands on the individual and the consolations it offered in return was a response to her father's conversion, which left him on one side of the Oxford debates and the remainder of the Arnold clan on the other side, most notably the celebrated stance of Ward's grandfather, Thomas Arnold, and of

⁷ HFA JI, 12 September 1861, p.81.

⁸ HFA JI, 12 September 1861, p.81.

⁹ HFA JI, 16 December 1868, pp.145, 146.

her uncle, Matthew Arnold. Amiel had written relatively little about his views of Catholicism in his *Journal*, but reflections of his short critique can be traced in both *Helbeck of Bannisdale* and in *Eleanor*. *Helbeck* had explored the idea that belief and doubt are irreconcilable rather than reverse aspects of some pivotal experience, because they represent antagonistic attitudes of mind and soul – affirmation of independent thought opposed to a conviction that translates its intellect through a religious ‘framework’,¹⁰ as Ward characterises *Helbeck*’s religious sensibility. This analysis and the conflict between *Helbeck* and Laura rework aspects of Amiel’s perceptions of Catholicism’s irreconcilable conflicts with both individual conscience and a philosophic approach. His views set out in the *Journal* were a specific response to Eugene Pelletan’s *Profession de foi du dix-neuvième Siècle*, which celebrated Pelletan’s optimism about humanity’s future development. Amiel, a Protestant, was unconvinced:

[...], always the same absence of moral personality, the same obtuseness of conscience, which has never recognised sin present in the will, which places evil outside of man, moralises from outside, [...]. What is at fault is the philosophic superficiality of France, [...] due to a life fashioned by Catholicism and by absolute monarchy.

Catholic thought cannot conceive of personality as supreme and conscious of itself. Its boldness and its weakness came from one and the same cause - from an absence of the sense of responsibility, from that vassal state of conscience which knows only slavery or anarchy, which proclaims but does not obey the law, because the law is outside it, not within it. Another illusion is that of Quinet and Michelet, [...] whose idea is to fight Catholicism by philosophy - a philosophy which is, after all, Catholic at bottom, since it springs from anti-Catholic reaction.¹¹

Ward’s dialogue with such ideas was nuanced in both *Helbeck of Bannisdale* and in *Eleanor*. Friedland’s monologue in *Helbeck* seems on one level to respond to Amiel’s arguments. Friedland too rejects ‘the personal abjection of Catholicism’ and celebrates the individual responsibility for conscience, ‘seen in the best moderns’:

[...] the old terrors and eschatologies are no more. We fear evil for quite different reasons; we think of it in quite different ways. And the net result in the best moderns is at once a great elaboration of conscience – and an almost intoxicating sense of freedom.¹²

¹⁰ MW HB, IV. 3. p.276.

¹¹ HFA JI, 1 August 1853, p.42.

¹² MW HB, V. 1. p.332.

His championship of the historicist and philosophic cause reflects Amiel's argument that the terms of the religious critique are determined by its rejection of Catholicism's demands. However, Ward has added to Friedland's arguments a sense that the new religion cannot yet replicate what Catholicism offers, a symbolic language for the human relationship with God. In other ways too, the novel is distanced from Amiel's critique of Catholicism. Even while using the terms of the 'old eschatology', Helbeck himself paints a very different picture of the internality of the individual Catholic attitude to sin and the human conscience from that identified by Amiel's Protestant antipathy:

[...] what must that sin be that demands the Crucifixion? Of what revolt, what ruin is not the body capable? I knew – for I had gone down into the very depths.¹³

In *Eleanor*, the critique of Catholicism centres around its political function as a conservative moral force implicated in absolutist government and opposed to liberal values. It focuses on Amiel's criticism of 'that vassal state of conscience which knows only slavery or anarchy, which proclaims but does not obey the law,' and his identification of this aspect of Catholicism with 'absolute monarchy'. As in Friedland's monologue, the aspects of Catholicism perceived as addressing human psychological and emotional needs, Amiel's 'eternal gospel', are disentangled from their Catholic context and transfigured by the narrative into new, unorthodox rites where humans fulfil priestly functions for each other.

The increased emphasis on an analysis of the validity and influence of Catholicism's claims was, no doubt, a result of Ward's efforts to understand her father's fluctuating commitment to the Catholic Church, and the effect these had on family. Janet Trevelyan's account of her mother's work on *Helbeck* suggests that Ward's apparent fascination with Catholicism was the object of some conjecture. Ward wrote to George Trevelyan (her son-in-law):

Catholicism has an enormous attraction for me, - yet I could no more be a Catholic than a Mahometan.¹⁴

However, John Sutherland hypothesises that Ward's intense interest may have reflected a further stage in her own spiritual quest:

¹³ MW HB, IV. 4, p.304.

¹⁴ Janet Penrose Trevelyan, *The Life of Mrs Humphry Ward*, p.151.

Although Mary Ward masked it as ‘research’, it is clear that, while writing *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, she was studying Catholicism with a view to possible conversion. [...]. What finally stopped her (and Laura) going all the way was confession. This ‘uncovering of the inner life and the yielding of personality’ constituted a last step she could not take. There was something buried deep in her that no other person must know.¹⁵

Ward’s letter to William Addis (a Catholic convert and Professor of Theology at Oxford) quoted above by Sutherland suggests that as well as commenting on the accuracy of her depiction of Catholic practice and faith, Addis may well have probed how far her interest was purely daughterly or professional. Trevelyan quotes a letter from Ward to her father which identifies ‘the terror of confession’ and the ‘yielding of personality’ as the points ‘on which Laura’s final breach with Helbeck would turn’.¹⁶ Ward’s attitude to Catholicism’s practice of confession was complex. At one point in *Helbeck*, she analyses Laura’s longing for, yet repulsion by Catholicism as follows, in an echo of her response to Addis, quoted above:

It was what seemed to her the spiritual intrusiveness of Catholicism, its perpetual uncovering of the soul—its disrespect for the secrets of personality—its humiliation of the will—that made it most odious in the eyes of this daughter of a modern world, which finds in the development and ennobling of our human life its most characteristic faith.¹⁷

Her distaste for Catholicism’s ‘uncovering of the soul’ contrasts intriguingly with her attitude towards other people’s spiritual confessionals, most notably the often mentioned St. Augustine, Obermann, and the author with whom she compares these spiritual works, Frédéric Amiel. Her introduction to her translation of the *Journal Intime* emphasises the importance of the confessional aspects of Amiel’s work as a way of understanding human psychology and the psychology of his era, reflecting her interest in the context of any testimony, explored in the previous chapter. The *Journal* was:

[...] the confidant of his most private and intimate thoughts; [...], the voice of grief, of self-examination and confession, [...].¹⁸

¹⁵ John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian, Pre-eminent Edwardian*, p.194, quoting a letter from Ward to William Addis, 4 Feb 1898.

¹⁶ Trevelyan, p.147.

¹⁷ MW HB, IV. 3. p.278.

¹⁸ HFA JI, Mary Ward’s ‘Introduction’, p.vii.

He is the successor of St Augustine and Dante; he is the brother of Obermann and Maurice de Guérin. What others have done for the spiritual life of other generations he has done for the spiritual life of this, [...] and the wealth of [...] psychological faculty which he has brought to the analysis of human feeling [...].¹⁹

Yet, as Peterson shows, she considered that:

[...] as a nation we are not fond of direct ‘confessions’. It is in books like *Sartor Resartus* [...] or *Marius* [...] that the future student [...] will have to look for what is deepest, most intimate, and most real [...].²⁰

Her fascination with confessional writing as a tool to probe psychology, yet distaste for its potential personal application, and her ambivalence towards Catholicism produce a convoluted variant of confession in *Eleanor*. Eleanor’s unorthodox confession to Fr Benecke, an excommunicated priest, secures her redemptive acts towards Lucy and Manisty, and allows Fr Benecke to retrieve his dignity as a priest. Through it Eleanor finds her own unorthodox route to unorthodox faith before she dies. Yet it is a confession which explicitly negates its sacramental role because Eleanor is not a Catholic and Fr Benecke is an apostate.

In addition to Amiel’s language of doubt and self-distrust, there is one further recurrent idea within Amiel’s *Journal* which finds echoes in Ward’s religious novels. Amiel returns frequently to a consideration of whether doing right or knowing right is the most important of human activities:

[...]; man *becomes* man only by the intelligence, but he *is* man only by the heart. Knowledge, love, power, - there is the complete life.²¹

His contrast between the intellectual and the emotional is one that resonated for Ward personally, and its influence can be seen at work in *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, where Laura’s actions are determined by her heart, both in her loyalty to her father and to Helbeck, without her knowledge and intelligence having been able to shape the debate between herself and her lover. In *Eleanor*, Manisty is portrayed as a thinker lacking any emotional commitment to his

¹⁹ HFA JI, Mary Ward’s ‘Introduction’, p.xxxvii.

²⁰ William S Peterson, *Victorian Heretic: Mrs Humphry Ward’s Robert Elsmere*, quoting Ward’s 1885 review of *Marius the Epicurean*, p.16.

²¹ HFA JI, 7 April 1851, p.12.

thoughts, whereas Eleanor and Lucy both combine shaping intelligence with loyalty to the causes they espouse and the people they love.

The Influence of *Amiel's Journal* on *Helbeck of Bannisdale*

While continuing to portray the experience of doubt in traditional understandings of Christianity derived from *Amiel's Journal Intime*, *Helbeck of Bannisdale* and *Eleanor* shift their focus to the mysterious gaps which open between people where belief and unbelief confront each other. The incommunicability of deepest human experiences is a theme emphasised by Amiel:

[...] all these belong to our secret, and are almost all incommunicable and intransmissible, even when we try to speak of them, and even when we write them down. What is most precious in us never shows itself, never finds an issue even in the closest intimacy.²²

The human challenge of overcoming this perception, of translating each other, is a major subject of these novels. Incomprehension of cultural background, or rejection of the alteration to a former joint understanding intensify the challenge. In *Robert Elsmere*, Robert and Catherine's relationship survived the collapse of its foundation of a joint faith. *Helbeck of Bannisdale* explores how far it is possible to bridge an even more profound chasm between the dogmatic demanding faith of Catholicism and none.

The book revisits *Robert Elsmere's* conflict between orthodoxy and a new liberalism, with a change in the protagonists' positions, reflecting the conflicts of Thomas Arnold's marriage, where it was the male who was the defender of orthodoxy and the female who opposed it. Laura, the heroine of the novel, becomes the female vehicle for Amiel-like fluctuations of attitude, self-interrogation, and refusal to compromise with ideals to secure a loving relationship. Her conflict lies between her loyalty to her father's advocacy of freedom of conscience and her love for Helbeck, and recognition of the seductive appeal of his austere Catholicism.

²² HFA JI, 27 October 1856, p.58.

Ward's Letters to her Father during Revisions of *Helbeck of Bannisdale*

Trevelyan was convinced that no unbridgeable gaps in understanding affected Ward's relationship with Thomas Arnold:

She loved to discuss these matters with her father, from whom she had no secrets, in spite of their divergencies of view; [....].²³

However, letters between them during the writing of *Helbeck of Bannisdale* show how anxious Ward was about her father's likely reactions. As she was trying to finalise the text of *Helbeck* in the spring of 1898, her letters reveal her sense that the book confronted the gap between his beliefs and her own, an attempt to find an acceptable mutual translation of their separate positions, an acceptance and resolution of their differences. They express her passionate need to secure his assent, not only to the justice of her portrayal of Catholicism's demands and practice, but also to the validity of the rationalist intellectual positions she had adopted. The words 'anxiety' and 'violence', and their variants occur repeatedly. The letters reveal a woman waiting 'anxiously' for her father's letters or those of Catholic family friends, such as Addis or Lord Acton (a politically liberal Catholic and historian), with their comments and reactions:

I am anxiously expecting Mr Addis's last letter. There are many points of Catholic practice in Books IV and V in which I may have made mistakes, [....].²⁴

Ward reveals a vigilant sensitivity to what she perceived, on re-reading the proofs of her novel, as the emotional violence hovering behind and within her dramatisation of the argument between Catholicism and rationalism, and a wish to soften this to make it more acceptable to her father. Her representations of Laura's position and that of Dr Friedland, the articulator of the 'religion of the free mind' are beset with concerns about the 'violence' of their views.²⁵

²³ Trevelyan, p.146.

²⁴ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, April 7th 1898.

²⁵ MW HB, V. 1. p.332.

I have been anxiously softening down a number of passages that seemed to me too violent. As I told you [...] I felt bound [...] to let the other side of thought [Friedland's] have here and there its full and even fierce expression.²⁶ But I have softened Friedland's paragraph about Scaliger and the Jesuits [...]. And I have all but cut out Fountain's remark about the Oratory church [...]. It might have given pain, and it is only a piece of violence.²⁷

As well as cutting out earlier draft passages and sentences, and 'softening' the language, she tried to redress the balance of the novel through more positive assessments of Catholicism, and total rewriting of certain sections:

I have cut out another violent sentence or two, and put in a passage about the "treasures of Catholic experience", and now I think there is no harm in it, [...].²⁸ [...], the tone of violence is out of place and unnatural in the scholar [Friedland] and that I felt at once as soon as I saw the pages, [...]. I have now completely rewritten them, and I am sure that at any rate they are mellowed and softened; [...].²⁹

Her concern about her representation of the rationalist cause through Friedland is mentioned repeatedly in the letters, as are her efforts to make the arguments and actions of both Friedland and Laura reflect their characters, while also representing their cause fairly:

I have been at work again on Friedland's talk which does not please me at all. [...]. But it is not so much unjust to Catholicism – that can take care of itself! – as to Friedland, who is meant for a genial old person, and [...] not a mere railer.³⁰ As to the "personal abjection" par. which I have modified, "abjection" is of course a word of Catholic devotion itself, and I think that Friedland is here expressing one of the strongest feelings of non-Catholic minds.³¹ But I don't think you need be troubled about Laura's outburst on p.142. It is simply in keeping with her training and temper. Of course Grandpapa could never have expressed himself so – nor could I – [...]. But there would be no story, if these touches of violence in Laura's character were softened away.³²

As well as revealing the emotional 'violence' glimpsed in the act of suppression through these letters, the novel was for her a hazardous search for a father-daughter

²⁶ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, Easter Monday 1898.

²⁷ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, Easter Monday 1898.

²⁸ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, April 13th 1898.

²⁹ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, April 20th 1898.

³⁰ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, April 13th 1898.

³¹ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, April 13th 1898.

³² MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, April 20th 1898.

relationship which transcended differences of belief. The letters reveal Ward's determination to confront issues which might distance her from her father, and to secure an explicit understanding built on mutual respect, "through all our difference".³³

But especially do I want to know dearest what you think of it. I should like it if you felt – through all our difference – that I had tried to get at some of the finest things in Catholicism, so far as an artist may.³⁴

The letters interweave her responses to her father's criticisms with invitations to share memories of the Arnold family's Westmoreland inheritance:

Tell me how you like Daffady, and the Westmoreland scenes generally. Browhead Chapel is Cartmel Fell, though of course the lie of the valley is altered. Do you remember the old window? I wonder whether you went with me?³⁵

The book's Westmoreland setting is a reminder of the father's and daughter's familial inheritance of childhoods spent at Fox How, 'the joy of three generations'³⁶ of Arnolds, as it is lovingly described in the *Recollections*. It provided a way for Ward to involve her father in joint memories, but also provided her with a confirmation of her own radical place within the Arnold family tradition of liberal Anglicanism. The sense of family tradition and her own relationship to it forms a mysterious but dynamic component of *Helbeck's* plot, where the family tradition under consideration, that of a marginalised Catholic family, is the reverse of that of the Arnold family's Broad Church Anglicanism. The Helbeck family's marginal status does, however, reflect Thomas Arnold's unique position in relation to the very public position of the other Arnolds. The story of Helbeck's family allowed her to embrace yet critique her father's intellectual position, and it is perhaps significant that amongst the many autobiographical reverberations of the novel's plot and characterisation, Ward portrayed Helbeck's family line as doomed to extinction.

Ward's need to secure her father's acceptance of the way in which she treated issues which underlined the intellectual differences between them, so obvious in the letters, camouflages any explicit joint consideration of the emotional dynamic of the novel, the

³³ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, April 7 1898.

³⁴ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, April 7 1898.

³⁵ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, Easter Monday, 1898.

³⁶ MW Rec, Ch.II, p.24.

possibilities and pains of passionate love between two people with irreconcilable beliefs, the issue which had destroyed her parents' marriage. Where she does allude to it obliquely, it is with a distancing, archaising ['alack'], and the purported focus of the comment is on the emotional thrust of the narrative:

I am afraid the story will have struck you as very painful. Certainly it does not add to the gaiety of nations, - alack! – and I myself have been quite haunted by it [...].³⁷

and:

Now I think it is a fairly faithful picture of jarring minds, - of religion in that aspect alack! which brings not peace but a sword. It is a tragedy, in which as it seems to me the beau role is Helbeck's.³⁸

In her *Recollections*, she described the genesis of the novel as deriving from an almost impersonal interest in the marginalisation of older Catholic families.

The relation between [...] a family, [...] with its own [...] inherited consciousness of an unbroken loyalty to a once persecuted faith – and this modern world of ours [...].³⁹

But as work on the novel progressed and the painful, personal implications of the novel became unavoidably clearer, she wrote on a later page of the *Recollections* that:

My first anxiety was as to my father and [...] I was seized with misgivings lest certain passages in the talk of Dr Friedland, who [...] is made the spokesman in the *intellectual* case against Catholicism, should wound or distress him.⁴⁰

The measured memories of the *Recollections* translate the 'anxiety', 'pain' and 'violence' of the letters into 'misgivings', but even this more anodyne word reflects Ward's concern about the cost of translating ideas into a form which could engage or challenge feeling, the 'human and emotional' cost of an 'intellectual process',⁴¹ the very issue which had been the catalyst for *Robert Elsmere* ten years earlier. *Helbeck of Bannisdale* provides a proof of how

³⁷ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, April 13th 1898.

³⁸ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, Easter Monday, 1898.

³⁹ MW Rec, Ch.XV, p.314.

⁴⁰ MW Rec, Ch.XV, p.316.

⁴¹ MW Rec, Ch.XII, p.231

seriously Ward engaged with her father's 'intellectual process'. The conclusion of the novel in Laura's death is testimony to her intention to be unflinching in portraying the 'human and emotional' cost of intellectual difference.

According to the *Recollections*, she was 'softening' and 'improving'⁴² the proofs of the novel during April and May 1898, but, according to a letter to her father as she was travelling back from Italy for the publication of the book, she was rewriting it 'almost entirely':

Well, now, dearest, you must promise not to mind the completed form. For I have re-written it almost entirely for your dear sake – though now I am sure that what I have done is also a literary improvement.⁴³

Several letters seem to take up and respond to issues raised either by Thomas Arnold or by friends about the presentation of Catholicism in the book. Ward distanced herself from the narrator's apparent criticisms of Catholicism by re-attributing them to characters such as Laura or Friedland, but defended her characters' statements as an integral aspect of their characters, and as essential to the novel's plot. Her protests reflect the anxiety felt perhaps on her father's side and certainly by Ward herself about the justice of her portrayals:

The entourage of Bannisdale, Father Bowles, the Sisters may be thought to be too unfavourably drawn. But I have tried to shew it is as Laura sees them. When she is no longer indirectly in conflict with them she can make friends with them and see them more justly. And the effect they produce upon her prejudice is necessary to the story.⁴⁴

Her final letter states that she has had to finalise the proofs without having received his 'last suggestions'. 'Perhaps you hardly realise how anxiously I have been waiting for what you have to say',⁴⁵ she wrote as she prepared to return home for publication.

⁴² MW Rec, Ch.XV, p.316.

⁴³ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, 7 April 1898.

⁴⁴ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, Easter Monday, 1898.

⁴⁵ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, April 20th 1898.

The Translation of Signs and Symbols

In *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, the lives of Helbeck and Laura are shown exercising Amiel's 'inevitable and silent propaganda'⁴⁶ for each other, despite their incomprehension or rejection of each other's emotional and intellectual positions. The agnostic Laura perceives the seductive virtues of Helbeck's life of austerity and faith; but articulation of that faith and veneration of its symbols antagonise her. Unable to fully articulate her commitment to rational secularism or her emotional rejection of Catholicism, her silence as she listens to Helbeck seems to be reacting to something other than what is being said - 'absorbed in a passionate prescience of things more vital yet to come [...].'⁴⁷ She is forced to fall back on a language of symbolic action. Her death, rather than her life, becomes her obscure 'unspoken sermon',⁴⁸ and a sign to compete, within the novel, with the power of the image of the Crucified Christ. For both characters, the weight of emotion attached to their individual intellectual positions, and the familial loyalties which fuel and define such emotions, are untranslatable, and provide yet another autobiographical resonance within the novel. Attempts at communication are disrupted by incommunicable emotion. The gap is filled by obsessively watching and attempting to decode each other's ambiguous signs and gestures:

Laura stood opposite to Helbeck [...]. Once [...] he lifted his head and found that she was looking at him and not at Augustina. Her expression was so forlorn, and difficult to read, that he felt a vague uneasiness.⁴⁹

The attempt to find ways to communicate, relying on the making or translation of 'obscure signs', or on a search for a symbolic expression, forms one of the most powerful motifs of the novel. Christ's crucifixion provides proof, for Helbeck, of God's love and initiated and explains his passionate, mystical adherence to his faith:

'Laura, since that night I have been my Lord's. It seemed to me that He had come Himself – come from His cross – to raise two souls from the depths of Hell.'⁵⁰

⁴⁶ HFA JI, 2 May 1852, p.24.

⁴⁷ MW HB, IV. 4. p.302.

⁴⁸ HFA JI, 2 May 1852, p.25.

⁴⁹ MW HB, V. 4. p.382.

⁵⁰ MW HB, IV. 4. p.304.

On the secular side of the debate signs are absent. Friedland demands, but cannot identify, a symbol for the new free faith with an equivalent power to that of the sacrifice of the Mass. For Laura too, her step-mother's death is a sign of a negation of meaning and significance, either in the efficacy of prayer, or the mercy of God. The signs that human beings give each other are beset by misapprehensions. Mistranslated or untranslatable minute movements, facial expressions, and cryptic utterances assume immense, but sometimes misleading significance for both main characters, and their translations into assumptions of dominance or disengagement prove tragically unreliable. This reliance on fragile momentary interpretation also poses questions about the immutable significance given to the Crucifixion of Christ and the ambiguous human parallel which Laura's self-sacrifice assumes at the close of the novel. The difficulties of translating emotion or experience into actions or words, and retranslating personal meaning from other people's signs underlie the argument of the book, whose ending suggests the limits of translation in its equivocal and contradictory interpretations. Laura cannot translate and refuses to learn Helbeck's language for understanding emotional and intellectual experience: Helbeck cannot reach out for a significance beyond the symbols of his own language. Friedland's paradoxical statement at the end of the novel that Laura's death is 'a blind witness to august things' suggests the failure to understand the significance of emotional truths confronting them both.

As considered earlier, Amiel had argued a 'new faith must have its symbols too'.⁵¹ Laura appears to reject the sacrificial symbols of Helbeck's faith without having any alternative symbols to structure a resolution of the competing claims of her loyalties. However, the conclusion of the novel reveals that she has internalised Helbeck's sacrificial symbol, even while her last letter attempts to obscure her suicide's significance as a sacrifice to a human love.

The Two Monologues: Helbeck

In one of the letters to her father, Ward had implied that she wanted to achieve a balance between two 'conversations' in sequential chapters of the novel.

As I told you [...] I felt bound [...] to let the other side of thought [Friedland's] have here and there its full and even fierce expression.⁵²

⁵¹ HFA JI, 27 December 1880, p.283.

⁵² MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, Easter Monday, 1898.

The first conversation is between Laura and Helbeck (Book 4, chapter 4), where he traces his spiritual history, and the second, Friedland's conversation with an academic colleague (Book 5, chapter 1), an analysis of the history of Catholicism and objections to it, is also directed at Laura. Both Helbeck and Friedland each present their arguments in a virtual monologue, with only the most minimal interjection from their interlocutor. Helbeck's monologue recounts a passionate, almost visionary spiritual experience, framed by the 'facts' of sin, guilt and forgiveness. Friedland's monologue is transformed from an academic analysis into a 'prophetic' anticipation of spiritual adjustment as humanity abandons the narratives of the Fall and Redemption, and adopts the religion of the free mind and conscience. Both reflect the entry in *Amiel's Journal*, quoted again below, in their conceptualising of self, the process of thought, its monologic nature, and the problems of communication, particularly in relation to Ward's depiction of Laura's reactions:

In all the chief matters of life we are alone, and our true history is scarcely ever deciphered by others. The chief part of the drama is a monologue, or rather an intimate debate between God, our conscience, and ourselves. Tears, griefs, depressions, disappointments, irritations, good and evil thoughts, decisions, uncertainties, deliberations, all these belong to our secret, and are almost all incommunicable and intransmissible, even when we try to speak of them, and even when we write them down. What is most precious in us never shows itself, never finds an issue even in the closest intimacy. Only a part of it reaches our consciousness, it scarcely enters into action except in prayer, and is perhaps only perceived by God, [...].⁵³

Amiel's perception that the deepest truths of spiritual experience are incommunicable is translated by Ward into descriptions of the misunderstandings and mistaken expectations which result from each of the monologues. The balance of the two chapters typifies the way in which the novel deals as justly as possible with the position of both a Catholic and a free-thinker, even if Laura, the silent participant in each conversation, remains an enigma.

In describing Helbeck's attempt to win Laura's assent to Catholicism's claims, Ward drew parallels between Helbeck's response to Christ's crucifixion and Laura's subsequent decision that their love is impossible and that suicide is the only possible, though tragically ironic, response. While Helbeck wrestles to persuade Laura of Catholicism's emotional truth, she perceives, in his account of his spiritual agony, the impossibility of being

⁵³ HFA JI, 27 October 1856, p.58.

persuaded. Helbeck's catechism to her and to himself on the proper response to the crucifixion also emphasises the doubts and hypotheses underlying faith:

Is the world under sin — and has a God died for it? All my nature — my intellect, my heart, my will, answer “Yes.” But if a God died, [...] what must that sin be that demands the Crucifixion? [...] And if He died, are we not His from the first moment of our birth—His first of all? [...]. All these mortifications, and penances, and self-denials that you hate so, [...] spring from two great facts—Sin and the Crucifixion. But, Laura, are they *true*?"

[...] Laura knew well that his life was poured into each word. She herself did not - could not - speak. But it seemed to her strangely that some spring within her was broken—some great decision had been taken, by whom she could not tell.⁵⁴

Laura's response to this catechism is obscure even to herself, and seems to rob her of any autonomy in determining her fate. Her unwillingness and inability to communicate are emphasised 'she [...] did not - could not speak'. She appears as a passive victim of her own thought processes: things 'seemed' to her, through an indeterminate apprehension of something 'broken', and a 'great decision [...] taken' by an unidentifiable agency. The narrator withdraws from interpretation or translation, and the reader is left to infer that the process of decision makes Laura an alien to herself, and to Helbeck's hopes. The sentence echoes an earlier description of the impersonal power of her 'instinct' to subvert her human longing to love Helbeck:

Simply a revolt and repulsion that seemed to be more than and outside herself — something independent and unconquerable, of which she was the mere instrument.⁵⁵

The 'great decision', unattributable and mysterious, and the image of the broken inner spring consolidate the cumulative language of Laura's passivity and victimhood before a conflict of ideas, which can for her only be translated into a conflict of tenacious emotions, a process which ends in her suicide.

The mismatches between intention, expectation, appearance and inner reality also reflect one of Amiel's psychological perceptions about the signs which people use to conceal their emotions as well as to reveal them to each other:

⁵⁴ MW HB, IV. 4. pp.304, 305.

⁵⁵ MW HB, IV. 3. p.276.

But, as always happens, the appearance is exactly the contrary of the reality, and my outward life the reverse of my true and deepest aspiration [...]. Pride and delicacy of soul, timidity of heart, have made me thus do violence to all my instincts and invert the natural order of my life. It is not astonishing that I should be unintelligible to others. In fact I have always avoided what attracted me, and turned my back upon the point where secretly I desired to be.⁵⁶

The earlier quotation lamented the limits of self-expression and self-understanding. The latter quotation suggests the self-destructive psychological manoeuvres used by the mind to obscure itself and its motives. The decision which is imposed by some unwilling part of Laura's psyche echoes Amiel's grief at his self-destructive 'violence' to instinct. Throughout Helbeck's recital of his spiritual history, the narrator describes Laura's ambiguous, minimal outward physical reactions, leaving both the reader and Helbeck to infer a 'reality' of thought and emotion to Laura which may be revealed or disguised by her 'appearance'. Helbeck's exposure of his intense inward life is interspersed with the narrator's descriptions of Laura's unnoticed or misinterpreted reactions:

But Helbeck did not notice the sudden tremulous movement of the hands lying in his.⁵⁷

Her responses are described as either minimal or as negatives of a response: 'She moved imperceptibly, but she did not speak.'⁵⁸ They reveal only her anticipation of something other than the immediate reality of Helbeck's self-revelations and demands that she respond:

She herself neither moved nor spoke; she was all hearing, absorbed in a passionate prescience of things more vital yet to come.⁵⁹

The way in which Ward describes Laura's body language is neutral; the signs disguise or merely designate possibilities. As in Amiel's analysis, the 'appearance' is inconsistent with 'the reality', and 'the reverse of [her] true and deepest aspiration'. Throughout the description of Helbeck's spiritual history, the complex movements of Laura's mind and emotions are, as in Amiel's assessment of his own behaviour, 'unintelligible' and left for the reader to infer.

⁵⁶ HFA JI, 12 September 1861, p.81.

⁵⁷ MW HB, IV. 4. p.302.

⁵⁸ MW HB, IV. 4. p.305.

⁵⁹ MW HB, IV. 4. p.302.

The description of her actions emphasises a growing distance and negation ('she slowly drew away, she shook her head, her eyes were full of tears, she shrank before it'⁶⁰). Where she does offer a response it is indirect and unintelligible, emphasising the anxieties both to be understood and also to withhold meaning, which later reach their climax in her suicide letter.

Without any direct answer to his appeal or his threat, she lifted to him a look that was far from easy to read – a look of passionate sadness and of pure love.⁶¹

The implications of her mysterious look are withheld and uninterpretable. While Helbeck's language deals explicitly with his emotions, Ward's evocation of Laura's state of mind is through negation. There are no comments from the narrator to suggest whether Laura's reactions stem from sympathetic understanding, rejection, or grief. It is only through this absent interpretation that the reader can infer that Laura's reactions thwart both Helbeck's and her own desires. As in Amiel's analysis, her unintelligibility reflects a nature unable to evade passivity and to lay claim to what it 'secretly desires'. Even the nature of the passive decision which takes place within Laura's mind during the one-sided conversation remains unarticulated until Laura is alone.

The reader is only made aware through the cumulative impact of silences and evasion of corroboration that Helbeck's interpretation of her responses is based on misapprehension. As with Amiel, the reader is not astonished that Laura remains 'unintelligible to others', and infers that Laura's reactions are to the unspoken undercurrent of emotional assumption below the surface of Helbeck's spiritual history. The elusiveness and mystery of their interaction, and its revelation of the significance of the unspoken creates a sense of the fatality determining Laura's reactions and actions. Helbeck's 'strange look of power – almost of triumph'⁶² is based, ironically, on an assumption that 'the appearance is exactly the contrary of the reality', and that her 'outward life [is] the reverse of [her] true and deepest aspiration'. His hypothesis that her rejection of Catholicism is due to its having 'gained some footing'⁶³ in her heart and the narrator's brief sentences describing Laura's outward reactions suggest his misapprehension to the reader, but Laura's movements of feeling and thought remain obscure – unintelligible - until her final pronouncement to herself at the end of the day:

⁶⁰ MW HB, IV. 4. p.306.

⁶¹ MW HB, IV. 4. p.306.

⁶² MW HB, IV. 4. p.306.

⁶³ MW HB, IV. 4. p.306.

“It would be a crime - a *crime* - to marry him”, she said, with a dull resolve that was beyond weeping.⁶⁴

Her conclusion re-echoes Amiel’s perception that ‘the appearance is exactly the contrary of the reality’, and a ‘reverse of my true and deepest aspiration’. It is also based on an analysis which is never shared with either Helbeck or the reader.

The Two Monologues: Friedland

In the following chapter, the narrator describes Friedland’s normal academic style as one of ‘paradox and ellipse’,⁶⁵ a form of verbal obscurity parallel to the indecipherability of visual signs which characterises the previous chapter’s description of Laura’s reactions to Helbeck’s spiritual history. The narrator then identifies Friedland’s mutation of tone into the ‘prophetic, pontifical’⁶⁶ when he embarks on what is presented as a monologue, an impassioned analysis of Catholicism’s weaknesses and strengths, along with an apologia for a new ‘religion of the free mind’.⁶⁷ The narrator also suggests that Friedland’s performance is directed at Laura’s confusion of mind and emotion:

And often, as Molly [his daughter] noticed, with a slight instinctive gesture – a fatherly turning towards that golden spot made by Laura’s hair among the shadows.⁶⁸

The narrator’s comments continue to emphasise the indirectness of the communication being undertaken between Friedland and Laura, the disguises of tone and ostensible audience which he adopts, and Laura’s enigmatic withdrawal from both eye contact or even passive participation. The intermediary, his daughter Molly (‘Friedland went on enlarging, with his hand on Molly’s head- looking into her quiet eyes’⁶⁹) and Molly’s sensibility as the translator and go-between for her friend and her father becomes the substitute for the narrator. It is Molly’s memory of her father’s conversation which takes over from the narrator’s presentation as the monologue progresses. Her reactions translate Laura’s possible reactions to Friedland’s arguments. Laura’s reactions themselves are not described. She is even more

⁶⁴ MW HB, IV. 4. p.307.

⁶⁵ MW HB, V. 1. p.329.

⁶⁶ MW HB, V. 1. p.329.

⁶⁷ MW HB, V. 1. p.332.

⁶⁸ MW HB, V. 1. p.329.

⁶⁹ MW HB, V. 1. p.330.

enigmatic in this scene than in the previous chapter where her indecipherable physical reactions to Helbeck's history were described. She is a suppressed presence, yet she is the focus of both Friedland's and Molly's consciousnesses:

Laura, in her dark corner, had almost disappeared from sight. Molly, [...], turned now and then from her friend to her father. She would give Friedland sometimes a gentle restraining touch – her lips shaped themselves, as though she said, 'Take care!'⁷⁰

Friedland's meditations, supplying the perspective and arguments which Laura cannot provide, focus, in their apologia for the new 'religion of the free mind', on a missing 'sign', one not yet determined but which must be of equivalent emotional power to the sacrifice of the Mass:

'Catholicism would have disappeared long ago but for the Mass. [...].
What will the religion of the free mind discover to put in its place? Something, it must find. For [...] the needs of the soul remain the same.....'⁷¹

His monologue reflects some of Amiel's reservations about Catholicism's diminishment of individual conscience. He rejects 'the personal abjection of Catholicism' and dwells on the transformation of moral ideas which, he argues, is happening throughout the world beyond the Catholic Church:

[...] what one sees going on in the modern world is a vast transformation of moral ideas [...]. Beside the older ethical fabric — [...] - a new is rising. [...]. And the net result in the best moderns is at once a great elaboration of conscience — and an almost intoxicating sense of freedom.⁷²

While he dwells on the historical context for a changing 'ethical fabric', and the hold of the symbolic ritual of the Mass, he celebrates the emerging conceptions of an 'elaboration of conscience' and 'intoxicating sense of freedom', reminiscent of Elsmere's Pentecostal experience of a 'new inrushing sense [...] of liberty – of inward expansion'.

His ideas echo, but redefine and reformulate more optimistically those of Amiel's meditation considered earlier, on the needs of the 'new faith' for symbols to interpret the

⁷⁰ MW HB, V. 1. pp.331, 332.

⁷¹ MW HB, V. 1. p.332.

⁷² MW HB, V. 1. p.332.

deepest and most serious needs of mankind. Where Amiel sees the symbolic language of the Christian narrative of the Fall and Redemption as an expression of psychological reality, 'sensitiveness of feeling, the sense of sin, the desire for pardon, the thirst for holiness',⁷³ Friedland defines the new religion of the free mind as one which must dispense with the narrative of the Fall and original sin, even while it retains some symbol of sacrificial power analogous to the Mass. Where Amiel locates the need for symbols in sin's need for forgiveness, Friedland locates the same mystical need in the facts of 'pain and death'.⁷⁴ But he goes on to argue that a solution to these ineffable needs will be found, his words suggesting that the unknown and transcendent can only be approached through symbols:

But all the secrets and formulae of a new mystical union have to be worked out. And so long as pain and death remain, humanity will always be at heart a mystic!"⁷⁵

It is during these closing thoughts about the new freedom of human conscience and rejection of the narrative of the Fall, that Laura is described emerging from her seclusion:

[...] the head among the shadows had emerged. The beautiful eyes, so full – unconsciously full - of sad and torturing thought, rested upon the speaker. Friedland became sensitively conscious of them. [...]. The negations of his talk began to trouble him – in sight of this young grief and passion. [...].
When Friedland and his wife were left alone, Friedland said with timidity:
'[...] I would willingly brace that poor child's mind a little. And it seemed to me she listened.'

Just as Laura's reactions to Helbeck proved unreadable to him, her reactions remain enigmatic to Friedland, and open to his misconstruction. To both men her repressed signs of emotion or thought prove misleading. Following the conversation with Helbeck, which he thought promised so much, her decision was to reject a life framed by Catholicism's powerful symbolic language. After his bravura rhetoric and analysis, Friedland discovers that, rather than finding her mind braced, Laura sought out the comforts of the Benediction service, the experience Helbeck would be having at Bannisdale. The interplay between perception of Laura's feelings and their actuality echoes again Amiel's experience of 'appearance' being the 'contrary of reality'.

⁷³ HFA JI, 27 December 1880, p.283.

⁷⁴ MW HB, V. 1. p.333.

⁷⁵ MW HB, V. 1. p.333.

Last words

The sign that Laura ultimately decides to give the Friedlands in her suicide letter demonstrates her difficulties in explaining her own predicament, and predicting the repercussions of her action on others, except in sudden moments of emotional perception. Amiel enunciated what seems to have been a widespread Victorian concentration on the drama and significance of final words as an unequivocal truth:

Such words and looks are a kind of testament. They have a solemn and sacred character which is not merely an effect of our imagination. For that which is on the brink of death already participates to some extent in eternity.⁷⁶

Laura's message from beyond death is, in contrast, a withholding of meaning from her lover, and an ambiguous explanation for her friends. Its broken, jerky syntax, its repetitions and non-sequiturs, not only represent her in a moment of tragic anguish but also typify her inability to present a coherent argument to her friends and lover.

‘[...]— I sit here like a coward—but I can't go without a sign. - You wouldn't understand me—I used to be so happy as a little child—But since Papa died—since I came here—Oh! I am not angry now, not proud—no, no.—It is for love—for love.’⁷⁷

The letter is the most explicit statement of her state of mind and reasons for action in the novel. The narrator provides no further elucidation, and so it is left again to the reader to disentangle the ambiguities of her actions. Laura's aims in writing it are to provide ‘a sign’ and not a coherent ‘explanation’, and yet she hopes that this incompleteness will still gain understanding. She demands from the Friedlands a leap of understanding analogous to that required to link a religious symbol or signifier with its ‘signified’ emotional and intellectual experience.

Laura's letter and Ward's description of its aftermath focus on the demand people make of each other for ‘signs’, both personal individual signs, which the novel emphasises are intrinsically mutable and unreliable, and religious symbols, which have the resonance of significance accumulated over time. Even in this last opportunity to communicate her anguish and intentions, Laura is also haunted by the need to conceal, and a fear that her words or

⁷⁶ HFA JI, 16 December 1868, pp.145, 146.

⁷⁷ MW HB, V. 4. p.387.

actions may allow too much understanding. The very ambiguity and secrecy of her act of self-sacrifice create a mysterious space for unverifiable interpretation. Her letter refers to ‘signs’, their absence, their pre-emption, and their necessity. The sign which is absent is that of allowing her step-mother to hear of her marriage to Helbeck before her death. The letter also emphasises Laura’s fear of providing signs to Helbeck himself:

‘He must always think it was an accident - [...] But I am afraid of saying or doing something to make the others suspect.’⁷⁸

In relation to the Friedlands and to Molly, Laura writes that her letter is ‘for you three only’, because ‘[...] I can’t go without a sign. – You wouldn’t understand me.’⁷⁹ Laura’s fear of articulating ‘the voice of [her] own life, only far stronger and crueller [...]’⁸⁰, and her need to evade detection and understanding in trying to navigate her competing intellectual and emotional loyalties leave her with an ambiguous re-enactment of Christianity’s self-sacrificial central sign. She cannot ‘live a lie’,⁸¹ but her death becomes a substitute, protective lie, an ambiguous final act of self-sacrifice, a ‘sign’ designed only for the Friedlands, and excluding Helbeck.

The interchange between Dr Friedland and Helbeck the morning after Laura’s death, moves through Helbeck’s attempt to understand, one he realises will be unsuccessful (‘He approached the doctor with an uncertain step, like one finding his way in the dark’⁸²), and culminates in a series of refusals to enlighten by one or to react by the other, underlining the complexity of the human motives which prevent understanding and enforce isolation.

‘You had a letter,’ he said. ‘Is it possible that you could show it me—or any part of it? [...]’

Dr. Friedland grew pale.

‘My dear sir,’ he said, [...] ‘that letter contained a message for my daughter which was not intended for other eyes than hers. I have destroyed it.’

And then speech failed him. The old man stood in a guilty confusion.⁸³

⁷⁸ MW HB, V. 4. p.387.

⁷⁹ MW HB, V. 4. p.387.

⁸⁰ MW HB, V. 4. p.387.

⁸¹ MW HB, V. 4. p.387.

⁸² MW HB, V. 4. p.387.

⁸³ MW HB, V. 4. pp.387, 388.

Helbeck's final action, as he 'lifted his deep eyes with the steady and yet muffled gaze of one who, in the silence of the heart, lets hope go',⁸⁴ emphasises the conjunction of his capacity to see ('lifted his deep eyes') with his concealment of his own bitter comprehensions ('steady and yet muffled gaze'). From describing the limits of the sense of sight, the imagery of the sentence moves to that of hearing, where sense is denied even to internal interrogation ('in the silence of the heart, lets hope go'). The passage ends with two short statements emphasising the inadequacies and impossibility of sharing meaning either of Laura's action or Helbeck's reaction, and the mutual loneliness of those left behind: 'Not another word was said. The doctor found himself alone.'⁸⁵

Laura's action, forbidden by Catholic teaching, accumulates through her account some of the attributes of martyrdom. As well as recognising the finality of her death and its closure of the emotional turmoil of their relationship ('because death puts an *end*'), she sees her suicide as a death-transcending, self-sacrificial symbol ('it is for love - for love'), but its significance is withheld from her Catholic lover and revealed only to the agnostic Friedland family.

The Impact of Laura's Withheld Voice

It is left to the three men of the novel - the lover, dead father and surrogate father to suggest the arguments which may or may not illuminate Laura's decisions and actions. Stephen Gwynn quotes from Ward's account of her rationalised perspective on a novel, whose plot, characterisation and language all suggest the tensions and ambitions which lay behind her decision to write so personally:

Suppose, therefore, [...] this triumphant weakness, this 'dying to live' were given to the woman, who yet, as standing for modern civilisation, and the ideas on which it is built, would have in truth the strong and conquering rôle? Suppose to her were assigned the same instinctive loyalty to something greater than herself, which she cannot expound or analyse, but which she *feels*, for which she can die,- as that which made the tragedy and the greatness of the Catholic story? [...]. Let her represent the same dumb clinging, a clinging of the heart - to an idea; place on her lips that same

⁸⁴ MW HB, V. 4. p.388.

⁸⁵ MW HB, V. 4. p.388.

pitiful cry of tortured but inexorable loyalty [...]; but let it be in the interest of that order of thought which is opposed to Catholicism in a life-and-death struggle [...].⁸⁶

Ward's analysis of the impulses of the inarticulate religious martyr (instinctive, dumb clinging [...] of the heart, inexorable loyalty) is transferred to Laura, raised as a critic of religion and of its demands on the individual conscience. As in *Robert Elsmere*, intellectual revolt is transmuted by the analogies of language, allusion and metaphor into an experience similar to Christian spiritual aspiration, experience, and self-sacrifice. It is also haunted by echoes of Amiel's psychological predicament both in the divisions within the consciousness of each of the protagonists, and in Laura's case, the terror of the psychic self-destruction entailed in any self-surrender. In Ward's hands, it becomes a narrative of whether the independent, instinctively agnostic Laura can renounce such instincts to become a Catholic. Like most of Ward's heroines in her religious novels, Laura refuses to change her beliefs for love, and chooses to renounce both Helbeck and her own life. The ambiguities of Laura's sign of suicide are reflected in the comments which the narrator chooses to include. In Friedland's eyes, Laura's death becomes, in its internal contradictions, and even in its self-incomprehension, a symbol of the transcendent, 'a blind witness to august things.'⁸⁷ In relation to Helbeck, Ward describes Laura's death as 'a last irrevocable submission',⁸⁸ an ambiguity which embraces the sexual and the spiritual.

Laura's inarticulate resistance to Catholicism reflected Julia Arnold's 'instinctive dread of Catholicism [...] ancestral and historical'.⁸⁹ Laura's character was also, in some ways, Ward's own. Her descriptions of her own and Laura's self-education are hauntingly similar. Laura's, in Cambridge, was 'a thing of shreds and patches, managed by herself throughout';⁹⁰ Ward's, in Oxford, was 'a great voyage of discovery, organised mainly by myself'.⁹¹ Ward's decision to place an explicit articulation of her own intellectual position at one remove from the novel's foreground narrative, the conflict between Helbeck and Laura, suggests the complex tensions she herself experienced in reconciling her attitudes to her father's faith, to her mother's emotional rejection of it, and to her own more nuanced intellectual rejection. Like Amiel, the novel suppresses its author's views and makes her

⁸⁶ Mary Ward, quoted in Stephen Gwynn, *Mrs Humphry Ward*, p.64.

⁸⁷ MW HB, V. 4. p.389.

⁸⁸ MW HB, V. 4. p.386.

⁸⁹ MW Rec, Ch.I, p.21.

⁹⁰ MW HB, I. 2. p.56.

⁹¹ MW Rec, Ch.VI, p.102.

emotions ‘unintelligible to others.’⁹² Even the narrator’s role becomes ambiguously suspended or emphatically absent during the monologues. The depth of Ward’s views can perhaps be detected through Laura’s suicide, and the anxiety about the revelation of pain and violence betrayed by her letters.

Her approach means that the case for her father’s Catholic faith is advocated and Laura’s critique suppressed, and expressed only through an alternative father figure, Dr Friedland, and his interpretation of the views of Laura’s dead father. Laura, deprived both of an intellectual understanding which would reinforce her emotional commitment to ‘the religion of the freedom of the mind’, and unable to free herself of her instinctive, inherited rejection of the ‘great visible system’ of Catholicism and its symbolic language, is left without the means to bridge the chasm between herself and her lover.

Ward presents Helbeck’s and Laura’s positions in ways which echo Amiel’s resolution of the dichotomies of intelligence and feeling faced by human beings: man *becomes* man only by the intelligence, but he *is* man only by the heart.⁹³ Here is Ward’s description of Helbeck’s intellectual and emotional nature, emphasising the framework for thought provided by Catholic tradition and its interplay with feeling:

Helbeck [...] had been trained by Jesuit teachers; he had lived and thought; his mind had a framework. [...]. But he was governed by heart and imagination no less than Laura. A serviceable intelligence had been used simply to strengthen the claims of feeling and faith.⁹⁴

In contrast, Laura’s valuation of freedom from such constraints is described as having no roots in any knowledge of rationalist criticism, but motivated by an emotional loyalty to it:

[...] Laura [...] represented forces of intelligence, of analysis, of criticism, of which in themselves she knew little or nothing, except so far as they affected all her modes of feeling. [...]. But when in this new conflict—a conflict of instincts, of the deepest tendencies of two natures — she tried to lay hold upon the rational life, to help herself by it, and from it, it failed her everywhere.⁹⁵

⁹² HFA JI, 12 September 1861, p.81.

⁹³ HFA JI, 7 April 1851, p.12.

⁹⁴ MW HB, IV. 3. pp.276, 277.

⁹⁵ MW HB, IV. 4. Ch.3, p.277.

Laura represents a secularising prioritising of reason and intellect, which, ironically, she cannot analyse in order to justify her position in any explicit way. She has been brought up by her father to believe in reason feelingly, a problematic education described by Friedland as follows:

‘He makes of Laura a child of Knowledge, a child of Freedom, a child of Revolution – without an ounce of training to fit her for the part, [....].’⁹⁶

And:

‘Her reason refuses them [Catholic claims] – but why? She cannot tell. For Heaven’s sake, why do we leave our children’s minds empty like this? If you believe, my good friend, Educate! And if you doubt, still more – Educate! Educate!’⁹⁷

Because of the sensitive nature of the novel’s theme, and in advance of the alterations to the second draft already considered, Ward had altered the first draft to avoid causing her father any pain. John Sutherland argues that the sensitive personal issues included:

[....] a gallery of gullible, ignorant, and sinister Catholics in her cast. Even more sensitive was the love-relationship at the core of the novel; the generation gap and the strong hint of incest were suggestive of a father-daughter passion. It was not something to make a Catholic father with a famous free-thinking daughter easy – especially as that father had recently married a younger woman.⁹⁸

However it is clear from Ward’s letters that her overt concern was to be just to her father’s intellectual position and her own, without causing pain or rupturing the relationship. What is intriguing is the deference to the passion of her father’s beliefs which the novel’s structure creates. The personal, familial nature of Ward’s project intersects with a tragic vision of the fatality of ideas. The book is a statement of the irreconcilability of the two positions intellectually, but, there is, I would argue, a subtext, not of incest, but of submission to the suppression of emotional pain expected of her, and made explicit through the repeated ‘alacks’ of Ward’s letters, and through her placatory hopes:

⁹⁶ MW HB, V. 1. p.315.

⁹⁷ MW HB, V. 1. p.316.

⁹⁸ Sutherland, p.154.

[....] I do not think that [....] there is anything in it which should now give offence. In fact I believe that it will be all the other way! - and so does Humphry who is dreadfully afraid that it will be taken as a catholic plaidoyer by half the world!.....⁹⁹

Presentation of the Catholic case

Ward presents the Catholic case so that the reader feels the human force and attraction of the uncompromising claims of Catholic doctrine and tradition as well as understanding Ward's reservations about its potential damage to individual identity and human relationship. Laura feels the attractions of Helbeck's austere and passionate spirituality, and of the sensuous beauty of Catholicism itself. She finds the idea of having Helbeck as her spiritual director a seductive one. Ward's language suggests the fusion of the sensual longing with the spiritual:

Oh! to be guided, loved, crushed if need be, by the mystic, whose first thought can never be for you – who puts his own soul [....] before your lips, your eyes! Strange passion of it! – it rushes through the girl's nature in one blending storm of longing and despair.¹⁰⁰

She could recall — with trembling — many a strange moment in Helbeck's presence, or in the chapel, when she had seemed to feel her whole self breaking up, dissolving in the grip of a power that was at once her foe and the bearer of infinite seduction. But always the will, the self, had won the victory, had delivered a final "No!" [....].¹⁰¹

Ward's description of Laura's emotions as she contemplates what her love for Helbeck would bring her appeals to the violent, ambivalent and self-destructive nature of the lure of conversion. Metaphors of conquest and destruction fuse the sexual with the spiritual, in an analogy of Catholicism's demands with those of a demanding lover. The wording suggests the dualities of Amiel's psychological world, in particular his fascination with the divisions of his consciousness. As discussed in the previous chapter Amiel's use of the word 'abyss' suggests the conflict engulfing Laura. For Amiel, 'abyss' suggested the hidden depths of the unconscious mind which lie below consciousness itself, and the forces which caused the surrender of individualised life to the infinite:

⁹⁹ MWL.Hel, to Thomas Arnold, April 20th 1898.

¹⁰⁰ MW HB, III. 2. p.221.

¹⁰¹ MW HB, IV. 3. p.276.

For this abyss is within us; this gulf [...] is in the depth of our own being, and our liberty floats over this void, which is always seeking to swallow it up. Our only talisman lies in that concentration of moral force which we call conscience [...].¹⁰²

In contrast, Helbeck's attraction to her and his longing for her to convert is also revealed as being part of a male need to 'conquer' the object of his sexual desire ('to conquer the woman and pierce the sceptic'¹⁰³), as shown in his early thoughts about their possible relationship:

She would sooner die than obey. Unless she loved! Then what an art, what an enchantment to command her!¹⁰⁴

In *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, no compromise is possible for the two protagonists, drawn together by human love and separated by the gulf between their beliefs. The agnostic, independent Laura dies for the sake of the man she loves and also prevents him from having any understanding of why she has chosen that path. Several critics have commented on Ward's sympathetic and moving portrayal of both Laura's and Helbeck's predicaments. Rosemary Ashton's introduction to the book praises "the extreme delicacy" with which Ward portrays:

[...] the yoking of attraction and resistance between the lovers' characters and beliefs, and finally expresses the tragic wisdom, the true insight which makes *Helbeck of Bannisdale* an important work which achieves what is rare even in major novels: [...].¹⁰⁵

Earlier critics also celebrate this novel in particular. Stephen Gwynn praises its characterisation¹⁰⁶ and Q D Leavis argues that:

The situation, the conflict, and the insoluble deadlock have stature from being representative, [...].¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² HFA JI, 23 May 1855, p.48.

¹⁰³ MW HB, IV. 4. p.300.

¹⁰⁴ MW HB, II. 3. p.183.

¹⁰⁵ MW HB, 'Introduction' by Rosemary Ashton, p.21.

¹⁰⁶ Gwynn, p.65.

¹⁰⁷ Q D Leavis, *Collected Essays: Vol. 3 The Novel of Religious Controversy*, ed. By G Singh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.118.

In *Helbeck of Bannisdale* the subtlety of Ward's technique allowed the cases for both the Catholic and rationalist viewpoints to be made forcefully. The structure of the novel places the Catholic case in the foreground, but its symbolic language poses questions about the legitimacy of that case. The letters considered earlier reveal the personal pressures she was under to portray the riches of Catholicism's spiritual heritage, while still wishing to analyse its authoritarian framework and the clash with her own more liberal understandings of Christianity.

The novel weaves into its thought and structure thematic material drawn from *Amiel's Journal*. As in the *Journal*, the significance of religion as a psychological phenomenon and framework is explored, along with the power of symbols, the ambiguity of human signs, the power of religious signs to shape action and thought, and the need to illuminate how humanity should live even through the mutability and fragility of the signs which it evolves. Catholicism is subjected to aspects of Amiel's critique of it, although Ward is far more sympathetic to its appeal, and Amiel's debate about the balance necessary between heart and intelligence shapes the presentation of Helbeck's and Laura's characters.

The Influence of *Amiel's Journal* on *Eleanor*

Ward's subsequent book, *Eleanor* (1900), returns to some of the thematic material of the earlier religious novels. The highly personal arguments for and against Catholicism, rehearsed in *Helbeck of Bannisdale*, are transformed into a more detached consideration of the importance of a religious authoritarian tradition in informing social morality, and the difficulties of reconciling religious authority with social democracy, liberal political values, individual reason and individual conscience. It echoes *Amiel's Journal's* concerns with the nature and place of personal religion in a scientific age, with the impacts of democracy on education and culture, and with personal spiritual predicaments arising from disappointment and doubt, explored in characters such as Eleanor herself and Father Benecke, the Bavarian liberal theologian excommunicated for his historicist and scientific Christian critique. The novel also considers the more personal issues of the psychological function of confession and direction, even when stripped of their sacramental role.

Ward had identified one of the ideas which interested her as a novelist as the conflict between old and new ideas:

It is in these conflicts between old and new, [...], that we moderns find our best example of compelling fate, [...].¹⁰⁸

One of the principal themes of *Eleanor*, a version of the story of Châteaubriand and Mme Pauline de Beaumont, concerns just such a conflict, the usurpation of roles and the violent emotions such usurpation can engender. Ward uses the story of the sacrificial replacement of one priest by another at Nemi as a symbol not only for changing political and religious narratives – the process of replacing the influence of the Church by that of the new secular State, or of supplanting former religious beliefs by a more liberal understanding of Christianity - but also for the pain of displacement in human relationships, as one ‘muse’ is replaced by another.

Joubert and Mme de Beaumont

Ward’s interest in the story of Joubert, Châteaubriand and Mme de Beaumont, and the germ of the idea of the displacement of one woman by another, must have been suggested to her during her translation of the *Journal Intime*, with its analysis and criticism of the works and lives of Joubert and Châteaubriand. Matthew Arnold’s 1856 essay on Joubert may also have had its own emotional and familial influence. A further indication that the idea had been gestating for some time can be detected in the character of Mme de Netteville in *Robert Elsmere*. Squire Wendover’s assessment of Mme de Netteville dwells on her intelligence, comparing her with Pauline de Beaumont, friend of Joubert and mistress and source of inspiration for Châteaubriand:

[...] one of the best persons ‘to consult about ideas’, like Joubert’s Madame de Beaumont, [...]. One suspects her of adventures just enough to find her society doubly piquant.¹⁰⁹

Ward’s *Recollections* confess that during the summer of 1898 she had ‘jotted down on a sheet of notepaper’ ‘some suggestions gathered from the love-story of Châteaubriand and Madame de Beaumont’ which led ‘to the writing of *Eleanor*’.¹¹⁰ However, Sutherland notes that in April 1898 she had told her brother Willie that she intended taking a villa the next

¹⁰⁸ Mary Ward, letter to C E Maurice, cited in Trevelyan, p.150.

¹⁰⁹ MW RE, IV. 26. p.328.

¹¹⁰ MW Rec, Ch.XVI, p.323.

spring '[so] that I may write an English story in a Tuscan setting'.¹¹¹ She had also commissioned or encouraged her daughter Dorothy's friend, Katharine Lyttelton, to translate Joseph Joubert's *Pensées*, which were published in England in 1898 as *Joubert: Selected Thoughts*, with an introduction provided by Ward herself. Peter Collister points out that in practice it was a joint translation, quoting one of Ward's letters at the time which claimed that 'Katharine and I are doing Joubert 6 hours a day and there is no room for anything else.'¹¹² Such exacting partnership anticipates Eleanor's partnership with Edward Manisty in the writing of his contentious book. Lyttelton's translation builds on the translations of Joubert's thoughts provided in Matthew Arnold's essay, a double enfoldment within the Arnold family's literary oeuvre. The writing of *Eleanor* was therefore interwoven with the Lyttelton translation of Joubert, and her own introduction to it, in a similar way to the twin geneses of *Amiel's Journal* and *Robert Elsmere*. There are a number of parallels and linkages between the two projects.

Amiel himself had written about Joubert at length as if, in some way, he was aware of the comparisons between his emerging *Journal* and the *Pensées*, and that Joubert was one of those writers against whom his own work might in future be measured. In 1853 he had published - as *pensées* - some extracts from his *Journal* in '*Grains de Mil*'.¹¹³ Typically critical in his initial thoughts about Joubert's *Pensées*, he revised his estimate after reading Joubert's *Correspondance*. He admired its style for its 'grace, delicacy, atticism and precision',¹¹⁴ but more ambiguously identified Joubert's limitations of approach ('He wants bone and body: timid, dreamy and clairvoyant, he hovers far above reality'¹¹⁵) and of content:

The place of Joubert seems to me then, below and very far from the philosophers and the true poets, but honorable among the moralists and the critics.¹¹⁶

And a few days later he wrote dismissively:

The *pensée*-writer is to the philosopher what the dilettante is to the artist.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ Sutherland, p.232, quoting a letter of 29 April 1898.

¹¹² Peter Collister, 'Mrs Humphry Ward's *Eleanor*: A late Victorian Portrait of Chateaubriand and Pauline de Beaumont', *Neophilologus*, October 1981, 65(4):622-639 <doi:10.1007/BF01512577 > [accessed 11 June 2017]

¹¹³ HFA JI, Mary Ward's 'Preface', p.vi.

¹¹⁴ HFA JI, 17 Feb 1851, p.6.

¹¹⁵ HFA JI, 17 Feb 1851, p.7.

¹¹⁶ HFA JI, 17 Feb 1851, p.6.

¹¹⁷ HFA JI, 27 February 1851, p.7.

Arnold's essay on Joubert and Ward's introduction to the Lyttelton translation highlight some of the parallels between the circumstances of Amiel's and Joubert's lives as writers. Joubert's fragments, which had been published in France in 1838, ranged, as did Amiel's, over religion, philosophy, social life and art. Arnold's essay on Joubert argued that, although he had a relatively secluded life and had not produced any definitively great written oeuvre, he should be considered as one of those writers who had influenced the ideas and culture of their time. His description of the way in which the *Pensées* came to be published anticipates the posthumous emergence of the *Journal Intime*.

Joubert's papers were accumulated in boxes and drawers. He had not meant them for publication; [...]. But, as her own [Mme Joubert's] end approached, the natural desire to leave of so remarkable a spirit some enduring memorial [...], made her [...] allow the printing, but for private circulation only, of a volume of his fragments.

Châteaubriand edited it; it appeared in 1838, fourteen years after Joubert's death.¹¹⁸ In her introduction to Lyttelton's translation, Ward defers to the critical estimate of Joubert in Arnold's essay, but also quotes from Amiel's estimate of him:

'His philosophy', says Amiel of him in 1851, 'is merely literary and popular; his originality is only in detail and in execution.... All that has to do with large views, with the whole of things, is very little at Joubert's command; he has no philosophy of history, no speculative intuition.' But within his own limits, as Amiel confesses abundantly, Joubert is still among the first and choicest. [...]. [...] he is one of those men who are 'superior to their works, and who have themselves the unity which these lack.'¹¹⁹

Ward's critical judgements of Joubert underline the ways in which she saw his life and literary writing foreshadowing that of Amiel:

He did write indeed; there are the *Pensées*—sure of their modest but enduring place in French literature. But this writing of his was infinitely slow and scanty. It was the quiet, life-long deposit of himself. Drop by drop the thoughts fell, crystallising and taking shape in a gentle and tranquil obscurity.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Matthew Arnold, 'Joubert' in Vol III, *The Complete Prose Works Of Matthew Arnold, Lectures And Essays in Criticism*, ed. R H Super, p.188.

¹¹⁹ JJ ST, 'Introduction' by Mary Ward, p. xli, quoting *Amiel's Journal* entries for 17th and 20th February 1851, pp.6, 7.

¹²⁰ JJ ST, 'Introduction' by Mary Ward, p.x.

Apart from critical estimates of Joubert's place in French literature, Ward's introduction focuses much more on his life and, in particular, his relationships with Châteaubriand and Madame de Beaumont. In terms of intellectual influence, Ward casts Joubert in the role of midwife to Châteaubriand's representations of the turbulent intellectual cross-currents of his era. Her words about Châteaubriand could equally apply to her own perceptions of the ebb and flow of religious argument within Victorian society and her own experience:

[....]; he helped Châteaubriand to give voice and expression to that new and stormy life of Europe which was none the less conscious of all that it had conquered because it returned so passionately, so remorsefully, to much that it had overthrown; [....].¹²¹

Joubert's role in supporting Châteaubriand's religious revisionism cast a light on her own interest in her father's advocacy of Catholicism and the schisms within her own family.

And when the new and all-conquering talent threw itself into the service of the old Church, and of the expelled faith, which was now flowing back upon France like some great river upon its ancient channels, Joubert made himself alternately the herald and the guardian of the new force.¹²²

Amiel's analyses of both Joubert and Châteaubriand had, in contrast, confined themselves to the work of both men and what that revealed of their character, rather than considering their private lives and relationships with Mme de Beaumont. His judgement of Châteaubriand as a man was severe:

[....] - a nature at once devoured with ambition and unable to find anything to love or admire in the world except itself, - [....].¹²³

His judgement of Châteaubriand's *René* grudgingly admired its style's 'terseness' and 'marvellous vigour', but assessed the principal character as 'a pathological case', rather than a hero.¹²⁴ His evaluation of Châteaubriand, and Ward's analysis of Châteaubriand's intellectual role combine to define her portrait of Manisty. In the novel, he is cast in the role of egoist, contrarian and revisionist, aware of the impact of modernism but determined to

¹²¹ JJ ST, 'Introduction' by Mary Ward, p.xii.

¹²² JJ ST, 'Introduction' by Mary Ward, p.xv.

¹²³ HFA JI, 24 September 1857, p.66.

¹²⁴ HFA JI, 24 September 1857, p.68.

defend the cause of authoritarian conservatism. It is a softened and camouflaged version of Amiel's critical assessment of Châteaubriand:

I saw in him a great artist but not a great man, [...] - indefatigable in labour and capable of everything except of true devotion, self-sacrifice, and faith. Jealous of all success, he was always on the opposition side, that he might be the better able to disavow all services received, and to hold aloof from any other glory but his own. Legitimist under the empire, a parliamentarian under the legitimist regime, republican under the constitutional monarchy, defending Christianity when France was philosophical, and taking a distaste for religion as soon as it became once more a serious power, - the secret of these endless contradictions in him was simply the desire to reign alone like the sun,—[...].

[...] Châteaubriand from the beginning was inspired by [...] the passion for contradicting, for crushing and conquering. [...]. Rousseau seems to me his point of departure, the man who suggested to him by contrast and opposition all his replies and attacks, [...]. Always a *rôle* to be filled, cleverness to be displayed, a *parti-pris* to be upheld and fame to be won,—his theme, one of imagination, his faith one to order, - but sincerity, loyalty, candour, seldom or never! Always a real indifference simulating a passion for truth; always an imperious thirst for glory instead of devotion to the good; always the ambitious artist, never the citizen, the believer, the man.¹²⁵

The narrator of *Eleanor* describes Manisty as one of the 'intellectual soldiers of fortune'.¹²⁶ His cynical espousal of the Catholic cause is exposed as an aspect of a conservative political strategy rather than as a sincerely held personal belief, an incarnation of Amiel's judgement above, 'always a real indifference simulating a passion for truth'. Eleanor perceives it as follows:

'Of course I sometimes wish that it were conviction with him and not policy. [...]. If instead of this praise from the outside, this cool praise of religion as the great policemen of the world, if only his voice [...] spoke for one moment the language of faith.'¹²⁷

The ambivalence and moral limitations of its principal champion allow Ward to interrogate Catholicism's claims and practice with less scrupulous sensitivity to her father's possible reactions than in *Helbeck of Bannisdale*.

The elements of the story of Joubert, Châteaubriand and Mme de Beaumont that was to become the plot of *Eleanor* are identified in Ward's introduction to Joubert's *Pensées*.

¹²⁵ HFA JI, 24 September 1857, pp. 66, 67, 68.

¹²⁶ MW EI, Ch.25. p.485.

¹²⁷ MW EI, Ch.14. p.285.

Ward's description of Madame de Beaumont's pre- and post-revolutionary life informs her characterisation of Eleanor as a European intellectual, the equal of analytical and creative men, who has had to struggle with private despair and loss of faith.

Pauline de Beaumont was a person in whom the intellectual and aristocratic traditions of eighteenth century Paris were equally strong. [...] when Joubert first saw her he found her buried in the study of philosophy, especially of Kant. The agony she had suffered and witnessed had produced two marked effects. Her religious faith was gone; the world in her eyes had neither God nor justice. On the other hand, her intelligence had revived with passionate force. [...]. She read, therefore, incessantly—literature, history, philosophy. And what she read she discussed with Joubert. After her death, Joubert wrote to a friend:—‘Madame de Beaumont understood everything. You and I will never find her like again She was excellent to consult about ideas. She judged them admirably, and one might be sure that what had charmed her was exquisite indeed—if not for the crowd, at least for the elect.’¹²⁸

Just as Eleanor helps Manisty to formulate his critique of the new Italy's secularism and advocate a return to a Catholic state, Pauline had become the muse and mistress of Châteaubriand during the writing of *La Génie du Christianisme*:

[...] she threw herself heart and soul into the completion of the *Génie du Christianisme*, listening, inspiring, criticising, copying for him in the morning, walking with him in the afternoon, writing letters to Joubert and others in quest of the books he wanted, [...].¹²⁹

Her subsequent abandonment by Châteaubriand, and their reconciliation before her death provided Ward with the plot of her novel; Eleanor's displacement in Manisty's affections, her illness, their reconciliation, her discovery of a faith, and death. She describes Mme de Beaumont's death thus:

During her last hours he seems to have given her full assurance of a devotion which could no longer embarrass either himself or her; and her poor heart was comforted. ‘As she listened to me,’ he says, ‘she seemed to die, *désespérée et ravie*’ [without hope and in rapture]. [...]. But the Catholic also shows to advantage in these last scenes. [...]. But as death approached, Châteaubriand prevailed upon her to send for a priest. A good French priest arrived, and heard her confession; afterwards Châteaubriand and her two old servants received the Sacrament with her.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ JJ ST, ‘Introduction’ by Mary Ward, , p.xxv.

¹²⁹ JJ ST, ‘Introduction’ by Mary Ward, pp.xxxi, xxxii.

¹³⁰ JJ ST, ‘Introduction’ by Mary Ward, pp.xxxiii, xxxiv.

Ward's depiction of Eleanor as a woman of ability and intelligence, who understood and was engaged by the main European intellectual debates of the age contrasts with her earlier portrayal of a de Beaumont figure in *Mme de Netteville*. *Mme. de Netteville*'s sensual charms are as remarkable as her intelligence, according to Squire Wendover. Eleanor, in contrast, is depicted as a charming, intelligent and vivacious woman, rather than as an amorous corsair. Her spiritual and intellectual role of muse and adviser is recognised by Fr Benecke:

He understood that she had been of assistance to Mr Manisty: but that it had been the assistance of a comrade and equal – that had never entered his head.¹³¹
[...] for Eleanor he gradually became - like Manisty — the intellectual comrade, crossing swords often in an equal contest, where he sometimes forgot the consideration due to the woman in the provocation shown him by the critic.¹³²

Unfulfilled Lives: Heart and Head

Eleanor's role as judge and translator of male ideas and energies is contrasted with her judgement of them as human beings. Ward again focuses on the balance between intelligence and emotion, 'the complete life' as Amiel defined it:

[...] man *becomes* man only by the intelligence, but he *is* man only by the heart. Knowledge, love, power, - there is the complete life.¹³³

Eleanor admires Manisty's intellect, and longs for his love, but she also longs to see his unification of head and heart in an emotional commitment to the religious ideas he is exploiting. Equally, although she can provide intellectual stimulus to Benecke, what she wanted of him was the spiritually and emotionally charged role of 'the priest, the Christian, the ascetic.'¹³⁴ Women's roles in this novel are portrayed as sacrificial, they make possible the work of men like Manisty and Benecke. In a subordinate narrative, Alice, Manisty's unstable sister, is ready to sacrifice her fortune to the man she loves. What they receive in return is limited. Towards the end of the novel, Benecke asks himself if engineering a

¹³¹ MW EI, Ch.18. p.352.

¹³² MW EI, Ch.18. pp. 353, 354.

¹³³ HFA JI, 7 April 1851, p.12.

¹³⁴ MW EI, Ch.18. p.354.

rapprochement between Lucy and Manisty has been wise. Ward provides an ambiguous answer through the judgement of this unworldly man himself:

In his Christian stoicism – the man of the world might have called it a Christian insensibility - he answered for Lucy.

Why suppose that she would shrink, or ought to shrink? Eve's burden is anyway enormous; and the generous heart scorns a grudging foresight.¹³⁵

If *Eleanor's* plot stems from Ward's introduction to the translation of Joubert, which in turn was influenced by Amiel, Eleanor's character draws both upon her outline of Mme de Beaumont's life, and upon Amiel's perceptions of a life he felt was unfulfilled and, in terms of human relationships and of professional achievement, a disappointment. However, for Eleanor, Ward introduced a variation on Amiel's despair over his life. Her life does not end, as Langham's does in *Robert Elsmere*, in an ever-deepening retreat from religious faith and engagement with the world, but goes on to explore how it might be possible to find a faith of sort, which allows even a tragic and unfulfilled life to close in acceptance. Ward saw in Eleanor's predicament parallels with Amiel's emotions as he observed his life slipping by without any relationships or literary achievement to place between himself and the 'abyss'. Here is how she depicts Eleanor assessing her life:

She [...] was in the mood to see her whole existence as a refused petition, a rejected gift. She had offered Edward Manisty all of her sympathy and intelligence [...]. Her inmost sense of identity was shaken.¹³⁶

To die with this cry of the heart unspent, untold for ever! Unloved, unsatisfied, unrewarded – she whose whole nature gave itself – gave itself perpetually, as a wave breaks on a barren shore. How can any God send human beings into the world for such a lot? There can be no God. But how is the riddle easier, for thinking Him away?¹³⁷

There are many parallels of these emotions and thoughts and their expression in the *Journal Intime*:

[...], I feel I cannot do without affection, and I know that I have no ambition, and that my faculties are declining [...]. So that there is no deceiving myself as to the fate

¹³⁵ MW El, Ch.25. p.486.

¹³⁶ MW El, Ch.7. p.132.

¹³⁷ MW El, Ch.16. p.326.

which awaits me: - increasing loneliness, mortification of spirit, long-continued regret, melancholy neither to be consoled nor confessed, a mournful old age, a slow decay, a death in the desert!¹³⁸

I whose whole being - heart and intellect - thirsts to absorb itself in reality, in its neighbour man, in Nature and in God, - I, whom solitude devours and destroys, - I shut myself up in solitude and seem to delight only in myself and to be sufficient for myself.¹³⁹

How hard it is to grow old, when we have missed our life, [...].¹⁴⁰

The *Journal* entries emphasise his need for affection, and his need to reach out to other human beings and to God, and contrast this with his enforced solitude which creates an illusory appearance of self-sufficiency. Eleanor also contrasts her sense of her own emotional and spiritual generosity with the bitter reality of her rejection by Manisty. In both Eleanor's and Amiel's accounts there is a stark contrast between their perception of their inner emotional reality and the circumstances of their lives which dictate that their needs can never be expressed or understood. It is Ward's reworking of the mismatch between appearance and reality discussed earlier in the chapter in relation to *Helbeck of Bannisdale*. In addition, echoes of the expression, rhythms and hiatuses of Amiel's style can be detected in Ward, for example in the repetitions and vocabulary of Amiel's 'I whose whole being – heart and intellect – thirsts to absorb itself in reality' compared with Ward's description of Eleanor's despair, 'she whose whole nature gave itself – gave itself perpetually, as a wave breaks on a barren shore.'

The function of Confession

Eleanor's impending death and the way in which she finally takes up Benecke's challenge to confront her desperation and sense of loss enable Ward to challenge the pessimism of Amiel's despair over a 'wasted life'. As discussed earlier in the chapter, Ward had an ambivalent attitude to confession. She dismissed its 'spiritual intrusiveness' for herself, yet recognised the importance of works such as Amiel's, with their unflinching exposure of emotional and spiritual desolation. Amiel's despair over his unfulfilled life and

¹³⁸ HFA JI, 26 April 1868, p.143.

¹³⁹ HFA JI, 12 Sept 1861, p.81.

¹⁴⁰ HFA JI, 11 April 1865, p.106.

his ‘melancholy neither to be consoled nor confessed’¹⁴¹ may have found a type of confessional catharsis in the semi-privacy of his *Journal*. In *Eleanor*, Ward provided her main character with another human being to whom to confess her grief and bitterness, a Feuerbachian *homo homini deus*, in the figure of Fr Benecke. The instigator of what proves to be an exceptionally unorthodox confession is Eleanor herself:

‘Father’, she said, bending towards him, ‘you are a priest – and a confessor?’
[....].
‘Yes, Madame – I am!’ he said at last, with a firm and passionate dignity.
‘Yet now you cannot act as a priest. And I am not a Catholic. Still, I am a human being – with a soul, I suppose – if there are such things! – and you are old enough to be my father, and have had great experience. I am in trouble – and probably dying. Will you hear my case – as though it were a confession – under the same seal?’
[....].
‘I cannot refuse’, he said uneasily. [....]. But let me remind you that this could not be in any sense a true confession. It could only be a conversation between friends.’
[....].
‘I must treat it as a confession or I cannot speak. I shall not ask you to absolve me. That – would do me no good’ [....]. ‘What I want is direction – from someone accustomed to looking at people as they are – and – and to speak the truth to them.’¹⁴²

Ward defines Eleanor’s need for spiritual direction in terms of what it is not. The repeated negatives of the dialogue create a movement towards an understanding of what the transaction could and might be ([....] you cannot act as a priest. And I am not a Catholic. I cannot refuse, [....] this could not be a true confession. [....]. I must [....] or I cannot speak. I shall not ask you. [....] What I want is direction [....]) Its intricate deconstruction of the purpose of the Catholic confessional strips away its sacramental nature and substitutes a sacred transaction between two human beings, one ‘in trouble’ and one with ‘great experience’. As discussed in chapter 2, Feuerbach and Eliot attempted to find in human relationship all the gravity of the sacred, but divested of the divine. *Amiel’s Journal* also considers the priestly function of one human being to another:

Every man is the centre of perpetual radiation like a luminous body; [....]. Every man is a priest, even involuntarily; his conduct is an unspoken sermon which is forever preaching to others; [....].¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ HFA JI, 26 August 1868, p.143.

¹⁴² MW EI, Ch.19. pp.381, 382.

¹⁴³ HFA JI, 2 May 1852, pp.24, 25.

Eleanor explores in a variety of ways the sometimes ‘involuntary’, inspirational nature of human relationship, and the ways in which people can and do take on quasi-priestly functions for each other, and therefore bring about change in each other’s lives or perceptions. Eleanor receives direction from Benecke, and finds a faith which enables her to die reconciled to the losses of her life. Benecke provides direction, but also he receives an insight into the possibilities of spiritual response from Eleanor:

But here, beneath his eyes, in this dying woman, was another certainty; [...]; a certainty of the spirit.¹⁴⁴

In her treatment of Eleanor’s death, just as with Laura’s death, Ward portrays the manner or choice of death as a ‘sign’ to other characters either of ‘august things’ or of spiritual certainties which transcend conventional religious expectations. These deaths also reflect Amiel’s argument considered earlier that:

Such words and looks are a kind of testament. They have a solemn and sacred character which is not merely an effect of our imagination.¹⁴⁵

Eleanor’s discovery of a way through her bitterness draws heavily on both Amiel’s and Arnold’s beliefs in the necessity of Christ-like self-renunciation as the only ‘method’ of achieving peace. Challenged by Father Benecke’s spiritual direction, Eleanor is reconciled to her loss of Manisty’s affection and to his relationship with Lucy, but her death-bed reconciliation is not through a Catholic understanding of grace and forgiveness, but through a change in her own perceptions:

The “grace of God”, you think? – or the natural welling back of the river, little by little, to its natural bed?[....]. But what are “grace” and “nature” more than words? There is a Life, - which our life perpetually touches and guesses at - like a child fingering a closed room in the dark. What else do we know?¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ MW EI, Ch.25. p.492.

¹⁴⁵ HFA JI, 16 December 1868, pp.145, 146.

¹⁴⁶ MW EI, Ch.25. p.489.

Eleanor's questioning of how far the signifiers 'grace' and 'nature', which categorise human psychological experience in religious terms, reflect the truth of humanity's deepest experiences is an idea considered by Amiel:

The divine life is a series of successive deaths, in which the mind throws off its imperfections and its symbols, and yields to the growing attraction of the ineffable centre of gravitation, the sun of intelligence and love.¹⁴⁷

His thought here suggests that what is understood through symbols and signs transcends its translation and that mutable signs of language and religious symbols are only approximate expressions of an 'ineffable' reality. The importance of signs to Amiel and to Ward, explored earlier in this chapter, must be seen as an approximate and provisional step towards emotional and intellectual understanding.

Eleanor's discussion with Father Benecke about the nature of her spiritual transformation reviews the capacity of the languages of faith or of poetic or literary metaphor, with their apparent specificity or imaginative penetration, to elucidate elusive and indefinable personal experiences.

'Don't quarrel with me – with my poor words. He is there – *there!*' - she said under her breath.

And he saw the motion of her white fingers towards her breast. [...].¹⁴⁸

[...] here, beneath his eyes, in this dying woman, was another certainty; [...]; a certainty of the spirit.¹⁴⁹

Eleanor's explanation of the change in her understanding reflects Arnold's identification of the essential teaching of Christ, rather than Amiel's bleaker vision:

[...] - what *is* true – is the "dying to live" of Christianity. One moment, you have the weight of the world upon you; the next, as it were, you dispose of the world and all in it. Just an act of the will! – and the thing verifies itself like any chemical experiment.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ HFA JI, 12 August 1852, p.28.

¹⁴⁸ MW EI, Ch.25. p.490.

¹⁴⁹ MW EI, Ch.25. p.492.

¹⁵⁰ MW EI, Ch.25. p.489.

The phrasing echoes the positive and challenging tone of Arnold's description of the 'secret of Jesus', of following conscience and practising 'self-renouncement', a phrase which Arnold perhaps felt implied a more positive and active mental state than self-renunciation. He describes his formula in a number of places in *Literature and Dogma*:

[...] the method and secret of Jesus, that is to say, conscience and self-renouncement, *are* righteousness, bring about the kingdom of God or the reign of righteousness, - this, [...], is best impressed, for the present at any rate, by experiencing and showing again and again, in ourselves [...] that it *is* so; [...].¹⁵¹

Eleanor's strange analogy between 'an act of will' with its results and the observation of 'any chemical experiment' may also have drawn on Arnold's metaphor of 'experiment':

Now, as we say that the truth and grandeur of the Old Testament most comes out *experimentally*, - that is by the whole course of the world establishing it, and confuting what is opposed to it - so it is with Christianity. Its grandeur and truth are far best brought out *experimentally* [...].¹⁵²

Arnold's challenge to experience the internal and social proofs of experimental 'self-renouncement' is generously life-affirming in tone, and this affirmative tone is echoed in one place early in the *Journal*, where Amiel defines the ideal type of renunciation as having the character of:

Mâle résignation, [...]; 'manly' - that is to say, courageous, active, resolute, persevering, - resignation, [...]. Energy in resignation - there lies the wisdom of the sons of earth, [...].¹⁵³

In later entries however, his idea of renunciation becomes more passive and despairing. In an entry in his *Journal* for August 1856, when he was thirty five, he discusses the need for recognition of the inevitable process of renunciation of human 'hopes', but still hoping in 'this nothingness' to find 'the divine spark':

¹⁵¹ Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, Vol VI, *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, Dissent and Dogma*, ed. by Super, p.401.

¹⁵² Arnold, pp.395, 396.

¹⁵³ HFA JI, 26 April 1852, pp.20, 21.

We must learn to look upon life as an apprenticeship to a progressive renunciation, a perpetual diminution in our pretensions, our hopes, our powers, and our liberty. [...] and then we have to [...] throw ourselves upon God for all, recognizing our own worthlessness, and that we have no right to anything. It is in this nothingness that we recover something of life - the divine spark is there at the bottom of it. Resignation comes to us, and, in believing love, we reconquer the true greatness.¹⁵⁴

As he was suffering his last illness he records his nihilist resignation to the destruction of personality:

This vague intermediate state, which is neither death nor life, has its sweetness, because if it implies renunciation, still it allows of thought. [...]. Selbstbewusstsein [consciousness or awareness of self] becomes once more impersonal Bewusstsein [consciousness or awareness], and before personality can be reacquired, pain, duty and will must be brought into action.

Are these oscillations between the personal and the impersonal, between pantheism and theism, between Spinoza and Leibnitz, to be regretted? No, for it is the one state that makes us conscious of the other.¹⁵⁵

The apparent journey towards nihilism is countered by one of his final journal entries a month before his death. It counterpoises the assertion of faith which began the journal in 1848: 'There is but one thing needful – to possess God' with a resignation of himself to the 'necessary' and an appeal to that sense of a 'holy will' to which Ward had commended her dying mother: 'Garde en mon coeur la foi dans ta volonté sainte' [Keep in my heart faith in your holy will].¹⁵⁶

The role of Joubert

The roles of both Father Benecke and Reggie Brooklyn combine to provide a composite Joubert figure to Eleanor's Pauline de Beaumont. Through them she receives the just estimate of her spiritual heroism. In the figure of Father Benecke, Ward returns to thematic material from earlier books: the necessity of change to the Church's teaching in the light of contemporary biblical studies. He embodies a more gradualist approach to the transformation of Christianity from within. Alive to the implications of contemporary biblical scholarship like Robert Elsmere, Benecke sees himself acting as a catalyst in a slow process

¹⁵⁴ HFA JI, 22 October 1856, pp. 57, 58.

¹⁵⁵ HFA JI, 18 February 1881, p.292.

¹⁵⁶ HFA JI, 16 March 1881, p.294.

of recognition and transformation of the Catholic Church. His defiance of the Church is described in similar terms to Elsmere's, as 'a marvellous liberation of the soul'¹⁵⁷ and Ward compares him with David Strauss:

His intelligence had much the same acuteness and pliancy as that of another and more pronounced doubter – a South German also, like Father Benecke, - the author of the 'Leben Jesu'.¹⁵⁸

Benecke's excommunication leaves him in a similar predicament to that of Amiel, waiting for a Church to arise that matches his spiritual needs: 'Ah! When will the church to which I belong in heart rise into being?'¹⁵⁹

Individual Conscience and Public Morality

In *Eleanor*, the Catholic Church is portrayed in a struggle with individual freedom and conscience, manipulating the uneducated, and ostracising and punishing individuals who dare to import ideas which question prevailing dogma. Manisty supports its actions against individuals, even friends such as Benecke, partly in horror at the cultural dislocation and loss which any revolution in thought brings in its train, and partly to reinforce authority even if that authority is refusing to address intellectual developments in the world beyond its jurisdiction. In contrast, the emergence of a secular state is given sympathetic spokesmen and women, such as the Contessa.

Eleanor presents a more overt hostility to Catholicism as an impersonal authoritarian force compared with *Helbeck of Bannisdale's* sympathetic balance. Ward admired Italy's nascent, secular democratic state, and she dedicated *Eleanor* to Italy 'the beloved and beautiful, instructress of our past, delight of our present, comrade of our future'.¹⁶⁰ The novel's Catholic characters, apart from the apostate Father Benecke, are portrayed as committed to protecting an institution rather than its religious values. Lucy Forster perceives it as a tyrannic force, just as does Laura in *Helbeck of Bannisdale*:

¹⁵⁷ MW El, Ch.18. p.351.

¹⁵⁸ MW El, Ch.18. p.351.

¹⁵⁹ HFA JI, 26 April, 1852, p.20.

¹⁶⁰ MW El, dedication.

The priest's crushed strength and humiliated age - what a testimony to the power of that tradition for which Mr Manisty was working – its unmerciful and tyrannous power.¹⁶¹

As discussed earlier in the chapter, Amiel had identified Catholicism not just as the enemy of freedom of conscience but of individual conscience itself. Elsewhere in the *Journal* he had discussed the impact of 'socialist and non-socialist democracy' on culture and on individualism.

The age of great men is going; the epoch of the ant-hill, of life in multiplicity, is beginning. [...].

Is this indeed the fate reserved for the democratic era? May not the general well-being be purchased too dearly at such a price? [...]. Or rather, above the economic and political equality to which the socialist and non-socialist democracy aspires, taking it too often for the term of its efforts, will there not arise a new kingdom of mind, a church of refuge, a republic of souls, in which, far beyond the region of mere right and sordid utility, beauty, devotion, holiness, heroism, enthusiasm, the extraordinary, the infinite, shall have a worship and an abiding city?¹⁶²

Amiel saw threats to culture, freedom of conscience, and individual thought arising from authoritarian regimes and utilitarian liberal democracy alike. His solution was expressed through language which suggests visionary, biblical hope in an 'abiding city', but one which embraces both equality, 'a republic of souls [...] far beyond the region of mere right and sordid utility', and the supremacy of the individual in 'a new kingdom of mind'. Such a visionary – and scarcely practical – demand was not likely to be incorporated in Ward's novel. However, *Amiel's Journal* frequently expresses his longing for the spiritual and unattainable to be present within human community:

Ah! when will the church to which I belong in heart rise into being? [...]. Alas! Well understood, this place is the earth, this country of one's dreams is heaven, and this suffering is the eternal homesickness, the thirst for happiness.¹⁶³

Finding a community within which to find an echoing response to the continuing spiritual needs of those who have dispensed with what they perceive as untenable dogma is the search embarked upon by Robert Elsmere and by Fr Benecke. Elsmere founded his own community.

¹⁶¹ MW EI, Ch.17. p.339.

¹⁶² HFA JI, 6 September 1851, pp.13,14.

¹⁶³ HFA JI, 26 April 1852, p.20.

But by the time she wrote *Eleanor*, Ward was less radical. Benecke's loss of communion within the Catholic Church is translated into acceptance within a community of Old German Catholics, a Church then in communion with the Anglican Church, the Anglican Church to which Ward remained emotionally identified, even if intellectually sceptical of its thirty nine articles.

In Eleanor's invitation to Benecke to act as her spiritual director, the mechanism for the resolution of the novel, it seems that Ward has brought together a number of her intensely personal themes – the need for a spiritual renewal of the Church and its dogma, the recognition of the power which certain rites of Catholicism still exercised for her because they were grounded in human psychological need, the shadowy presence of a father-figure behind this recognition, and the need for those spiritual transactions to be recognised as the 'needs of the soul', but liberated from authority and dogma. Amiel's influence can be seen very clearly in the way she constructed the characters of Eleanor and Manisty in order to explore these ideas, over the shaping of the ideas themselves and over the way she depicted the 'human and emotional crisis'¹⁶⁴ following from 'an intellectual process'.

In *Eleanor*, Ward introduced a variation on Amiel's despair over his life. Her life does not end, as Langham's does, in an ever-deepening spiritual retreat from religious faith and engagement with the world. Half way through the novel, as she senses her displacement from Manisty's affection as his fascination with Lucy grows, Eleanor, is given the last words in Amiel's *Journal Intime*, as he faced his imminent death, 'Que vivre est difficile, ô mon coeur fatigué!'¹⁶⁵ [How difficult it is to live, o my exhausted heart!]. This identification with the experience and words of Frédéric Amiel demonstrates very clearly his continuing influence over how she imagined and presented emotion and ideas, but Ward goes on to explore, through Eleanor, how it might be possible to find a faith of sort, which allows even a tragic and unfulfilled life to close in acceptance, a faith in self-renunciation as Amiel described it early in his *Journal* at the age of thirty one:

Mâle resignation, [...]; 'manly' – that is to say, courageous, active, resolute, persevering, - resignation, [...]. Energy in resignation – there lies the wisdom of the sons of earth, [...].¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ MW Rec, Ch.XII, p.231.

¹⁶⁵ MW EI, Ch.6. p.126; and HFA JI, 19 April 1881, p.296.

¹⁶⁶ HFA JI, 26 April 1852, pp.20, 21.

Eleanor's courageous resignation is demanded at a similar age, 'not very far from thirty',¹⁶⁷ and it is in Eleanor's resignation to her loss of love and death, that Ward portrays a fusion of Amiel's concept with that of another of Ward's major influences, her uncle, Matthew Arnold, who for her represented the continuity of her family's tradition of liberal, radical thought about Christianity.

¹⁶⁷ MW EI, Ch.1. p.11.

Conclusion

If art translates the existential anxieties, as well as the values of its time, then Eliot's and Ward's novels indicate how deep were the anxieties about the value of human life and thought, when their age-old external validation through beliefs that God both existed and 'so loved'¹ his creation seemed deluged with philosophic, scientific and scholarly amendments. The fictional projects of both Eliot and Ward were to demonstrate that human lives, both their internal and external dramas, had an intrinsic value, and that moral or intellectual decisions had a significance beyond the personal, even if they were not significant in any eschatological sense. They both aimed to show that freedom from belief in Judaeo-Christian dogma did not entail a less valuable or valued life, nor a less morally aware life, but rather liberated individuals to reflect more fully on the reality of the way their own and others' lives inter-related. Both writers were deeply aware of the rethinking taking place in European and British intellectual life, and this rethinking is a backdrop which permeates and conditions the moral context for the lives of their fictional protagonists.

This is, to an extent, well known. What this thesis has demonstrated is that both writers' thinking about the mechanisms of translation, and their actual undertaking of it in practice had broader and deeper implications for their intervention in this debate than has hitherto been recognized. Translation in the nineteenth century was experienced and envisaged as a responsibility to enter the mind of the non-English-speaking writer with sympathy and an analytic understanding of the contextual and cultural influences on his, or sometimes her, work. The intensity of the effort to maintain a combination of sympathetic identification and objective analysis provides in itself a formative influence on Eliot's concern with sympathy and judgement in her fiction, and provides Ward with a model of intellectually able and emotionally committed protagonists, aware of European scholarship and thought. Recent models of translation have stressed the role of conflict, and of the explicit cultural alienation between translator and subject. In contrast, the priorities of faithfulness to text and textual intention, so important to these two Victorian writers, redirected towards an inclusive vision of human beings and of humanism the conventions of biblical translation, concerned as it was with finding workable mechanisms that embraced expectations of accuracy and fidelity, rather than conflict and anxiety. My contention in this thesis has been that we need to read Eliot's and Ward's engagement with models of

¹ The Gospel of St John, 3.16.

translation (and the way they then deployed and developed these models in their fiction) much more in their own spirit.

Eliot's and Ward's novels reflect and explore, through the narrative and its characters, the challenges of understanding and translating the language used by other people; they also represent secondary translations and evaluations of the ideas found in their source works. The primacy of making ideas accessible was seen as a justification for this secondary translation into fiction, but the choice of realism as the convention within which to write also emphasises their philosophic concerns with evidence and the reality of human experience - with, as Eliot put it, a 'picture of life'.² It allowed them to demonstrate that fictional individuals and communities recognisable as part of English nineteenth century experience would continue to live recognisably similar lives and face recognisable predicaments without dogmatic Christianity's 'aberglaube'.³ Despite Oscar Wilde's world-weary strictures about the intellectual anachronism of Robert Elsmere's loss of faith, Gladstone's reaction shows that it seemed, at the time, a significant attack on the bases of Christianity and, by extension, on the ethical underpinnings of English society. The convention of realism adopted by both women offers pre-emptively a vision of how such radicalism could be absorbed and even welcomed by a society undergoing the nineteenth century's wide-ranging political and economic change.

Reflecting on the novel's use for 'religious or social propaganda' by Froude, Newman and Kingsley, Ward insisted that the novel was capable 'of holding and shaping real experience of any kind, as it affects the lives of men and women', provided that in doing so it created 'interest' and 'beauty'.⁴ However, within their explicit considerations of how they intended to expose the ideas found within their translations to the simulated realities of their fiction, both women allude to an uneasy apprehension that fictionalised life had to have its own internal self-justifying intensity of vision of human experience to avoid the charge that it was a reduction to theory, formulae or propaganda.

Through their translations, both women entered not only into a human search for significance that transcended national cultures and philosophies, but also into the debate about how to replace old ideas about human duties to each other with ideas that reflected more fully the new spiritual and intellectual reality of human responsibility. For them, the

² George Eliot, 'The Natural History of German Life' in *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, ed. by Byatt and Warren, p.110.

³ Matthew Arnold, 'Literature and Dogma', in Vol 6, *Dissent and Dogma*, ed. by Super, p.212.

⁴ MW Rec, Ch.XII, pp.229, 230.

movement from translation of works of philosophy to creation of fictions to embody these ideas represented a different type of translation, one which could not only find ways of dramatising ideas, but could involve the reader in thinking through their implications.

George Eliot called her novels ‘experiments in life’⁵, and they test out the ideas of the philosophers she translated in fictional simulations of ‘real’ human situations, and the potential for translation itself to provide models for thinking about those situations. Norman Vance argues that both Eliot’s and Ward’s fictional creations were intended to be ‘secular scriptures’, resolutely grounding their radical ideas about the basis for a good life through examining recognisable human situations and characters.⁶ This is to put translation at the very heart of their fictional practice. The conventions of realism, embraced by both authors, parallel the rejection of the miraculous and supernatural elements of religion, advocated by Spinoza, Strauss, and Feuerbach, and agonised over by Amiel. Ideas had to be grounded in what could be agreed as a shared human reality, where supernatural explanation had given way to scientific observation and theory. The search for an authentic, ‘human’ Jesus beyond or beneath the layers of the supernatural in religious tradition and gospel narrative, and religion’s answering debate about whether pre-eminent authenticity and authority lay in scripture or tradition, cross-fertilised art forms which sought authenticity in realist convention and went on to use that ‘realism’ to test out and advocate new ideas.

Eliot’s and Ward’s novels became above all, attempts to develop a new language for talking about how to live a good life, how to translate anew the ‘needs of the soul’⁷ and to retranslate the significance previously attached to the sacred and what it might mean, when there was no longer a traditional, validating religious conception of God to which to appeal. Eliot’s tentative transfigurations of human interaction are subject to the inherent difficulties and even contradictions of creating that sense of otherness demanded by the sacred while rejecting the truth of any other than the natural world of un-illusioned reality, difficulties she found in the works that she translated, particularly Feuerbach’s. The tension applies equally to Arnold’s demands for reverence for the ‘Eternal Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness’,⁸ and Ward’s demands for a language which could address the continuing ‘needs of the soul’, once dogmatic Christianity had been abandoned. In both women’s fiction the language for new ideas uses the poetic, metaphorical language of Judaeo- Christianity to

⁵ GEL. VI, to Dr Joseph Frank Payne, 25 January 1876, pp. 216-217.

⁶ Norman Vance, *Bible and Novel*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.96.

⁷ MW HB, V. 1. p.333.

⁸ Arnold, p.298

suggest the penumbra of emotional resonance which was to be transferred to secular humanism and the new freedom of thought. The difficulties of articulating and translating humanity's deepest emotional and intellectual needs as its symbolic frameworks were in transition are addressed by both writers. In Ward's fiction, allusiveness to the former language and experience of religious thought and emotion is retained, while at the same time insisting that its substructure of dogma be removed. In the introduction, I referred to Lukács' description of the modern novel's purpose as being to see 'where God is to be found in a world abandoned by God,'⁹ and as a response, therefore, to the contradictory demands of reason and feeling. What remains to be sought in a world without God is a meaning which the characters experience as an external validation of themselves, their human aspirations, suffering and despair, but a validation that also demands from them intellectual, moral or emotional understanding and change. Eliot's characters find this most often through sympathy, Ward's through a developing personal conviction.

How did this particular type of novel - attempting to transfer existential validity to human lives and minds alone - respond to the ethical chaos of the twentieth century? The twentieth century philosopher, translator, and novelist, Iris Murdoch, whose translator hero, Jake Donaghue, opened this thesis, has written compellingly about the relationship between philosophic ideas and the capacity of the novel form to explore them in a particular and nuanced way. At the end of *Under the Net*, Jake intends to become a novelist rather than a translator. The move to fiction from translation perhaps signals his move to a more just and attentive relationship with reality. In this move he also had some parallels with his creator.

Murdoch's career also reveals some parallels with those of Eliot and Ward. Like them, she had translated, in her case Raymond Queneau's *Pierrot Mon Ami* in 1949, although the translation was not published. She dedicated *Under the Net* to Queneau, and Queneau's *Pierrot* is one of the books which Madge, Jake's reluctant landlady, ensures he takes with him on his eviction from her flat at the beginning of the novel.¹⁰ Murdoch had written to Queneau inviting him to fulfil the role of her 'maître', a 'master' or mentor, describing this as a '*problème important et dangereux*' [an important and dangerous problem].¹¹ Peter Conradi,

⁹ Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, p.92.

¹⁰ Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net*, p.16.

¹¹ Peter Conradi, 'Holy Fool and Magus, The Uses of Discipleship in *Under the Net* and *Flight from the Enchanter*', in *Iris Murdoch, Philosopher* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) p.121. Oxford Scholarship Online.

Murdoch's biographer, suggests that she was also in love with Queneau. It underlines the potential complexity of the relationship between translator and translated, its emotional undertow submerged below its apparent intellectualism. Eliot's language in relation to Strauss hints only at her ironic awareness of those undercurrents surrounding the process of sympathetic identification, and of close and 'faithful' attention to the 'products of another man's mind', of that particular intensity of the I and thou relationship which Feuerbach argued subsisted between man and woman.¹²

Like Jake, and like Eliot and Ward, Murdoch moved from translation and from engagement with philosophy to become a novelist, although she never relinquished her professional involvement as a philosopher. She thus becomes the inheritor of a tradition both Eliot and Ward had developed: the translation of European – and, in Murdoch's case, Anglo-American – philosophic debates and the cultural milieu for them into a novel form. Her novels, like theirs, invoke symbolically the emotional and intellectual complexity of European religious and philosophic tradition and those artistic movements which translate them. They are full of references to European philosophers, quotations from European poets, descriptions of European paintings, and dialogues with religious figures, representing the intellectual traditions and crises of European Christianity, as well as the sensibilities of Judaism.¹³

In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1993), Murdoch claimed that the novel is an ethical form dedicated to truth of seeing,¹⁴ and in *Sartre, Romantic Rationalist* (1953) she recognised that the novel form translates ideas both through fiction or dramatised exploration, and also sets up an independent language of 'dispute with philosophy as a mode of knowing, understanding or discovering'.¹⁵

The novel, after all, is itself a typical product of this post-Hegelian era; [...]. The novelist proper is, in his way, a sort of phenomenologist. He has always implicitly understood, what the philosopher has grasped less clearly, that human reason is not a single unitary gadget the nature of which could be discovered once for all. The novelist has his eye fixed on what we do, and not on what we ought to do or must be presumed to do. [...]. He has always been, what the very latest philosophers claim to

¹² LF EC, Ch.IX, p.92.

¹³ See also *The Philosopher's Pupil, The Bell*

¹⁴ Martha Nussbaum, 'Faint with Secret Knowledge': Love and Vision in Murdoch's *The Black Prince* in *Iris Murdoch, Philosopher*, p.1.

¹⁵ Malcolm Bradbury, 'Introduction' to Iris Murdoch's *The Philosopher's Pupil*, (London: Vintage, 2000), p.x.

be, a describer rather than an explainer; and in consequence he has often anticipated the philosopher's discoveries.¹⁶

The novel form was, for her, 'more important, in the sense of being more influential,'¹⁷ than philosophic endeavour, in that it made ideas nuanced, vivid and accessible. Yet paralleling Eliot's distaste for theory or formulae, and Ward's ambivalence about 'propaganda', she too is uneasy about fiction's relationship with philosophy, describing her 'absolute horror of putting theories or "philosophical ideas" as such into my novels'.¹⁸ Conradi interprets her aim as that of re-articulating philosophic ideas as a human struggle, a position which, we can see, bears close resemblance to Ward's and to Eliot's:

Ideas-in-art, she would say, must suffer a sea-change, and so at the heart of a good novel, she felt, should be a vital spiritual struggle implicating both writer and reader: [...]. Without such struggle, literature proper would give way to propaganda.¹⁹

The objective of involving the reader in 'a vital spiritual struggle' recalls Eliot's narrator's attempts to entrap the reader, through continuous ironic adjustments of our view of ourselves as well as of the novel's characters, into reassessing our reactions, and gaining a more just perception of the novel's characters and predicaments, and of our internal and external worlds. As with Eliot's insistence on her 'endeavour to see what our thought and emotion may be capable of' and on her novels as a 'set of experiments in life',²⁰ Murdoch claimed that she focused on 'what we do, and not on what we ought to do or must be presumed to do'.²¹ Yet, her novels address similar issues and hypotheses about how to live despite the absence of God, but with a new conception of the dangers of living when spirituality has no mooring in the search for the good.

Parallels can also be detected between her 'skeptical and loving'²² handling of character and Eliot's narrator's sympathy combined with ironic, thinking judgement. In her essay 'The Sublime and the Good', Murdoch argued that:

¹⁶ Iris Murdoch, *Sartre, Romantic Rationalist* (London: Collins Fontana Library, 1967), pp.9, 10.

¹⁷ Iris Murdoch, *Sartre*, p.10.

¹⁸ Iris Murdoch *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997), p.19.

¹⁹ Peter J Conradi, p.1.

²⁰ GEL.VI, to Dr Joseph Frank Payne, 25 January 1876, pp. 216, 217.

²¹ Iris Murdoch, *Sartre*, pp. 9, 10.

²² Martha Nussbaum, p.1.

Love is the extremely difficult realisation that something other than oneself is real. Love, and so art and morals, is the discovery of reality.²³

The parallel between this idea and the ideas explored by Feuerbach and Eliot of the relationship between consciousness of the other, self-conscious thought and sympathy for other people, in a joint translation of self and other-than-self, reflects Murdoch's obvious admiration for Eliot's apprehensions and their novelistic expression. In her critique of Sartre's novel *L'Être et le Néant* [*Being and Nothingness*], she argues that 'if we are to be touched or terrified there must be that concrete realisation of what George Eliot called 'an equivalent centre of self from which the shadows fall with a difference,' and, later in the paragraph, called *Middlemarch* 'that brilliant study of being-for-others'. Only in one of Sartre's portrayals does she find 'the flicker of a real 'I-Thou'',²⁴ so consistently realised by Eliot.

Also like Eliot and Ward, Murdoch was interested in finding a language for those aspects of experience which had, in the past, been tethered to religion and to mysticism. Her project was to continue to assert the language both of morality and the mystical, in a world that no longer has religion as a way of translating and unifying them.²⁵ Her concern with the 'good' illuminates Eliot's search for a language which can translate or suggest Feuerbach's 'sacred', another type of reality penetrating that of scientific observation and explanation. If Murdoch dismissed the sort of transcendental reality postulated by religion, she was also dissatisfied by the exclusion of any other language than that of scientific rationalism as valid translations of experience. The language she aspired to create was one which could effectively translate 'all that meets the gaze of a just and loving moral perceiver,'²⁶ who may experience, or may not, an intermeshed world where transcendental good can be perceived.

The just and loving moral perceiver of Murdoch's novels is the narrator. The narrator is also the quizzical, disturbing, ironic presence which we note in Eliot's narrator. Unlike Eliot's and Ward's novels, apparently so deeply rooted in realism's reassuringly recognisable world, but so explicitly challenging of the reader's assumptions about it, Murdoch's twentieth century novels include magus-like characters, hallucinatory or surreal events, erotic delusions, the discovery of 'love' – or another person's 'reality' - in unexpected and absurd

²³ Iris Murdoch, 'The Sublime and the Good' in *Existentialists and Mystics*, p.215.

²⁴ Iris Murdoch, 'Introspection and Imperfect Sympathy' in *Sartre*, p.60.

²⁵ Justin Broackes, 'Introduction' to *Iris Murdoch, Philosopher*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.92. Oxford Scholarship Online.

²⁶ Justin Broackes, p.47.

conjunctions. The world, as she indicated, of Nietzsche, Freud and Sartre,²⁷ has displaced nineteenth century perceptions of reality, but what that reality consists of is still the subject of exploration and the search for new translation. What Knoepfmacher described as the ‘religious yearning without a religious object’,²⁸ a yearning for a new translation of human significance, has been transformed in a variety of ways, and not only by Murdoch’s symbolism and surrealism. This genre of novel, addressing the anxieties about how to live and how to determine the significance of human life, remains one of fundamental importance, despite changing narrative methods, moral imperatives, and ideological contexts.

²⁷ Iris Murdoch, *Sartre*, p.10.

²⁸ U C Knoepfmacher, *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel: George Eliot, Walter Pater and Samuel Butler*, p.15.

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