THE VOICE AND VISION OF GEORGE ELIOT: THE RESCUER OF HUMAN MEANING

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PREFACE

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INTRODUCTION

The influence of Ludwig Feuerbach in George Eliot's work was recognized by her contemporary, the critic R.H. Hutton. Malcolm Woodfield gives credit to Hutton's unique perception.[1] When he reviewed *Romola* Hutton remarked that, in spite of the historical setting of the novel, George Eliot's heroine seemed to have read Feuerbach. My thesis will try to show how George Eliot made Feuerbachian thoughts natural to her characters, without their having had to read him.

More recently both Ulrich Knoepflmacher and Bernard Paris have covered some aspects of Feuerbach's influence, emphasizing the significance of his ideas to George Eliot after her break with Christianity in 1841. Knoepflmacher cites that now famous declaration made by George Eliot to her friend Sara Hennell in 1854 - 'With Feuerbach I everywhere agree' - and adds:

> This agreement is everywhere exemplified in her novels. Feuerbach and the 'Higher Criticism' had taught her that Christianity was a fable, a beautiful fiction which contained only a 'Religion of Humanity,' teaching the perennial truth of human love and selflessness. In her own fiction, begun two and a half years later, she sought to recreate this 'truth' with something of the force and intensity which marked her evangelical upbringing.[2]

Knoepflmacher is right to highlight George Eliot's efforts to make incarnate aspects of Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*. But, as I will show, instead of simply endeavouring to recreate Feuerbachian doctrine imbued with her own personal experience, George Eliot used her books to test the adequacy of such ideas within the framework of the real-life demands that her novels imaginatively represent.

Rosemary Ashton has made some qualifications to the understanding of George Eliot's readings in Feuerbach, emphasizing that in her role as translator George Eliot always exercised a critical eye and felt that some of Feuerbach's language was too 'lax'. Moreover, she has attempted to widen the understanding of George Eliot's

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1 Malcolm Woodfield, *R.H. Hutton, Critic and Theologian: The Writings of R.H. Hutton on Newman, Arnold, Tennyson, Wordsworth, and George Eliot* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p.173: hereafter cited in the text as 'Woodfield'.

2 U.C. Knoepflmacher, *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel: George Eliot, Walter Pater and Samuel Butler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp.53-54: hereafter cited in the text as 'Knoepflmacher'.

thinking in relation to her translation of Spinoza, arguing that: 'if George Eliot's language describing her own development, and that used of Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, were traceable to any single source, it would be finally to Spinoza'.[3]

No study has yet brought together a close reading of both Feuerbach and Spinoza in the context of George Eliot's development as a novelist. That is my aim in this thesis. I have interpreted George Eliot's readings of *The Essence of Christianity* and the *Ethics* (translated by George Eliot in 1854 and 1856 respectively) in the framework of her own comments about other writers who had influenced her life.

On 4 February 1849 George Eliot wrote to Sara Hennell:

> I wish you thoroughly to understand that the writers who have most profoundly influenced me - who have rolled away the waters from their bed, raised new mountains and spread delicious valleys for me - are not in the least oracles to me. It is just possible that I may not embrace one of their opinions, - that I may wish my life to be entirely different from theirs.[4]

She further told Sara that her approach to ideas was with a view to 'new combinations' of thought. It is this model which I have in mind when approaching George Eliot. For even though this letter was written before her novel-writing career began, it reveals the characteristic structure of George Eliot's wide intelligence, ever modifying and reconstructing ideas, later manifest as the presence of 'George Eliot' within the rich density of her novels.

I consider George Eliot's work in the following context: in relation not only to Spinoza's application of rational propositions to reading the Bible and Feuerbach's ideas of projection, but also in the light of Matthew Arnold's Spinozistic understanding of the Bible as a literary source to be read with discretion and flexibility of understanding, in contrast to the strict formalized dogmatics of John Henry Newman.

I aim to present George Eliot as the Middle-woman, simultaneously testing Feuerbach and Spinoza, sceptical of Matthew Arnold's liberalism, herself a sort of

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3 Roesmary Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of German Thought 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp.159, 157.

4 *George Eliot's Life as Related in her Letters and Journals*, first published 1885, ed. by J.W. Cross, new edn (Edinburgh & London: Blackwood, [n.d.]), p.107: hereafter cited in the text as 'Cross'.

believer, sympathetic to the Christian sentiments of John Henry Newman, yet unable to follow such a rigid dogmatic path as he prescribed.

In the first two chapters I examine the efforts made by individuals towards self-transformation in the light of George Eliot's translations of Feuerbach and Spinoza. *Romola* might be understood in terms of the partial success of a Feuerbachian model. But Romola's success is set against the non-efforts at self transformation of men such as Tito Melema and Arthur Donnithorne. These men represent precisely the version of traditionless individuals which were W.H. Mallock's concern in *Is Life Worth Living?*

Mallock categorized George Eliot as a Positivist thinker (along with other writers such as Leslie Stephen and Matthew Arnold), too vague about what she considered the 'highest good'. He insists that without God as an absolute external judge of man's inward conscience ('God who reads the heart, and who cannot be deceived') there can be no constraint upon the immoral actions of men:

> There is no example, so far as I know, to be found in all history, of men having been stimulated or affected in any important way - none, at any rate, of their having been curbed - by a mere ideal that was known to have no reality to correspond to it.[5]

Later on he reinforces this point:

> It is true enough that I might present to my friend some image of my own inward state, and of all the happiness it gave me; but if, having compared his happiness and mine as well as he could, he still liked his own best, exhortation would have no power, and reproach no meaning. (Mallock, p.76)

Indeed, it is George Eliot's own belief in the existence and the reality of the inward life that fuels her to operate as the 'George Eliot' consciousness, acting correspondently in lieu of God. She must read and articulate the inward condition of people who refuse to do so for themselves. As a realist writer, George Eliot must consider the problem of human beings who, without the external constraints of a formal religion, refuse even to try to transform themselves into moral adulthood.

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[5] W.H. Mallock, *Is Life Worth Living?* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1880), pp.73, 20: hereafter cited in the text as 'Mallock'.

It is in response to such challenges as Mallock presents that in Chapter Three I turn to *Silas Marner.* I argue that in this novel George Eliot uses the contrast between Godfrey Cass and Silas Marner to begin to offer her own sense of the necessity for something genuinely external and other, going beyond Feuerbach and moving closer towards a position of belief. In the concentrated space offered by the shorter novel there is a greater potential to illustrate more dramatically the relation between a believer and a non-believer. The shift of consciousness towards an external, spiritual force is illustrated by Silas's impressions after the coming of Eppie. He senses an invisible presence which is beyond the explanation of Feuerbachian projection: 'some Power presiding over his life'.[6] This shift becomes increasingly necessary in the light of Mallock's concern for the future of modern man in respect of the hopelessness that results after the loss of a spiritual life beyond the temporal world. The prospect of a spiritual after-life, Mallock argues gave depth, form and purpose to man's existence and offered a richness to the understanding of human suffering and even degradation. He writes:

> Judged of by itself, this life would indeed be vanity; but it was not to be judged of by itself. All its ways seemed to break short aimlessly in precipices, or to be lost hopelessly in deserts. They led to no visible end. True; but they led to ends that were invisible - to spiritual and eternal destinies, to triumphs beyond all hope, and portentous failures beyond all fear. (Mallock, p.8)

This is the challenge which, I think, George Eliot most feared: to find some replacement for the promise of an after-life. Chapter Four and Five are concerned with what I argue is George Eliot's answer to the highly intellectual standstill-scepticism of Arthur Hugh Clough and the sheer bitter hopelessness of Thomas Hardy. In order to resist that outcome and provide some sort of hope, George Eliot must strive towards an understanding of the rich mystery of life and towards the restoration of a strict faith. To use Arnold's terms from *Culture and Anarchy*, in *Daniel Deronda* George Eliot was turning back towards an ancient Hebraic

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6 *Silas Marner*, first published 1861, ed. by Q.D. Leavis (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p.168: hereafter cited in the text.

'*strictness of conscience*' distinct from Hellenistic '*spontaneity of consciousness*'.[7] I argue finally that at the end of her career George Eliot was neither Feuerbachian nor Spinozistic: that her understanding of human development was too broad and her own vision too large to accept as final the explanations offered by either.

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[7] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, first published 1869, *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), p.165: hereafter cited in the text.

CHAPTER 1

TESTING FEUERBACH AND SPINOZA

I. Savonarola: Religious Tradition and Personality

In his sermon entitled 'The Mission of St. Philip Neri', John Henry Newman measures the value of St. Philip Neri's gently influential personality against Savonarola's more radical religious methods of conversion. Newman writes:

> It is not by the enthusiasm of the multitude, or by political violence, - it is not by powerful declamation, or by railing at authorities, that the foundations are laid of religious works. It is not by sudden popularity, or by strong resolves, and demonstrations, or by romantic incidents, or by immediate successes, that undertakings commence which are to last. I do not say, that to be roused, even for a moment, from the dream of sin, to repent and be absolved, even though a relapse follow it, is a slight gain; or that the brilliant, but brief, triumphs of Savonarola are to be despised. He did good in his day, though his day was a short one.[1]

When Newman writes of Savonarola's 'immediate successes' and 'brief, but brilliant triumphs' as contrasted with 'the foundations of religious works' and 'undertakings which are to last', it is clear that Savonarola in his enthusiasm does not conform to Newman's ideal. For whilst he gives praise to Savonarola's efforts on one transitory level, 'even for a moment [...] even though a relapse should follow', it is also apparent that Newman regards Savonarola's over-swift methods as inadequate to institute any permanent change.

Newman was a traditional orthodox believer whom George Eliot admired.[2] Newman's criticism of Savonarola makes *Romola* an important novel with which to start to examine George Eliot's own form of belief.[3] For in *Romola* George Eliot wrestles with the worth of imperfect helpers like Savonarola, with her own personal

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[1] John Henry Newman, 'The Mission of St. Philip Neri', first published in *Discourses to Mixed Congregations* 1892, *Sermons and Discourses 1839-1857*, ed. by Charles Frederick Harrold, new edn, 2 vols (London: Longmans Green, 1949), vol. II, 292.

[2] In 1864 George Eliot wrote to Sara Hennell of having read Newman's *Apologia*. She said it 'breathed much life into me'. She continued: 'I envy you your opportunity of seeing and hearing Newman, and should like to make an expedition to Birmingham for that sole end' (Cross, p.378).

[3] *Romola* was an important novel to George Eliot. She believed that she had given it her 'best blood' and told John Cross in later years that it had marked a transition in her life: 'I began it a young woman, - I finished it an old woman' (Cross, p.361).

loss of an outward religious tradition, and with the urgent need to find another form of moral security to guard against the stance of men like Tito Melema.

George Eliot is not as deterred by Savonarola's imperfections as Newman is. Instead as a novelist, she is interested in Savonarola's difficulties and struggles as a flawed religious man who is using his personal influence to try to incarnate the religious idea within the constraints of a complicated practical life:

> His need of personal predominance, his labyrinthine allegorical interpretations of the Scriptures, his enigmatic visions, and his false certitude about the Divine intentions, never ceased, in his own large soul, to be ennobled by that fervid piety, that passionate sense of the infinite, that active sympathy, that clear-sighted demand for the subjection of selfish interests to the general good, which he had in common with the greatest of mankind. But for the mass of his audience all the pregnancy of his preaching lay in his strong assertion of supernatural claims, in his denunciatory visions, in the false certitude which gave his sermons the interest of a political bulletin; and having once held that audience in his mastery, it was necessary to his nature - it was necessary for their welfare - that he should *keep* the mastery. The effect was inevitable. No man ever struggled to retain power over a mixed multitude without suffering vitiation; his standard must be their lower needs and not his best insight.[4]

Savonarola suffers an unavoidable two-way conflict which centres in both his own nature and the social and historical circumstance in which his nature has found itself. In his own nature there is a complex mixture of egoism and idealism - his 'need of personal predominance' seems paradoxically inseparable from the energy of 'that clear-sighted demand for the subjection of selfish interests'. Savonarola's struggling double life of mutually intervolved strengths and weaknesses pervades the passage, running parallel with a social necessity to carefully compromise himself and his message in order to achieve any worthwhile practicable outcome for his religious mission. But what the multitude needs encourages the worst aspects of Savonarola's character, and the corrupt historical situation in which Savonarola is striving to do some good stimulates the weaknesses which already exist in him. Savonarola's consciousness that his mastery over the multitude is 'necessary for their welfare' is at the heart of his efforts to put ideas into action. But what is 'necessary to his nature' becomes confusedly tangled up with that other necessity till the selflessness of the

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[4] *Romola*, first published 1863, ed. by Andrew Sanders (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p.300: hereafter cited in the text.

ideal is itself involved in the narrower maze of human selfishness. In order to realize his great religious idea Savonarola has to be popularly competitive so that the idea may appear relevant and practicable in the political arena, using a medium which will capture the audience's attention and understanding.

In *The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine* John Henry Newman himself concedes that the medium must be made relevant to the audience to enable them to grasp the religious idea:

> To speak to a blind man of light and colours, in terms proper to those phenomena, would be to mock him; we must use other media of information accommodated to his circumstances, according to the well-known instance in which his own account of scarlet was to liken it to the sound of a trumpet. And so again, as regards savages, or the ignorant, or weak, or narrow-minded, our representations and arguments must take a certain form, if they are to gain admission into the minds of all, and to reach them.[5]

Newman is suggesting a mediated compromise, adapting the form to make the ideas fitting for certain circumstances. The medium which Savonarola uses is his visions, at once so strong and so partial, giving his sermons the power of a 'political bulletin'. But in Savonarola's case the compromise is not made in the way that Newman suggests. The religious ideas which Savonarola seeks to spread actually become reduced, just as Savonarola himself becomes corrupted: he does not stand properly aloof from the vulgar crowd that he seeks to convert as a teacher but forms a part of it. Instead of using the mass-medium to translate the religious idea, he is himself transformed by the needs of the multitude. The consequences of his public life are encapsulated in George Eliot's last sentence in the passage: 'No man ever struggled to retain power over a mixed multitude without suffering vitiation; his standard must be their lower needs and not his own best insight'. Even what is good in Savonarola, George Eliot recognized, has to be incarnated and immersed into what is not as good in Florence.

John Morley discusses the difficulty of conveying an idea to a mixed, quasi-democratic multitude in *On Compromise*:

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[5] John Henry Newman, *The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine*, first published 1871, *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford 1826-1843* (London: S.P.C.K. 1970), p.341: hereafter Sermons from this edition are cited in the text as *Fifteen University Sermons*.

> The advance of the community depends not merely on the improvement and elevation of its moral maxims, but also on the quickening of moral sensibility. The latter work has mostly been effected, when it has been effected on a large scale, by teachers of a certain singular personal quality. They do nothing to improve the theory of conduct, but they have the art of stimulating men to a more enthusiastic willingness to rise in daily practice to the requirements of whatever theory they may accept. The love of virtue, of duty, of holiness, or by whatever name we call this powerful sentiment, exists in the majority of men, where it exists at all, independently of argument.[6]

Morley, in liberal contrast to Newman, believes the most that can be achieved when trying to convey an idea on a 'large scale' is to generate enthusiasm and to try to awaken man's sleeping conscience. If men cannot be reached intellectually by a theory, then perhaps they can be reached through the emotions. It is clearly more by manipulating the enthusiastic emotions that Savonarola tries to reach the masses, than through that intellectual incarnation within the emotions which Newman would prefer:

> Every changing tone, vibrating through the audience, shook them into answering emotion. There were plenty among them who had very moderate faith in the Frate's mission, and who in their cooler moments loved him little; nevertheless, they too were carried along by the great wave of feeling which gathered its force from sympathies that lay deeper than all theory. A loud resounding sob rose at once from the wide multitude, while Savonarola had fallen on his knees and buried his face in his mantle. He felt in that moment the rapture and glory of martyrdom without its agony. (*Romola*, p.294)

The scene depicts Savonarola as a charismatic orator: a person whom Morley would describe as having an 'art of stimulating men'. Savonarola's strong, enthusiastic tone and physical presence as a speaking personality are more important to his listeners than the content of his speech in 'cooler moments'.

In his 'art' Savonarola is half-genuine but also half-fake, like an artist or an actor whipping up emotions among the audience whose response is also half-fake and half-real: many in his audience 'loved him little' but are, nonetheless, 'carried along by the great wave of feeling which gathered its force from sympathies that lay deeper than all theory'. Savonarola's own strong egoism is stimulated by the sense of the power that he wields: he feels 'the rapture and glory of martyrdom without its agony' and, in effect, becomes his own audience. George Eliot recognized that there is a

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6 John Morley, *On Compromise* first published 1874, (London: Macmillan, 1888), p.237.

complex mixture of selfish and selfless motives which is inevitable in public life. She wrote to Miss Lewis in 1842:

> The martyr at the stake seeks its gratification as much as the court sycophant, the difference lying in the comparative dignity and beauty of the two egos. People absurdly talk of self-denial. Why, there is none in Virtue to a being of moral excellence: the greatest torture to such a soul would be to run counter to the dictates of conscience; to wallow in the slough of meanness, deception, revenge, or sensuality. (Cross, p.67)

George Eliot does not believe that the highest and best in men is measured by the absence of egoism for, as Barbara Hardy rightly observes: 'all George Eliot's characters are shown as egoists'.[7] The egoism which is inherent in all men is defined as high or low dependent on the *use* to which strong egoism is put. But with Savonarola, as I shall show, the higher use of ego cannot be generated out of the lower, and his efforts to control the masses end in his being virtually controlled by them. The prospect of a return to the simpler life of a monk is impossible for him.

When Romola attacks Savonarola for not defending Bernardo del Nero's innocence, he is suddenly made more immediately conscious that his position is one of a partly self-imposed stale-mate:

> Savonarola had that readily-roused resentment towards opposition, hardly separable from a power-loving and powerful nature, accustomed to seek great ends that cast reflected grandeur on the means by which they are sought. His sermons have much of that red flame in them. And if he had been a meaner man his susceptibility might have shown itself in irritation at Romola's accusatory freedom, which was in strong contrast with the deference he habitually received from his disciples. But at this moment such feelings were nullified by that hard struggle which made half the tragedy of his life - the struggle of a mind possessed by a never-silent hunger after purity and simplicity, yet caught in a tangle of egoistic demands, false ideas, and difficult outward conditions, that made simplicity impossible. Keenly alive to all the suggestions of Romola's remonstrating words, he was rapidly surveying, as he had done before, the courses of action open to him, and their probable results. (*Romola*, p.576)

The complexity that lies within Savonarola's 'never-silent hunger after purity and simplicity' is itself a symptom of his fall from simplicity: he cannot return to a quiet, simple life, for complexity itself prevents him. Like George Eliot herself as narrator,

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[7] Barbara Hardy, *The Novels of George Eliot: A Study in Form* (London: Althone Press, 1981), p 68.

Savonarola can only continue with the complexities. Savonarola's conscience cannot act spontaneously any longer but is trapped by the constant need to evaluate and try to predetermine practical outcomes by 'rapidly surveying, as he had done before, the courses of action that were open to him and their probable results'. Savonarola finds himself caught between either securing his religious ideal or supporting Romola's aged godfather. He runs a sort of race to ensure that the 'means' of working towards his vision of God's Kingdom will truly be justified by their 'ends'. Meanwhile in the 'tangle' of inner and outer considerations, Savonarola knows that a compromise which involves sacrificing del Nero (along with the other conspirators) in order to secure a chance of a future religious state, is bound up with the corrupt principles of men such as Dolfo Spini. Savonarola is suffering an inner life of turmoil mirrored by an external life which is lurching further out of his control.

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Savonarola and Romola's last meeting shows that a vast gulf has arisen between them. Romola feels isolated from Savonarola, in part because she is able to retain that degree of simplicity which Savonarola 'hungers after' but which, as a famous personality, he can no longer have. Romola provides the external voice for Savonarola's own desire to live a simple life when later she tells him: 'I cannot unravel your thoughts, father; I cannot hear the real voice of your judgement and conscience' (*Romola*, p.577). The 'real voice', once clear, is now a memory existing in him as an inward smart: he feels 'keenly alive to all the suggestions in Romola's remonstrating words'. Savonarola's 'hard struggle' is to do with his being able to remember that 'real voice of judgement and conscience' by which he had once addressed Romola on the road, but with his feeling now unable to return to it. The real voice sounded like this:

> 'What has your dead wisdom done for you, my daughter? It has left you without a heart for the neighbours among whom you dwell, without care for the great work by which Florence is to be regenerated and the world made holy; it has left you without a share in the Divine life which quenches the sense of suffering Self in the ardours of an ever-growing love. And now, when the sword has pierced your soul, you say, "I will go away; I cannot bear my sorrow." And you think nothing of the sorrow and the wrong that are within the city where you

> dwell: you would leave your place empty, when it ought to be filled with your pity and your labour. If there is wickedness in the streets, your steps should shine with the light of purity; if there is a cry of anguish, you, my daughter, because you know the meaning of the cry, should be there to still it.'
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> (*Romola*, pp. 434-435)

If only Savonarola could have spread his message on a one-to-one basis, as he does when he converts Romola on the road, he would not have had to suffer the agony of that last meeting with her. For Savonarola brings to Romola the same message of sacrifice which he had brought to the multitude but their relation is different because the medium is personal and individual. When he tells Romola: 'if there is a cry of anguish, you, my daughter, because you know the meaning of the cry, should be there to still it', he addresses a different 'you' than when he addressed Romola as a part of the multitude. Equally, the lower ego part of Savonarola's nature, which is stimulated by the masses, is subdued in his relation to Romola simply as another person: this is how the ego is changed from a lower to a higher function.

In *I and Thou* Martin Buber discusses the concept of a 'twofold I'. Man's nature is composed, says Buber, of 'person-orientated' and 'ego-orientated' qualities:

> No human being is pure person, and none is pure ego; none is entirely actual, none entirely lacking in actuality. Each lives in a twofold I. But some men are so person-orientated that one may call them persons, while others are so ego-orientated that one may call them egos.[8]

Martin Buber helps to locate the difference between Savonarola's public life and his personal relation to Romola: when Savonarola is preaching to the multitude he is more 'ego-orientated' but when he speaks to Romola he is more 'person-orientated'. This difference seems inevitable because when addressing the multitude his power rests in his difference from the people, for they become an homogenous mass - an It. Ironically, as we have seen, Savonarola's very sense of superiority to the masses leads him to become all too like them. When Savonarola addresses Romola, however, his power rests not only in their relation as persons but in a shared personal memory. It was Savonarola who had urged Romola to reject her pride and kneel beside Dino's death-bed to hear her brother's vision. The old connection between them is reinforced

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8 Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1970), p.112.

for, just before running away, it was Dino of whom Romola had been thinking. She looks at herself in the mirror, disguised in the religious garb of a Pinzochera:

> To herself she looked strangely like her brother Dino: the full oval cheek had only to be wasted; the eyes, already sad, had only to become a little sunken. Was she getting like him in anything else? (*Romola*, p.390)

The speculative thought - 'was she getting like him in anything else?' - partly also belongs to George Eliot who, as narrator, is already bringing forward the shadowy figure of Savonarola. Romola does not consciously connect her familial similarities to Dino's religious convictions. But it is Romola's likeness to Dino which causes Savonarola to recognize her on the road when she briefly lifts her cowl, although he expresses his recognition of her in the powerful terms of God's revelation: 'It was declared to me who you were: it is declared to me that you are seeking to escape from the lot God has laid upon you' (*Romola*, p.428). When Savonarola urges Romola to use her sorrow as a motivating force, the strength of his words partly rests in his personal relation to her, but his words also represent the impersonal voice - the calling which Dino had felt compelled to answer.

Significantly for a study of George Eliot, Martin Buber's very terms have their roots in Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity.* Feuerbach would have described the meeting between Romola and Savonarola as an example not of the merely personal but of the 'species' understanding, or the recognition of one's own 'essential nature' through a relation with another:

> The consciousness of the world is a humiliating consciousness; the Creation of the world was an 'act of humility;' 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 fellowman is the bond between me and the world. I am, and I feel myself, dependent on other men. If I did not need man, I should not need the world. I reconcile myself with the world only through my fellow man.[9]

The 'pride of egoism' in Romola prompts her to run away not only from her fellow-sufferers in Florence but from that best in her own nature, which is the real species

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[9] Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. by Marian Evans, 1854 (New York: Calvin Blanchard, 1855), p.117: hereafter cited as 'Feuerbach'.

consciousness (lost when Savonarola preaches to the mob). The 'humiliating consciousness' is made real to Romola through her personal relation to Savonarola when he tells her to turn her weakness ('I will go away; I cannot bear my sorrow') into motivation for continuing to stay and becoming strong in relation to the sorrows of others:

> Romola felt herself surrounded and possessed by the glow of his passionate faith. The chill doubts all melted away; she was subdued by the sense of something unspeakably great to which she was being called by a strong being who roused a new strength within herself. In a voice that was like a low prayerful cry, she said-
> 'Father I will be guided. Teach me! I will go back.' (*Romola*, p.436)

The words 'surrounded' and 'possessed' illustrate that the best in Savonarola's nature is not only outside Romola but also outside Savonarola, distantly reflecting the best that exists in both him and her. Once Romola's own egoism is 'subdued', the voice of her best self springs out in answer to Savonarola almost half-consciously: 'I will be guided', 'I will go back'. Moreover, in alerting Romola to the dangers of her egoism Savonarola touches on his own problem. Savonarola projects upon her his own best nature and in doing so sees it for himself, as well as allowing Romola to see her own better nature objectified in his.

Savonarola's intervention would probably have still been too extreme from Newman's viewpoint. What Newman desired was that the religious man should teach the way of Christ in a less urgent, more implicit form, as Newman's sermon 'Personal Influence: The Means of Propogating the Truth' makes clear:

> Men persuade themselves with little difficulty, to scoff at principles, to ridicule books, to make sport of the names of good men; but they cannot bear their presence: it is holiness embodied in personal form, which they cannot steadily confront and bear down: so that the silent conduct of a conscientious man secures for him from beholders a feeling different in kind from any which is created by the mere versatile and garrulous Reason. (*Fifteen University Sermons*, p.92)

Newman is advocating that the role of personal influence is to teach by silent individual example which is incarnate in being, not merely by noisy religious exhortation or by direct social intervention. Savonarola, even on an individual level, cannot be a 'silent' or 'conscientious man'. Newman's fear is that personal influence, being used in too forceful a manner, might result in an individual becoming, wrongly, an idol in competition with, rather than in imitation of, Christ. Initially, Newman's

concern seems justified in *Romola* for Savonarola's ideas are, in Romola's mind, inseparable from the man himself. But George Eliot goes on to show that as Romola's life and experience deepen throughout the novel, Savonarola's ideas increasingly become a source of strength *independent* of himself personally. In time, Savonarola's influence is applied to her life more generally as a guiding principle: as a powerful thought inside her, rather than a person outside. Thus Savonarola's teaching and influence extends beyond his death, incorporated in modified form in Romola's own way of life.[10]

The event which acts as a testimony to the transmutation of Savonarola's ideas, from the influential individual outside to the thought inside Romola, is given when Romola responds to the sounds of the crying baby in the Green Valley. Romola has fled from Florence after the execution of her godfather Bernardo del Nero. She feels that her faith in Savonarola has been totally destroyed:

> She had not been in this attitude of contemplation more than a few minutes when across the stillness there came a piercing cry; not a brief cry, but continuous and more and more intense. Romola felt sure it was the cry of a little child in distress that no one came to help. She started up and put one foot on the side of the boat ready to leap on to the beach; but she paused there and listened; the mother of the child must be near, the cry must soon cease. But it went on, and drew Romola so irresistably, seeming the more piteous to her for the sense of peace which had preceded it, that she jumped onto the beach and walked many paces before she knew what direction she would take.

Romola finds the child in a nearby hovel:

> On the straw, with which the floor was scattered, lay three dead bodies, one of a tall man, one of a girl about eight years old, and one of a young woman whose long black hair was being clutched and pulled by a living child - the child that was sending forth the piercing cry. Romola's experience in haunts of death and disease made thought and action prompt: she lifted the little living child, and in trying to soothe it on her bosom, still bent to look at the bodies and see if they were really dead. (*Romola*, pp. 641-642)

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[10] At the end of 'Janet's Repentance', George Eliot describes Janet as a 'another memorial' to Edgar Tryan in living contrast to his simple gravestone. She writes of Janet as one who has been 'rescued from self-despair, strengthened with divine hopes, and now looking back on years of purity and helpful labour' (*Scenes of Clerical Life*, first published 1857, ed. by David Lodge (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.412: hereafter cited in the text). Mr Tryan's influence continues to exert a force in Janet which reaches beyond his own physical existence.

The cry of the 'living child' is another real voice of life which comes to Romola out of the silence and gives her an inward vision of what she must do. Her sense of vision prior to hearing the cry had been, she thought, lost along with her faith in Savonarola, as if metaphorically she had felt herself to be blindly, confusedly wandering:

> The vision of any great purpose, any end of existence which would ennoble endurance and exalt the common deeds of dusty life with divine ardours, was utterly eclipsed for her now by the sense of a confusion in human things. (*Romola*, p.586)

But the child's cry recreates and strengthens that guiding inward vision which has already dimly existed in her. The intense power of the cry of the child was illustrated in George Eliot's earlier novel, *Adam Bede*, when Hetty (although a small creature spiritually) was drawn back, instinctively and in spite of herself, to her crying baby. Her response to the child's cry marks the birth of Hetty's conscience where previously it had not existed: she had no conscience toward Adam or the Poysers who had been kind to her. Furthermore, the memory of her child's cry lives on in Hetty as a primitive conscience. In prison, after her act of infanticide is discovered, Hetty pleads with Dinah during her confession: 'Dinah, do you think God will take away that crying and the place in the wood, now I've told everything?'.[11]

In Romola's case the crying child does not create a belated conscience but draws her back into the realm of life from which she had hoped to be free and independent when she fled Florence. Up until this point, Romola had understood the concept of suffering, and her relief of suffering, only in relation to Florence. A few moments before the cry began, Romola had thought that 'no sound from Florence would reach her'. The jolt of the cry makes it appear to her that suffering has escaped from the confines of Florence and followed her even here. Romola is in the process of learning the lesson of which Thomas à Kempis writes in *Of the Imitation of Christ*:

> The Cross therefore is always ready, and everywhere waiteth for thee. Thou canst not escape it withersoever thou runnest; for wheresoever thou goest thou carriest thyself with thee, and ever shalt find thyself. Turn thee above, turn thee below, turn thee without, turn thee within, and in all these places thou shalt find

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[11] *Adam Bede*, first published 1859, ed. by Stephen Gill (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.500: hereafter cited in the text.

> the Cross; and everywhere of necessity thou must hold fast patience, if thou wilt have inward peace, and win an everlasting crown.[12]

George Eliot incarnates in *Romola* Thomas à Kempis's idea of the Cross from which 'thou canst not escape'. Romola's effort to put a physical distance between herself and Florence is, in fact, prompted by a mistaken psychological concept: she associates the Cross with a place rather than as a burden carried by herself. Thus Romola remains unconscious that by responding to the child's cry she is again taking up the Cross from which she has fled. She is unaware that her action is connected to the teachings of her religious mentor, Savonarola; for, as George Eliot tells us, she acted 'before she knew'. She has forgotten that he told her: 'if there is a cry of anguish, you, my daughter [...] should be there to still it' - but it is almost as if her deep memory remembers the words for her. In George Eliot's translation of Spinoza's *Ethics*, published in 1856, Spinoza argues:

> We can do nothing according to a decree of our minds, unless we remember that decree. For example, we cannot utter words unless we remember them; and it does not depend on our free will whether we remember anything or forget it.[13]

Thus, in Romola's case, even though she willed herself consciously to feel detached from Savonarola and from Florence, the words are brought alive by her deep recall and species-being, and the idea springs to life independent of Savonarola's immediate physical presence.

If Savonarola were to convey the religious idea on just such an individual basis it would obviously be a much slower process than that of mass-conversion, requiring greater patience. But Savonarola is impatient to reach a wider audience more quickly. His impatience is fuelled by his over-strict and literal adherence to the Scriptures. He accepts the promises of the Scriptures and understands his own mission as if it were on a par with that of a Hebrew Prophet:

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12 Thomas à Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, first published in translation c.1450, revised translation (London: Henry Froude, 1906), p.89: hereafter cited as *The Imitation*. Thomas à Kempis is a vital real voice to Maggie Tulliver in George Eliot's earlier novel, *The Mill on the Floss*, first published 1860, ed. by A.S. Byatt (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985): hereafter cited as *The Mill*. *The Imitation* was of huge personal importance to George Eliot: she had re-read it several times and, in 1874, praised he 'unchangeable and universal meanings of that great book' (Cross, p.531).

13 Benedict de Spinoza, the *Ethics*, first published 1677, trans by George Eliot 1856, ed. by Thomas Deegan (Salzburg: Salsburg University, 1981), p.98: hereafter cited in the text.

> Savonarola appeared to believe, and his hearers more or less waveringly believed, that he had a mission like that of the Hebrew prophets, and that the Florentines amongst who his message was delivered were in some sense a second chosen people. The idea of prophetic gifts was not a remote one in that age: seers of visions, circumstantial heralds of things to be, were far from uncommon either outside or inside the cloister; but this very fact made Savonarola stand out the more conspicuously as the grand exception. While in others the gift of prophecy was very much like a farthing candle illuminating small corners of human destiny with prophetic gossip, in Savonarola it was like a mighty beacon shining far out for the warning and guidance of men. (*Romola*, p.270)

Savonarola believes implicitly in the authority of the Bible as God's literal instruction and his over-active egoism fuels his personal need to see the scriptures fulfilled in his own life-time. His faith is rooted in the conviction that the Florentines are God's 'second chosen people'. God will come and cleanse the world of corruption, Savonarola asserts, but in order to hasten the progress towards a religious state, Savonarola himself becomes paradoxically embroiled in the corrupt political system which he wants to oust. Thus Savonarola '*appeared* to believe' because so much of his belief is made up of what he appears to be to the multitude. His visions (visions which are perhaps no more than the powerful imaginings of what that future life should be like) are half-consciously moulded into literal, historical specifics. He describes his visions as events that shall happen rather than be prepared to recognize that they are more closely connected with what he himself wills to happen.

In Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma,* another work of secular translation, man's impatience is likewise seen in the fact of his understanding metaphorical language as if it were literal. But Arnold asserts that the way to make the Bible most relevant to men's lives is by understanding and assessing it as literature with a spiritual message, not as an historical record:

> In this sense we should read the Hebrew prophets. They did not foresee and foretell curious coincidences, but they foresaw and foretold this inevitable triumph of righteousness. First, they foretold it for all the men and nations of their own day, and especially for those colossal unrighteous kingdoms of the heathen world, which looked everlasting; then, for all time. 'As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more;' - sooner or later it is, it must be, so. Hebrew prophecy is never read aright until it is read in this sense, which indeed of itself it cries out for; it is, as Davison, again, finely says, *impatient for the larger scope*.

> How often, throughout the ages, how often, even, by the Hebrew prophets themselves, has some immediate visible interposition been looked for![14]

Savonarola, like the Hebrew prophets in Arnold's analysis, is bound by his human nature to expect some kind of physical evidence - something which is visible and thus easier to comprehend than an abstract idea. In Savonarola the impatience for larger scope is dangerous because it is precisely this which draws him into public life and drives him to adopt methods to force the idea or promise into a reality:

> Nay, reason itself declared that vengeance was imminent, for what else would suffice to turn men from their obstinacy in evil? And unless the Church were reclaimed, how could the promises be fulfilled, that the heathens should be converted and the whole world become subject to one true law? He had seen his belief reflected in visions - a mode of seeing which had been frequent in him from his youth up.
>
> But the real force of demonstration for Girolamo Savonarola lay in his own burning indignation at the sight of wrong; in his fervent belief in an Unseen Justice that would put an end to the wrong, and in an Unseen Purity to which lying and uncleanliness were an abomination. To his ardent, power-loving soul, believing in great ends, and longing to achieve those ends by the exertion of its own strong will, the faith in a supreme and righteous Ruler became one with the faith in a speedy divine interposition that would punish and reclaim. (*Romola*, p.272)

By juxtaposing Savonarola's situation with Matthew Arnold's account of the Hebrew Prophets the connection is made clearer:

longing to achieve those ends by the exertion of his own strong will.	impatient for larger scope.
faith in a supreme and righteous ruler became one with the faith in a speedy divine interposition that would punish and reclaim.	how often even by the Hebrew prophets themselves has some immediate visible interposition been looked for!

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14 Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma: An Essay Towards a Better Appreciation of the Bible,* first published 1873, *The Complete Works of Matthew Arnold,* ed. by R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), pp.386-387: hereafter cited in the text. Matthew Arnold was following Spinoza. Matthew Arnold states in his essay 'Spinoza and the Bible' that in Spinoza's view: 'the pure teaching of God had been lost sight of. He determined therefore to go again to the Bible, to read it over with a perfectly unprejudiced mind, and to accept nothing as its teaching which it did not clearly teach. [...] Spinoza, in his own mind, regarded the Bible as a vast collection of miscellaneous documents, many of them quite disparate and not at all to be harmonized with others; documents of unequal value and of varying applicability, some of them conveying ideas salutary for one time, others for another' ('Spinoza and the Bible', *Essays in Criticism* (First Series) first published 1865, ed. by R.H. Super (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), pp.186, 195: hereafter cited as *Essays in Criticism).*

If only Savonarola could recognize the metaphorical and spiritual message of the Bible, it would be much more beneficial to him than is his literal understanding. It is clear, thinking back to Newman's assertion, that the religious man must use 'certain forms' as metaphors under variable circumstances in order to reach the masses. But neither Newman nor Savonarola - together for once in this - could accept the possibility, tantamount to blasphemy, that the language of the Bible is essentially metaphorical. Newman certainly would not have been convinced from the consequences which befell Savonarola that the Bible should lose its literal authority only to be replaced by Matthew Arnold's literary rendering.

George Eliot, I am arguing, was concerned precisely with the difficulties of making the shift from literal lessons to the literary ones. Like Savonarola, she uses her own medium, as a novelist, to reach a wide audience, but unlike Savonarola (the flawed 'vehicle' for religious ideas), is not herself compromised by a too direct personal involvement with the multitude called her readers. For through the novel, George Eliot as teacher has a one-to-one relation with each individual reader. In a letter to John Blackwood from Florence in 1861 (where she was busy gathering material *for Romola*), *George Eliot describes her writing as her 'medium' and herself* as the 'organ' destined to fulfil some particular piece of work:

> It may turn out that I can't work freely and fully enough in the medium I have chosen, and in that case I must give it up; for I will never write anything to which my whole heart, mind, and conscience doesn't consent, so that I may feel that it was something - however small - which wanted to be done in this world, and that I am just the organ for that small bit of work. (Cross, p.338)

George Eliot saw herself as a messenger with a specific purpose to fulfil. Her consciousness of work that 'wanted to be done' links back to Savonarola's belief that 'it was necessary for their welfare'. However, George Eliot is free from the impatience which tortures Savonarola, for she does not believe that her mission is on a par with the Hebrew prophets, but is a 'small bit of work' in the slow scale of human development.

If George Eliot is not like Savonarola, an impatient and literal believer, she cannot adopt the more liberally tolerant position of Matthew Arnold either, where the metaphorical stands in place of the literal. Understanding on a purely metaphorical level, she recognized, created other difficulties in place of those which exist with the

literal interpretation of beliefs. In *The Mill on the Floss* George Eliot, as narrator, rhetorically asks Aristotle:

> O Aristotle! if you had had the advantage of being 'the freshest modern' instead of the greatest ancient, would you not have mingled your praise of metaphorical speech as a sign of high intelligence, with a lamentation that intelligence so rarely shows itself in speech without metaphor, - that we can so seldom declare what a thing is, except by saying it is something else? (*The Mill*, p.209)

Her question seems to end in a lamentation, as if to highlight George Eliot's own acute consciousness of being one of 'the freshest moderns', trapped within the complexities of modern life while searching for some properly reclaimable simplicity. Leslie Stephen criticizes George Eliot, arguing:

> Her prose indeed though often admirable, sometimes becomes heavy, and gives the impression that instead of finding the right word she is accumulating more or less complicated approximations.[15]

But the 'complicated approximations' which Stephen locates are inevitable, for George Eliot is caught in between literal beliefs and their metaphorical replacements, entirely happy with neither. So too, at another level, Savonarola is caught in between his own strengths and weaknesses. In her writing George Eliot strives to bridge the gap between 'what a thing is', and 'saying it is something else'. Instead of the literal being merely replaced by the metaphorical, the spiritually metaphorical in George Eliot seeks to attain literal truths and universal laws as when Romola has Savonarola's teachings made incarnate in real life in her answering the cry of the baby. The problem of extra meaning left inside somebody else's life is more than banal but not simply allowed to be called 'spiritual'. For George Eliot 'what a thing is' includes something more - extra meaning that metaphorical expression covers once the spiritual is lost or gone.

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[15] Sir Leslie Stephen, *George Eliot* (London: Macmillan, 1903), p.168.

II. Tito Melema: A Man Without Tradition

Tito Melema's egoism reveals a contrast with the egoism of the apparently traditional religious man, Savonarola. According to the terms of Newman's view, Tito would be a prime example of traditionless human nature at its worst. In her examination of Tito Melema's inward motives and outward actions George Eliot questions whether Tito becomes the man he is simply because he lacks an outward religious tradition. This is a further variation on the theme, provided by the thinking involved in adding a third character to the Romola-Savonarola nexus.[16]

The following scene takes place just after Tito has rescued Tessa from the conjuror and shows the weakness which is a facet of his nature. His weakness here seems to operate as consideration for Tessa:

> The corners of the pouting mouth went down piteously, and the poor little bosom with the beads on it above the green serge gown heaved so, that there was no longer any help for it: a loud sob would come, and the big tears fell as if they were making up for lost time. Here was a situation! It would have been brutal to leave her, and Tito's nature was all gentleness.

But when Tito leaves her some time later:

> Tessa was looking after him, but he could see she was making no signs of distress. It was enough for Tito if she did not cry while he was present. The softness of his nature required that all sorrow should be hidden away from him.
> (*Romola*, pp.156, 163)

Tito had gone to release Tessa from the conjuror because his attention was caught by her child-like distress, and Tito remains in Tessa's view her rescuer and protector. Yet as soon as Tito is alone with Tessa, the soft child-like quality of his own nature emerges as a refuge from the responsibilities of adulthood. He chooses not to be a

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[16] In *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1982) Alasdair MacIntyre argues that the mid- and late-nineteenth century inherited a dilemma resulting from the failure of the Enlightenment. He writes: 'the price paid for liberation from what appeared to be the external authority of traditional morality was the loss of authoritative content from the would-be utterances of the newly autonomous agent' (pp.65-66). In a secular environment men are free agents, at liberty to exercise their own moral judgements. George Eliot understood that even in an individual like Romola there were great difficulties involved in trying to discern the right way to follow. But being 'unconstrained by the externalities of divine laws' as MacIntyre calls it, is even more challengingly problematic in men like Tito Melema.

morally grown-up individual, and even as he tries to soothe Tessa he views her 'pouting mouth' and 'poor little bosom' as the object of future sexual opportunities.

Daniel Deronda is Tito's antithesis in his relationship with Gwendolen Harleth. Here, Gwendolen comes into his thoughts, mingling with other complicated feelings, as he waits to meet his mother for the first time:

> Strangely her figure entered into the picture of his present and future; strangely (and now it seemed sadly) their two lots had come in contact, hers narrowly personal, his charged with far reaching sensibilities, perhaps with durable purposes, which were hardly more present to her than the reasons why men migrate are present to the birds that come as usual for crumbs and find them no more. Not that Deronda was too ready to imagine himself of supreme importance to a woman; but her words of insistence that he 'must remain near her - must not forsake her' - continually recurred to him with the clearness and importunity of imagined sounds, such as Dante has said pierce us like arrows whose points carry the sharpness of pity:-
> Lamenti saettaron me diversi
> Che di pieta ferrati avean gli strali.[17]

Deronda cannot erase Gwendolen's pleading from his mind, in spite of his feeling unable to bear the burden of her unhappy marriage to Grandcourt. He recognizes a bond with Gwendolen but feels bound to resist the sexual temptation into which the soft side of his nature might lead him. To act on a sexual temptation now, with the knowledge that so much of his influence comes from the contrast between Gwendolen's life as 'narrowly personal' and his own as 'charged with far reaching sensibilities', would be an abuse of her personal trust. But without an equivalent sense of levels, Tito seizes his opportunities, not thinking of the long-term consequences for Tessa of a sexual relation: 'it was enough [...] if she did not cry while he was present'.

An apparently contrasting aspect of Tito's nature is revealed - his hard strength of purpose - after he has met Fra Luca and learnt that his father is still alive:

> The men around him would expect that he should immediately apply those florins to his benefactor's rescue. But what was the sentiment of society? - a mere tangle of anomalous traditions and opinions, which no wise man would take as a guide, except so far as his own comfort was concerned. Not that he cared for the florins save perhaps for Romola's sake: he would give up the florins readily enough. It was the joy that was due to him and was close to his lips, which he felt he was not bound to thrust away from him and travel on, thirsting. (*Romola*, p.168)

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[17] *Daniel Deronda,* first published 1876, ed. by Barbara Hardy (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p.684; hereafter cited as '*Deronda*'.

Tito is not prepared to be fully adult, but this scene illustrates that he is not prepared to be his father's dutiful child either. Traditions are empty of belief for him. The sentiment which he enjoyed when it was in a pitying sexual relation to Tessa becomes abhorrent to him once connected to that which is difficult or unpleasant. Indeed his softness, which made him stay and comfort Tessa, is precisely what makes him turn away from Baldassarre's rescue. If it were easy, as the encounter with Tessa had been, and possessed a financial solution ('he would give up the florins readily enough'), it would be acceptable to Tito. He would still have the prospect of a union with Romola, a successful career, and freedom forever from the burden of his father.

Tito feels no obligation from a sense of tradition to control his behaviour. Tito believes he is intellectually above the multitude, who are influenced by 'a mere tangle of anomalous traditions and opinions'. Yet George Eliot's truly superior intelligence recognizes that Tito would be better if he was merely one of what Spinoza calls the 'vulgar crowd':

> As men rarely live according to the guidance of reason, therefore these two emotions, namely humility and penitence, and also hope and fear, are more useful than injurious; and since there must be error, this kind of error is preferable. For if weak-minded men were all equally proud, if they were ashamed of nothing, and afraid of nothing, by what bonds could they be held together and restrained? The vulgar crowd is terrible if it is not terrified. Hence it is no wonder that the prophets, who consulted not the good of the few but the good of the many, should have so strongly commended humility, penitence and reverence. (*Ethics*, p.193)

But the great difficulty with Tito is that he will not be a part of that crowd - not least because of his intelligence. The process of terrifying the masses into penitence and humility is something which Savonarola tries to do, but Tito views the Frate's ideas with contempt, believing that they have no relevance to his life, as he tells Romola: 'And for Fra Girolamo, he is simply a narrow-minded monk, with a gift of preaching and infusing terror into the multitude' (*Romola*, p.237). Savonarola tries to champion the worth of the Bible on a literal level, conforming to the model which Matthew Arnold outlines in his opening chapter of *Literature and Dogma*. He argues that theologians have, wrongly, taken 'literary terms' and employed them 'as if they were scientific terms' (*Literature and Dogma,* p.8). Ironically, it may be precisely because Savonarola tries to present the Bible at a literal level that Tito, with his scholarly intelligence, feels all the more capable to deny its truths. Tito is a scholar, George

Eliot tells us, who is: 'in erudite familiarity with disputes concerning the Chief Good, which had after all, he considered, left it a matter of taste' (*Romola*, p.169). He feels free to scrutinize and evaluate the Scriptures on the same level as he would any other historical piece of evidence.

Thus, Tito is presented as an early modern hybrid - a man with a sense of freedom from old religious values, half-educated and situated in between the vulgar crowd on the one hand and the fully responsible, intelligent adult on the other - as the following scene makes clear:

> He had avowed to himself a choice which he would have been ashamed to avow to others, and would have made him ashamed in the resurgent presence of his father. But the inward shame, the reflex of that outward law which the great heart of mankind makes for every individual man, a reflex which will exist even in the absence of sympathetic impulses that need no law, but rush to the deed of fidelity and pity as inevitably as the brute mother shields her young from the attack of the hereditary enemy - that inward shame was showing its blushes in Tito's determined assertion to himself that his father was dead, or at least search was hopeless. (*Romola*, pp. 151-152)

Tito has dismissed the law Spinoza prescribes for the 'weak-minded men', but he sees no necessity to replace it in his own life with an individual equivalent. There is a passage in George Henry Lewes's *The Problems of Life and Mind* which corresponds to George Eliot's description of Tito. Using Darwin's framework, Lewes writes of the evolution of a 'moral reflex' in man which is far advanced from the primitive moral sense of the dog:

> To the moral sense in this lower stage there is but a faint and confused impression of what constitutes the wrong of wrong-doing; forgiveness is contemplated as a heal-all. But in a mind where the educated tracing of hurtful consequences to others is associated with a sympathetic imagination of their suffering, Remorse has no relation to an external source of punishment for the wrong committed: it is the agonized sense, the contrite contemplation, of a wound inflicted on another. [...] The sanction which was once the outside whip has become the inward sympathetic pang.[18]

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[18] George Henry Lewes, *The Problems of Life and Mind (1873-1879)*, 2 vols (London: Trubner, 1879), vol. I, 150: hereafter cited in the text. George Eliot worked on after her husband's death to prepare this edition for publication. Gordon Haight notes that George Eliot's sorrow after the death of George Henry Lewes had left her thin and worn: 'instead of waiting to solve Problem III, for which Lewes had collected a mass of chaotic notes, Marian resolved to issue Problem I "The Study of Psychology", separately, leaving the other three for another volume' (*George Eliot: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p.520).

When George Eliot writes of Tito making a choice which 'would have made him ashamed in the resurgent presence of his father', his reaction is still that of the morally primitive animal which Lewes describes - made ashamed only by the presence of his master and the threat of the stick which, in human terms, is Baldassarre's vengeance. Tito is not entirely free of the moral human's 'inward sympathetic pang' towards his father: he feels guilty about his choice to stay in Florence. Yet for all his apparent sophistication, Tito is more degenerate in some respects than any animal can be, since he is deficient even in the animal instinctiveness of familial protection - 'as the brute mother shields her young from the attack of an hereditary enemy'. George Eliot uses the metaphor to describe the role-reversal which results between parent and child in later life: Baldassarre's aged vulnerability means that he is the helpless one now, and Tito represents the brute mother. Tito does not feel compelled to rescue Baldassarre but George Eliot anticipates and resists the simple explanation that Tito's disinclination is to do with his being an adopted child. *Silas Marner* was the novel which, said George Eliot, had 'thrust itself between me and the other book [*Romola*] I was meditating' (Cross, p.328). Godfrey's biological bond with Eppie is tested at the end of *Silas Marner* when Eppie's feelings for Marner, established over a period of long years, prove stronger than the claims of her natural father.

Tito's primitiveness is further illustrated in his determination not to actualize the guilt he feels towards his father into language ('he had avowed to himself a choice which he would have been ashamed to avow to others'), believing that if his sin has no external objectivity, it is not real. Feuerbach would attribute this to primitive man's originally only understanding something as 'real' if it had a visible form:

> Whatever man conceives to be true, he immediately conceives to be real (that is, to have an objective existence), because originally, only the real is true to him - true in opposition to what is merely conceived, dreamed, imagined. (Feuerbach, p.40)

In fact, Tito is reluctant to actualize his guilt even when he decides on confession. Confession comes to him as an inspiration - a chance to evade the obstacle which his father places in his path with an 'easy spring'. But clearly 'confession' is a word devoid of any true religious meaning in Tito:

> But with this possibility of relief, by an easy spring, from present evil, there rose the other possibility, that the fierce-hearted man might refuse to be propitiated. Well - and if he did, things would only be as they were before; for there would be *no witness by*. It was not repentance with a white sheet round it and a taper in hand, confessing its hated sin in the eyes of men, that Tito was preparing for: it was repentance that would make all things pleasant again, and keep all past unpleasant things secret. And Tito's soft-heartedness, his indisposition to feel himself in harsh relations with any creature, was in strong activity towards his father, now his father was brought near to him. (*Romola*, p.376)

The idea of confession is corrupted and adapted by Tito for his own psychological needs in place of ethical necessity. What he regards as confession is in reality an aesthetically limited form of therapeutic relief which will continue the general pattern of concealment. He comforts himself with the thought that whatever the outcome: 'there would be *no witness by*'. Confession and repentance are not accepted by Tito in the traditional religious form as a way for him to address and atone for his wrong-doing. He uses the words as mere devices which will enable him to hide the extent of the wrong-doing from his father and thus limit his father's response by keeping 'all past unpleasant things secret'. Tito's decision to confess and 'make all things pleasant again' is due only to Baldassarre's nearness. Spinoza writes that pleasure and pain are passions experienced through inadequate ideas:

> We only suffer in so far as we imagine i.e., so far as we are affected with an emotion which involves the nature of our own body and the nature of an external body. (*Ethics* p.134)

Tito is imaginatively inadequate. He did not suffer when he was apart from his father. Images do not linger in Tito's mind of an emotional attachment such as would help him to act rightly from within, independently of external circumstance.

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Tito has an acute instinct for his own self-preservation, and this instinct - a combination of primitiveness and intelligence - is manifest in him as fear. It is fear which stimulates his intelligence to devise ways of avoiding human tasks, without suffering the consequences. Thus, after Tito's denial of Baldassarre on the steps of the

duomo, Tito elects to buy a 'coat of mail' to eradicate the fear he has of his father's vengeance:

> He had been exerting himself throughout the day under the pressure of hidden anxieties, and had at last made his escape unnoticed from the midst of supper-gaiety. Once at leisure thoroughly to face and consider the circumstances, he hoped that he could so adjust himself to them and to all the probabilities as to get rid of his childish fear. If he had only not been wanting in the presence of mind necessary to recognize Baldassarre under that surprise! - it would have been happier for him on all accounts; for he still winced under the sense that he was deliberately inflicting suffering on his father: he would very much have preferred that Baldassarre should be prosperous and happy. But he had left no second path now: there could be no conflict any longer: the only thing he had to do was to take care of himself. (*Romola*, pp. 303-304)

The fear which Tito belittles in his mind as 'childish fear' and hopes to 'get rid of', is actually the grown-up voice of conscience which warns him against the activities he refuses to acknowledge as truly childish. It would have been better for Tito to be more grown-up with Tessa but he had chosen to be child-like; now, when he needs to listen to what he thinks of as childish fear he decides he is too mature to do so. Tito believes his 'hidden anxieties' can be cured through his talent for adaptation as an ability to adjust to new conditions in order to survive. But Tito, who distrusts the literal meaning of the Bible, believes too literally that external armour will protect him from the consequences of his moral misdemeanours.

In *The Two Paths* John Ruskin writes of the evolved virtue of self-restraint:

> As the plough is the typical instrument of industry, so the fetter is the typical instrument of restraint or subjection necessary in a nation - either literally for its evildoers, or figuratively, in accepted laws for its wise and good men. You have to choose between the figurative and literal use; for depend upon it, the more laws you accept, the fewer penalties you will have to endure, and the fewer punishments to enforce. For wise laws and just restraints are to a noble nation not chains but chain-mail - strength and defence, though something also of an incumberance.[19]

Ruskin is writing more widely about the issue of how much liberty individual citizens of a nation should be allowed. However, his words apply to Tito in that Tito should use the 'figurative' in his life, as he would the literal: namely, to create an invisible

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[19] John Ruskin, *The Two Paths: Being Lectures on Art and its Application to Decoration and Manufacture (1858-9)*, first published 1859 (London: George Allen, 1905), p.239.

moral armour. Although there is no visible outward fetter to restrain Tito, metaphorically there is an inward fetter which should be the bond between himself and his father. George Eliot believes that with repeated efforts at self-restraint Tito could have made a tradition for himself to follow inwardly, where there was none which he would accept outwardly:

> Our lives make a moral tradition for our individual selves, as the life of mankind makes a moral tradition for the race; and to have once acted nobly seems a reason why we should always be noble. But Tito was feeling the effect of an opposite tradition: he had won no memories of self-conquest and perfect faithfulness from which he could have a sense of falling. (*Romola*, p.420)

Thus, memory of past achievement becomes a dynamic source of inner strength. This idea has its roots in George Eliot's love of Wordsworth, for as he writes in *The Prelude*:

> So feeling comes in aid
> Of feeling, and diversity of strength
> Attends us, if but once we have been strong.[20]

George Eliot, following Wordsworth, believes that memories will come forward again in the future as guiding thoughts. But Tito has no understanding of 'if but *once* we have been strong', for Tito's only strength and resolution in the past has come out of his moral weakness - his decision not to seek his father out. Tito is the sort of example a traditional believer such as Newman might have offered in order to show how we cannot trust fallen humans to substitute metaphorical beliefs for literal ones. Even thus George Eliot's fiction begins to test itself. For Tito's actions fashion a bad inward tradition for him, which is so powerful that he shocks even himself when he responds to his father on the duomo steps with the words '*some madman, surely*':

> He hardly knew how the words had come to his lips: there are moments when our passions speak and decide for us, and we seem to stand by and wonder. They carry in them an inspiration of crime, that in one instant does the work of long premeditation [...]

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[20] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude or The Growth of a Poet's Mind* (text of 1805), ed. by Ernest de Selincourt with revised impressions by Helen Darbishire (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), I:269-271, p.215: hereafter cited in the text.

> Tito was experiencing that inexorable law of human souls, that we prepare ourselves for sudden deeds by the reiterated choice of good or evil which gradually determines character. (*Romola*, pp.283-284, 287)

Tito's response has been prepared as the result of accumulated unconfessed passions which now answer for him. There is a law which operates psychologically, even for those who deny the moral law, and this psychological law may act in reality without their knowledge or consent. Tito could have avoided his situation altogether if only he had forced on his selfish self the initial violence of going after his father. It is an habitually self-restrained frame of mind which George Eliot is urging men to pursue as, in a contrasting example, Felix Holt does:

> His strong health, his renunciation of selfish claims, his habitual preoccupation with large thoughts and with purposes independent of everyday casualities, secured him a fine and even temper, free from moodiness and irritability. He was full of long-suffering towards his unwise mother who 'pressed him daily with her words and urged him, so that his soul was vexed'; he had chosen to fill his days in a way that required the utmost exertion of patience, that required those little rill-like outflowings of goodness which in minds of great energy must be fed from deep sources of thought and passionate devotedness.[21]

Felix is both 'long-suffering' and has a 'long-trained consciousness' relative to his twenty-six years. His habits on an immediate personal level in his relation to his difficult and demanding mother have already set limits on his behaviour. His own 'selfish claims' have little room to exist in him, for he is too full with the 'large thoughts' of life beyond the merely personal realm. There is a combination in Felix's life of free choice and self-discipline - 'he had *chosen* to fill his days in a way that *required* the utmost exertion of patience' - two components which are vital from George Eliot's stance. For Felix's habitual efforts towards his mother are described as 'rill-like out-flowings of goodness' from which Felix is himself morally nourished; Tito's selfish thoughts towards Baldassarre are described 'as active as virulent acid, eating its rapid way through all the tissues of his sentiment'. Tito is steadily poisoning himself (*Romola*, p.168).[22]

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[21] *Felix Holt*, first published 1866, ed. by Peter Coveney (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), pp.390-391: hereafter cited in the text.

[22] The scientific 'acid' metaphor which George Eliot uses to describe Tito seemingly extended to her whole analysis of types of the human character. In 1848 George Eliot wrote to Sara Hennell: 'I once said yours was a sort of alkaline nature, which would detect the slightest acid of falsehood' (Cross, p.93). Sally
(footnote continued on next page)

In *The Essence of Christianity* Feuerbach argues that the renunciation of selfish claims is crucial if men are ever to be able to limit and control their passions. He writes:

> And when thou suppressest a passion, renouncest a habit, in short, achievest a victory over thyself, is this victorious power thy own personal power, or is it not rather the energy of the will, the force of morality, which seizes the mastery of thee and fills thee with an indignation against thyself and thy individual weaknesses? (Feuerbach, p.22)

Tito's failure to change his habits and avoid pleasure, results in him being possessed by the force of a primitive law - a precursor to inner morality. This law, however invisible to Tito, forces on him consequences that poison his pleasure, even as the following scene from the Rucellai Gardens illustrates. Baldassarre reveals to the host (Bernardo Rucellai) and other guests present at the supper that Tito is his long-lost son, a traitor and a robber. But Tito confuses the old man and manages to convince all present that Baldassarre is not his father but a mad, vindictive servant whom he had dismissed some years earlier:

> Tonight he had paid a heavier price than ever to make himself safe. He did not like the price, and yet it was inevitable that he should be glad of the purchase.
>
> And after all he led the chorus. He was in a state of excitement in which oppressive sensations, and the wretched consciousness of something hateful but irrevocable, were mingled with a feeling of triumph which seemed to assert itself as the feeling that would subsist and be master of tomorrow.
>
> And it *was* the master. For on the morrow, as we saw, when he was about to start his mission to Rome, he had the air of a man well satisfied with the world. (*Romola*, pp.426-427)

The same force of will which Feuerbach believes would 'seize the mastery', were Tito able to renounce his bad habits, becomes instead 'the master' which gives force to his selfish self. On a temporary emotional level Tito avoids immediate disgrace, but his better self is all the while being smothered, hence his consciousness of 'oppressive sensations'. Tito is unresponsive to the far-reaching consequences of his efforts to

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Shuttleworth argues: 'Although all novelists in the nineteenth-century were inevitably affected by the close interdependence of social and scientific thought, George Eliot was, in this respect remarkable. She brought to her writing a breadth of knowledge of contemporary social and scientific theory unmatched by any of her peers. Scientific ideas did not merely filter through into the metaphors and images of her work; in constructing her novels she engaged in an active dialogue with contemporary scientific thought' (*George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984): hereafter cited in the text as 'Shuttleworth').

make himself *safe*. In his mind the necessity for his own survival lies in isolation from his fellow-men. But Spinoza would argue that Tito makes his position actually more insecure at a deeper level of being by his rejection of his father - for the deeper level is itself destroyed by his reliance on a barely stable, separate ego:

> There is nothing more useful to man than man; nothing, I say, that man can choose more appropriate to the preservation of his being, than that all men should so agree in all things, that the minds and bodies of all should compose as it were one mind and one body, all at once, as far as they are able, striving to preserve their being, and all at once seeking for themselves what is a common good to all. Whence it follows that men who are governed by reason, i.e., men who under the guidance of reason seek what is useful for them, desire nothing for themselves which they do not desire for other men also, and thus are just, faithful and honest. (*Ethics*, p.169)

Spinoza believes 'all men should agree on all things'. That 'the minds and bodies of all should compose one mind and one body', is to him a holistic belief which should be understood literally if a genuine inner self, with a sense of belonging, is to survive. Thus Tito's denial of the existence of an inner-self (coupled with his determination not to believe in the invisible laws bound up with those which are visible), leads him to moral self-destruction rather than self-preservation.

Furthermore Tito allows no room in his life for confession to exist in the form which Feuerbach believes could halt moral decay and thus save man from even his most wretched and 'long-concealed' sins. Feuerbach writes as a secular man trying to reclaim what is of value in the religious tradition:

> The sins which we confess are forgiven us by virtue of the divine power of the word. The dying man who gives forth in speech his long-concealed sins, departs reconciled. The forgiveness of sins lies in the confession of sins. The sorrows which we confide to our friend are already half-healed. Whenever we speak of a subject, the passions which it has excited in us are allayed; we see more clearly; the object of anger, of vexation, of sorrow appears to us in a light in which we perceive the unworthiness of those passions. (Feuerbach, p.112)

Tito is a secularist who elects to follow the opposite path to Feuerbach's, intent not to use language, since he realizes that to 'avow' his choices to others would place external limits on his actions and create a disabling consciousness of recognition in himself. But George Eliot is a counter-intelligence, constantly committing the unspoken to language in the novel, as John Morley comments in his review of *George Eliot's Life*:

In George Eliot, a reader with a conscience may be reminded of the saying that when a man opens Tacitus he puts himself in the confessional.[23]

George Eliot uses the language which Tito himself refuses to actualize his guilt. She articulates the thoughts for Tito which he refuses to admit for himself, and herself confesses his wrong-doing when he is too scared to do so, as if language were in place of and in memory of what God used to be:

> There was still one resource open to Tito. He might have turned back, sought Baldassarre again, confessed everything to him - to Romola - to all the world. But he never thought of that. The repentance which cuts off all moorings to evil demands something more than selfish fear. He had no sense that there was strength and safety in truth; the only strength he trusted lay in his ingenuity and his dissimulation. (*Romola*, pp.287-288)

Newman would argue that Tito, lacking the Christian tradition, has nothing that could make sense of the concepts of repentance or confession. These words, in his view, have no meaning other than in relation to God, and divorced from a religious context are simply 'Unreal Words'.[24] Like Newman, W.H. Mallock believes that a philosophy which takes away formalized religion and only secularizes religious thoughts also removes man's ability to create and answer the demands which life makes upon him. Such a philosophy Mallock says, 'has to make demands upon human life that were never made before; and human life is, in many ways less able than it ever was to answer them'. The secular philosophy has to find value in a finite world, in merely temporary, subjective emotions. It has to find reasons for amoral people such as Tito to do right, when there is no fear of divine judgement. As for a philosophy capable of proving what the 'Chief Good' or 'highest happiness' is, without religious grounding:

> It must be capable of being made attractive for those who do not know it, and who have never sought it, but who have on the contrary, always turned away from everything that is supposed to lead to it. It must be able, in other words, not only to satisfy the virtuous of the wisdom of their virtue, it must be able to convince the vicious of the folly of their vice. Vice is only bad in the eye of the

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[23] John Morley, *Critical Miscellanies*, first published 1886, 3 vols, (London: Macmillan, 1898), vol.III, 116: hereafter cited in the text.

[24] John Henry Newman, *Realizations*: *Newman's Selection of his Parochial and Plain Sermons*, first published as an anthology 1868, ed. by Vincent Ferrer Blehl (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964), p.69.

> positive moralist because of the precious *something* that we are at the present moment losing by it. (Mallock, pp. 19, 31)

George Eliot is acutely conscious of the risks involved in the loss of an outward religious form and tradition. She is troubled by the issue of what can be *done* with an early modern man like Tito Melema, who in her own words regards the 'Chief Good' as a 'matter of taste'. The Bible uses stories which seek to warn men who might think of taking the wrong path that such disobedience is punishable, with the ultimate threat of God's judgement. George Eliot uses the novel with the same intention, but judgement comes not from God but from within men themselves not from a supernatural being, but from the inevitable consequence of disobeying what George Eliot believes is an invisible 'inexorable law' in which the wrong-doer himself has no belief.

There is a glimpse given of the potential for recovering the old tradition, even in Tito's fallen state, when he defeats his father in the Rucellai Gardens. Baldassarre fails to prove his claims against Tito because he is unable to remember the passage from Homer depicted on Tito's signet ring. When Baldassarre cries out in despair 'lost, lost!', even Tito feels for a moment as if he is not wholly alienated from his father's suffering:

> There was something so piteous in the wandering look and the low cry, that while they confirmed the belief in his madness they raised compassion. Nay, so distinct sometimes is a double consciousness within us, that Tito himself, while he triumphed in the apparent verification of his lie, wished that he had never made the lie necessary to himself - wished that he had recognized his father on the steps - wished he had gone to seek him - wished everything had been different.
>
> (*Romola*, p.425)

Baldassarre's cry bypasses Tito's selfish egoism and reaches him at a deeper level of emotion previously barely tapped, in a life where self-centred emotions have too often taken the place of beliefs. The demands still exist in man's consciousness as Tito's reflex of guilt shows, even if the outward, visible, traditional form has been lost. However, the loss of an outward tradition does call for greater individual effort and a greater sense of the demands made upon the self by the self in the way of personal duty. Thus here Tito's instinct for self-preservation is still triumphant at the sound of Baldassarre's defeat. Spinoza writes that: 'the same property of human nature which

renders men compassionate also renders them envious and ambitious' (*Ethics* p.117). The same basic energy goes into being compassionate as into being ambitious. Tito illustrates how ambition and compassion are respectively developed or retarded on the basis of his previous actions and choices. He has single-mindedly pursued ambition and made his life narrow by rejecting the compassion which ambition could instead have been[25]. Here, for the first time, Tito has a 'distinct' awareness of what Feuerbach calls the double consciousness within him:

> 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. (Feuerbach, p.20)

Tito's 'double consciousness' of his individual self as well as of his relation to his father is equivalent to Feuerbach's 'I and thou'. This is the closest that Tito ever comes to a sense of remorse which the species relation, the thou, allows. Tito has habitually put himself first and his consciousness of any relation to other men as 'thou' only comes as a delayed secondary response. While he still feels that his position is unsafe, he is at his most primitively ruthless and his most alienated - as his first response to his father showed:

> It was a moment of desperation that annihilated all feeling in him, except the determination to risk anything for the chance of escape. And he gathered confidence from the agitation by which Baldassarre was evidently shaken. He had ceased to pinch the neck of the lute, and had thrust his thumbs into his belt, while his lips had begun to assume a slight curl. He had never yet done an act of murderous cruelty even to the smallest animal that could utter a cry, but at that moment he would have been capable of treading the breath from a smiling child for the sake of his own safety. (*Romola*, p.422)

The scene is loaded with the symbolism of survival: Tito had pinched the neck of the lute as if it had been his father's. His desperation for his own survival over and above

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[25] It is an individual choice how the energy is used as Felix explains to Esther: '"It is because I'm a very ambitious fellow, with very hungry passions, wanting a great deal to satisfy me, that I have chosen to give up what people call worldly good. It all depends on what a man gets into his consciousness - what life thrusts into his mind, so that it becomes present to him as remorse is present to the guilty, or a mechanical problem to an inventive genius. There are two things I've got present in that way: one of them is the picture of what I should hate to be. I'm determined never to go about making my face simpering or solemn and telling professional lies for profit; or to get tangled in affairs where I must wink at dishonesty and pocket the proceeds, and justify that knavery as part of the system that I can't alter. If I once went into that sort of struggle for success, I should want to win - I should defend the wrong that I had once identified myself with. I should become everything I see now beforehand to be detestable"' (*Felix Holt*, p.363).

Baldassarre's returns Tito to the lower end of the evolutionary scale. But in his attempts to destroy Baldassarre, Tito is unaware that a dual destruction is taking place. George Eliot shows her displaced consciousness of it when she writes of Tito's 'determination to risk anything'. It is the invisible inner dimension that Tito does not believe in, which is being destroyed, and unlike Baldassarre, Tito cannot outwardly 'utter a cry' of 'lost, lost!'.

Tito is, in Feuerbachian terms, the 'true atheist':

> Hence he alone is the true atheist to whom the predictates of the Divine Being, - for example, love, wisdom, justice, are nothing. [...] And in no wise is the negation of the subject necessarily also a negation of the predictates considered in themselves. These have an intrinsic, independent reality; they force their recognition upon man by their very nature; they are self-evident truths to him; they prove, they attest themselves. It does not follow that goodness, justice, wisdom, are chimaeras, because the existence of God is a chimaera, nor truths because this is truth. (Feuerbach, p.43)

By her presence as 'George Eliot' she must almost physically represent the 'intrinsic, independent reality' of 'goodness, justice, [and] wisdom'. George Eliot's function is not to provide a simple and immediate answer to the problem of Tito Melema but instead to hold all the factors concerned with his position in solution as a sort of test or warning. Tito will not accept the existence of any inner dimension but the denied and invisible sense of it is shifted onto George Eliot: I shall argue throughout this thesis that is what makes her exist verbally, linguistically as all-seeing narrator in lieu of God.

III. Romola: Making a Tradition

Romola has been raised outside the formalized religion which Newman believed was necessary to influence and guide men. Yet even in her early life she establishes for herself a pattern of behaviour fundamentally different from Tito's as a consequence of her efforts at self-restraint in the personal realm. In the following scene Romola has been reading to Bardo about Teiresias who was blinded because he witnessed Minerva bathing:

> At this point in the reading, the daughter's hand slipped from the back of the chair and met her father's, which he had that moment uplifted; but she had not looked round, and was going on, though with a voice a little altered by some

suppressed feeling, to read the Greek quotation from Nonnus, when the old man said -

'Stay, Romola; reach me my own copy of Nonnus. It is a more correct copy than any in Poliziano's hands.'

Romola goes to fetch the work and at her father's request describes, once again, the exact position of the book on the shelf:

> As Romola said this, a fine ear would have detected in her clear voice and distinct utterance, a faint suggestion of weariness struggling with habitual patience. But as she approached her father and saw his arms stretched out a little with nervous excitement to seize the volume, her hazel eyes filled with pity; she hastened to lay the book on his lap, and kneeled down by him, looking up at him as if she believed the love in her face must surely make its way through the dark obstruction which shut everything else out. (*Romola*, p.95)

When Romola first takes her father's hand she does so almost half-consciously. Her touch, coupled with her tone - 'a little altered by some supressed feeling' - betrays the fact that Romola is moved by the story's painful connection to her father. Romola reads the book as George Eliot, as a novelist, intended her own books should be understood: Romola is moved by it because she applies the story to her own life.[26] Bardo, as a scholar, is too busy evaluating the account to be fully conscious of it in the wider context. Thus, when he breaks in to Romola's reading he jars the moment of closeness between himself and his daughter by creating another practical task for her to do. George Eliot tells us that 'a fine ear would have detected in her clear voice [...] a faint suggestion of weariness struggling with habitual patience'. The fine ear might have been Bardo's, but fortunately for Romola, Bardo's scholarly concentration is oblivious to the suggestion of weariness, even though he is himself repeatedly the object of her efforts. Instead, it is George Eliot's fine ear which notes the underlying

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[26] George Eliot poured into her novels, in modified form, the concentrated life experiences which had moved her deeply. In 1860, three years before the publication of *Romola*, she wrote to Sara Hennell: 'If Cara values the article on Strikes in *The Westminster Review*, she will be interested to know - if she does not know already - that the writer is *blind*. I dined with him the other week, and could hardly keep the tears back as I sat at table with him. Yet he is cheerful and animated, accepting with graceful quietness all the minute attentions to his wants that his blindness calls forth' (Cross, p.323). Equally, George Eliot hoped that her readers would understand her novels in terms of personal application. She told Charles Bray in July, 1859: 'If art does nothing to enlarge men's sympathies, it does nothing morally. I have had heart-cutting experience that *opinions* are a poor cement between human souls: and the only effect I ardently long to produce by my writings is that those who read them should be better able to *imagine* and to *feel* the pains and joys of those who differ from themselves in everything but the broad fact of being struggling erring human beings' (Cross, p.279).

feeling in Romola's response and actualizes it, just as she had actualized Tito's inner thoughts into language. But this scene illustrates how greatly Romola differs from Tito. Tito had thought that unseen was the same as non-existent. His guilt was not real to him when it was enclosed in the primitive external form of shame, for the shame ceased if his sin was never known or seen. When Romola turns and *sees* her father's blindness and recognizes that it has prevented him from observing her momentary impatience, she feels an intense internal shame - rebounding upon her as strongly as if Bardo had really seen her and she were not simply seeing in his place. It is in a penitent attitude that she 'hastened to put the book on his lap' and 'kneeled down by him' as his submissive child. Ironically, Romola is almost grateful for Bardo's blindness which 'shut out everything else' and which spares Bardo, as well as herself, from her impatience.

Romola cannot reach her father through the medium of sight, yet her belief that her love 'must surely make its way through the dark obstruction' of her father's blindness comes out as a sort of faith within her. In *The Problems of Life and Mind* George Henry Lewes discusses how it is possible, even in those who have lost the sense of sight, to see in the mind through the 'Sensorium' where all senses unite:

> We call up visual images by association, and such images sometimes acquire the energy of actual sensations; even the blind, if they have once seen, are capable of visual hallucinations. Now the central distribution of the optic nerve is not that of the auditory nerve; hence both must have their action united in a common centre. And so, indeed, must all the sensory nerves. Every visual perception involves other than optical sensations: it involves touches and muscular sensations, combined with those integrations of Experience, Space, Time, Substance, Cause &c. The image now present recalls previous images; what is *sensuously* seen is *ideally* touched, tasted, smelt heard. (*Problems of Life and Mind,* II, 73)

In one way if not another, meaning must make its way through the human system - by eye, ear, touch, via the religious or the secular, all together, or one in place of or for another. Romola's faith is confirmed later on when her father says to her: 'Bernardo tells me thou art fair, and thy hair is like the brightness of the morning, and indeed it seems to me that I discern some radiance from thee' (*Romola,* p.101). In saying 'I discern some radiance from thee', Bardo seems to answer Romola's hope that her meaning has reached him, if not through sight, through some other medium. Romola's relationship with her father begins to create a pattern of behaviour which determines

the form for her whole way of life. Romola is making a tradition for herself which is contrary to Tito's, ironically her husband. For her response to Bardo's appeals in the simplest form, such as taking her father's hand or struggling to be patient in the face of his demands, steadily grows into a way of seeing which is morally grounded.

The widening of Romola's very vision beyond the lowest sense is shown when she notices Baldassarre. He runs into the duomo as an escaped prisoner:

> Among the eyes that had been turned towards him were Romola's: she had entered late through one of the side doors and was so placed that she had a full view of the main entrance. She had looked long and attentively at Baldassarre, for grey hairs had a particular appeal to her, and the stamp of some unwonted suffering in the face, confirmed by the cord around his neck, stirred in her those sensibilities towards the sorrows of age, which her whole life had tended to develop. She fancied that his eyes had met hers in their first wandering gaze; but Baldassarre had not, in reality, noted her. (*Romola*, pp.289-290)

Baldassarre's 'grey hairs' act as a reminder of her own father who, as we learn later, had died suddenly three months prior to this event. R.H. Hutton attributed just such a sense of vision to George Eliot's conception of form in her novels. He wrote in his review of *Romola*:

> George Eliot's drawings all require a certain space, like Raffael's Cartoons, and are not of that kind which produce their effect by the reiteration of scenes each complete in itself. You have to unroll a large surface of the picture before even the smallest unit of its effect is attained.[27]

The form is designed to prevent the reader from, mistakenly, attributing Romola's emotions towards Baldassarre to her projecting her emotions, otherwise reserved for her father, onto the aged stranger. If this were true Baldassarre's presence would only be significant to Romola in Spinoza's terms:

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[27] *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by David Carroll (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p.202. George Eliot valued R.H. Hutton as a worthy and influential critic. His article on *Romola* appeared in the *The Spectator* in July 1863. In August George Eliot responded to a letter he had sent her concerning the review: 'I find nothing fanciful in your interpretation. On the contrary, I am confirmed in the satisfaction I felt when I first listened to the article, at finding that certain chief elements of my intention have impressed themselves so strongly on your mind, not withstanding the imperfect degree in which I have been able to give form to my ideas' (Cross, p.366). It is well known that Hutton resisted George Eliot's original conclusion to *Middlemarch* and caused her to alter it. Malcolm Woodfield notes in *R.H. Hutton: Critic and Theologian:* 'In terms of both the number of articles and the number of words devoted by Hutton to the discussion of George Eliot, she is by far the most significant novelist in his criticism' (Woodfield, p.152).

> Merely from the fact that we imagine a thing to have some likeness to an object which is wont to affect the mind with pleasure or pain, although that in which it is like the object be not the efficient cause of the emotions, we shall nevertheless love or hate that thing.
>
> That which is like the object, we have contemplated in the object itself with the emotion of pleasure or pain; and therefore when the mind is affected by the image of this, it will also be affected by the one or the other emotion, and consequently the thing which we perceive to have this quality will be accidentally the cause of pleasure or pain. (*Ethics* p.106)

Romola would be simply projecting the emotions for her father onto Baldassarre, who would 'accidentally' become the object of her feelings. Although there is, of course, a connection between the intensity of Romola's reaction towards Baldassarre and the plight of her own father, George Eliot urges that the 'particular appeal' which Baldassarre has to Romola exists because of deeper causes than accidental similarity - through unconscious 'sensibilities which her whole life had tended to develop'.

It is from the same tendency which leads Romola to notice Baldassarre and feel a sympathetic bond with him that Romola also judges (at times too harshly) those whose actions affect her personal life. This is shown in Romola's relationship with her brother, Dino. Separated for many years by Dino's decision to enter the Church, Dino calls for Romola on his death-bed:

> There was an unconquerable repulsion for her in that monkish aspect; it seemed to her the brand of the dastardly undutifulness which had left her father desolate - of the grovelling superstition which could give such undutifulness the name of piety. Her father, whose proud sincerity and simplicity of life which had made him one of the few frank pagans of his time, had brought her up with a silent ignoring of any claims the Church could have to regulate the belief and action of beings with cultivated reason. The Church, in her mind, belonged to that actual life of the mixed multitude from which they had always lived apart, and she had no ideas that could render her brother's course an object of any other feeling than incurious, indignant contempt. (*Romola*, pp.209-210)

Even though Romola knows that Dino will surely die, she can hardly get beyond her sense of Dino's wrong-doing towards her father. Romola's 'unconquerable repulsion' is not directed at Dino himself but towards his decision to follow an impersonal duty, in obedience to God and the Church, rather than to obey and honour their father. Dino's 'monkish aspect' is merely an outward symbol which represents a betrayal of a personal duty that exists so strongly in her. Romola is possesssed by one thought

alone - Dino's 'undutifulness' - and she has no other ideas to hold out in understanding against his position. John Foster writes about the development of a 'predominent tendency' in his *Essays in a Series of Letters* and explains how it is formed:

> As soon as the mind is under the power of a predominant tendency, the difficulty of growing into the maturity of that form of character, which this tendency promotes or creates, is substancially over. Because, when a determined principle is become ascendent, it not only produces a partial insensibility to all impressions that would counteract it, but also continually augments its own ascendency, by means of a faculty or fatality of finding out everything, and attracting itself to every cause of impression, that is adapted to coalesce with it and strengthen it: like the instinct of animals, which instantly selects from the greatest variety of substances those which are fit for their nutriment.[28]

Foster describes in this passage how actions establish ascendancy which, maintained and developed, is single-mindedly, and even unconsciously, attracted to activities which continue its general development. But the disadvantage in the creating of a personal tradition also rests here. Romola is entrenched in her family tradition: due to the circumstances of her life she has contracted Bardo's own tendency of 'silently ignoring' the Church and its wider claims on duty. She is blinkered in a way that makes her too limited to understand Dino for, as George Eliot tells us, 'Romola had *no ideas* that could render her brother's course an object of any other feeling than incurious, indignant contempt'. Further ideas which stretch beyond the realm of her personal life experience are precisely what Romola needs to enable her to break out of the strangle-hold of her *accidentally* formed tendency.

Even when Romola finds herself embracing the ideas of Savonarola, she still has a tendency to understand narrowly with an extremism like Savonarola's own. Here, for example, George Eliot explains why Savonarola's instructions to burn books, paintings and other possessions which distract man's attention away from God, are acceptable to Romola:

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[28] John Foster, *Essays in a Series of Letters* (London: Holdsworth & Ball, 1835), p.33. John Foster was a Baptist minister (b.1770, d.1843). In 1846 George Eliot wrote to Sara Hennell telling her that she was reading Foster's Life: 'it is a deeply interesting to study the life of a genius under circumstances amid which genius is so seldom to be found. Some of the thoughts in his journal are perfect gems' (Cross, p.87).

> For herself, she was conscious of no inward collision with the strict and sombre view of pleasure which tended to repress poetry in the attempt to repress vice. Sorrow and joy have each their peculiar narrowness; and a religious enthusiasm like Savonarola's which ultimately blesses mankind by giving the soul a strong propulsion towards sympathy with pain, indignation against wrong, and the subjugation of sensual desire, must always incur the reproach of a great negation. Romola's life had given her an affinity for sadness which inevitably made her unjust towards merriment. That subtle result of culture which we call Taste was subdued by the need for deeper motive; just as the nicer demands of the palate are annihilated by urgent hunger. Moving habitually amongst scenes of suffering, and carrying a woman's heaviest disappointment in her heart, the severity which allied itself with self-renouncing beneficent strength had no dissonance for her.
> (*Romola*, pp.501-502)

Romola's narrow and fixed sense of motive towards Bardo in her personal life extends now to her sense of the general life. Romola's consciousness of wrongs which she has endured within her personal experience - her disappointment in Tito, the death of her father - are all translated into an intense support for Savonarola's 'indignation against wrong', even though that inevitably spills over into what George Eliot describes as Romola being 'unjust towards merriment'. Only when her deepest hunger is satisfied will there be room and time for Romola to adjust her standards of taste.

Using the analogy of the animal world, Foster described how human tendency comes to form the character 'like the instinct of animals which instantly selects from the greatest variety of substances which are fit for their nutriment'. In human terms the fitness of substances and nutriment translates into the fitness of certain feelings and actions which secure man morally. Increasingly, Romola turns away from the luxury of judgement on the basis of taste. Her asceticism makes her too narrowly limited and her stance needs modification, just as in George Eliot's later novel Dorothea must learn to readjust her life's vision. Tito on the other hand exists in this passage as a ghostly underlying thought, for his aesthetic sense of 'subtle Taste' has spilled over into hedonism. Thus through their contrast, George Eliot illustrates that there are better and worse ways in which an individual can be limited. For Romola's extremism makes her way a better one to start from than is Tito's: both in the personal and the religious realm, Romola's limitations are founded on that inherent belief in the necessity of duty and a moral order. In Tito the superficial level replaces the deeper, in Romola the deeper need engrosses all later and more superficial but necessary considerations.

In W.H. Mallock's traditionally religious view Romola would indeed be understood as merely using her work with Savonarola as an alternative route to her own happiness, rather than as a translation of the personal into the more than personal, religious realm. The argument would be that she is, like Tito, selfish, albeit in a different form. He criticized George Eliot in *Is Life Worth Living*? for trying to find substitutes for religion which make life pleasurable and give it meaning. He asserts that the individual's 'great-life question' becomes:

> 'What then are the alternative pleasures that life offers *me*? In how many ways am *I* capable of feeling *my* existence a blessing? and in what way shall *I* feel the blessing of it most keenly?' (*Is Life Worth Living?*, p.61)

Mallock seems justified in his emphasis 'I', 'me' and 'my', for the alternatives are always another form of an individual's craving to satisfy personal needs. The reason that Romola, at first, accepts the radicalism of Savonarola's religious belief is because of the emotional rewards she derives from her efforts to help her fellow-men:

> Florence had need of her, and the more her own sorrow pressed upon her, the more gladness she felt in memories, stretching through the two long years, of hours and moments in which she had lightened the burden of life to others. All that ardour of her nature which could no longer spend itself in the woman's tenderness for father and husband, had transformed itself into an enthusiasm of sympathy with the general life. She had ceased to think that her own lot could be happy - had ceased to think of happiness at all: the one end of her life seemed to her to be the diminishing of sorrow. (*Romola,* p.463)

The difference is made by the crucial shift from Romola merely needing others to Romola's *being* needed by others. She feels that her life has been made worthwhile again, after her loss of self-worth in her personal life. Initially, Romola's work with Savonarola's cause had acted as a substitute for the happiness which she had lost in relation to Bardo and Tito, yet still craved. She was trying to drive out her emotional pain with great physical activity. But the changes in Romola's life mirror George Eliot's form by long scenic connections which Hutton noted. It takes *time* for Romola to transform her personal 'happiness' which belonged to her 'own lot' into the 'gladness' obtained through her work in the 'general life'. The powerful emotional investment which goes into a relationship with her father or Tito cannot be eradicated from her experience - if her emotion 'could no longer spend itself' in the personal

realm it cannot simply disappear but is forced to modify itself at a level much deeper and slower than any that could be created by conscious decisions to change or compensate. Running parallel with her conscious sense of the need for compensation, is Romola's unconscious sense that her activities are themselves being stored up into new levels of memory: 'memories, stretching through the two long years'. These memories would become more to her than compensation or alternative forms of happiness. The memories which Romola eventually accumulates seem to act as powerful motivation in themselves, pushing Romola to continue with her present work on the basis of her past work with fellow-sufferers, rather than as a result of her own original needs.

It is George Eliot's firm belief that the first step in the process of attaining a far-reaching, sympathetic understanding with general life must, inevitably, come from flawed and partial experiences gained in the personal realm. But it is equally essential for George Eliot that the personal does not simply replace the impersonal religious life. In a letter to John Sibree George Eliot wrote:

> This conscious kind of false life that is ever and anon endeavouring to form itself within us, and eat away our true life, will be overcome by continued accession of vitality, by our perpetual increase in 'quantity of existence,' as Foster calls it. [...] The passions and senses decompose, so to speak. The intellect by its analytic power restrains the fury with which they rush to their own destruction; the moral nature purifies, beautifies, and at length transmutes them.
>
> (Cross, p.97)

George Eliot takes her idea from the following passage in *The Life and Correspondence of John Foster*:

> '*Quantity of existence*' may perhaps be a proper phrase for that, the less or more of which causes the less or more of our interest in the individuals around us. The person who gives us most the idea of ample being, interests us the most. Something certainly depends on the *modification* of this being, and something on its comprising each of the *parts* requisite to completeness; but still perhaps the most depends on its quantity.[29]

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[29] John Foster, *The Life and Correspondence of John Foster 1799-1843*, ed. by J.E. Ryland, 2 vols (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1852), vol.I, 208.

This letter is a key to Romola's life, as it was to George Eliot's own. Romola needs time for her life to unfold and expand and gain what Foster calls the 'quantity of existence': George Eliot talks of this as being gained only 'at length'.[30]

Ideally, the personal life should be the basis of development with further more-than-personal ideas arising in order to whittle away the accidental over-emphasis or the mistaken efforts at compensation, in the course of time. The fact that Romola has 'ceased to think of happiness at all' indicates that Romola had already begun this long modification process. At first Romola had felt only an intense bitterness that her happiness was so prematurely cut off by her discovery that she was trapped in a marriage with a man whose nature was totally at odds with her own. In the following scene Romola prepares herself to take off her wedding ring and leave Tito - her expectations of what their relationship as husband and wife would be are shattered:

> But that force of outward symbols by which our active life is knit together so as to make an inexorable external identity for us, not to be shaken by our wavering consciousness, gave a strange effect to this simple movement towards taking off her ring - a movement which was but a small sequence of her energetic resolution. It brought a vague but arresting sense that she was somehow violently rending her life in two: a presentiment that the strong impulse which had seemed to exclude doubt and make her path clear might after all be blindness, and that there was something in human bonds which must prevent them from being broken with the breaking of illusions. (*Romola*, p.391)

The idea that bonds can be broken by removing those outward visible symbols (such as Dino's crucifix) which represent the inward invisible bond is precisely what Tito Melema, with his primitive understanding, would like to believe. Yet George Eliot implicitly argues throughout *Romola* that Tito's consciousness is inadequate in so far as it fails to separate inner meanings from outer forms and bear that inner responsibility. Romola, cannot be like Tito, cannot fully believe that removing the outward symbol will be enough to eradicate the past altogether. In fact, Romola and

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[30] The influence of time on an individual's development was never far from her own mind as she too, like Romola, sought out her vocation. Seven years before *The Scenes of Clerical Life* was published George Eliot wrote to the Brays: 'Keep me for seven years longer and you will find out the use of me, like all other pieces of trumpery'. Later, in 1857, united with George Henry Lewes and having completed her first novel, she wrote to Sara Hennell: 'If I live five years longer the positive result of my existence on the side of truth and goodness will outweigh the small negative good that would have consisted in my not doing anything to shock others, and I can conceive no circumstances that will make me repent the past' (Cross, pp.117, 226).

Tito differ so fundamentally that it is quite remarkable they were ever married. But there is a difference between her great mistake in marrying Tito and the meanings of marriage itself and, furthermore, all the tradition which underpins the marriage vows. Romola cannot simply dismiss the latter in the casting off of the former: it is that strangely connected difference which underlies her hesitancy in removing her wedding ring.[31] Her thought that her action might in some way be 'blindness' foreshadows Savonarola's externally 'arresting voice' by means of a new innerly 'arresting sense'.

Savonarola later verbalizes the vague feeling inside her and formalizes it into a concrete religious idea outside. Even whilst the details of Romola's personal life are seen as little units of time and action, her 'simple movement' to take off her ring is a part of a larger whole, a way in to the broader issue of human bonds and relations registered inside her. When George Eliot writes of Romola's feeling that she is 'somehow rending her life in two' she describes her own problem. For in the first passion of antagonism to escape from the 'illusion' of Church dogma the young Marian Evans was painfully severing herself from underlining meanings and traditions in which her life was grounded.

*

If personal failures still bring meaning to the more-than-personal concerns, still the very relation between the personal and impersonal life is to become an increasingly conscious issue for Romola. She has to try to reconcile her personal life of duties with the impersonal outward duties which Savonarola's religious doctrine demands. The flash-point of Romola's realization occurs after she has visited the prophetess Camilla, who had urged her to denounce Bernardo del Nero as the enemy of Savonarola's vision of the future. At this point Romola's early tendency to understand and accept life within a narrow framework is violently broken open:

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[31] F.B. Pinion argues: 'The ring is important as a symbol of personal loyalty. In selling Baldassarre's, Tito soon after his arrival in Florence registers his calculating disregard for the past, in contrast to his foster-father who continues to wear, as a relic of her love, the charm given him by his mother until maddened by the thirst for revenge, he opens it in the hope of finding something he can sell to buy a poniard. He argues that the ring is a 'symbol of 'the natural piety which roots one in the past' (*A George Eliot Companion: Literary Achievement and Modern Significance* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p.148).

> Where were the beings to whom she could cling, with whom she could work and endure, with the belief that she was working for the right? On the side from which moral energy came lay a fanaticism from which she was shrinking with newly-startled repulsion; on the side to which she was drawn by affection and memory, there was the presentiment of some secret plotting, which her judgement told her would not be unfairly called crime. And still surmounting every other thought was the dread inspired by Tito's hints, lest that presentiment should be converted into knowledge, in such a way that she would be torn by irreconcilable claims.
>
> Calmness would not come even on the altar-steps; it would not come from looking at the serene picture where the saint writing from her rocky solitude, was being visited by faces with celestial peace in them. Romola was in the hard press of human difficulties, and that rocky solitude was too far off. She rose from her knees that she might hasten to her sick people in the courtyard, and by some immediate beneficent action, revive that sense of worth in life which at this moment was unfed by any wider faith. (*Romola*, pp.527-528)

This is again a violent 'rending her life in two', making her detach inner concerns from outer people. She cannot simply try to comfortably make the two coincide (as when a hero is that embodiment of one's inner thought which Casaubon seemed to be to Dorothea). She had thought at first that the religious cause would simply solve all her needs and provide substitutes for the personal life that she had lost - 'beings to whom she could cling', psychologically, in lieu of father or husband. But it is at this point that Romola catches up with the conflicts, complexities and ambivalences which we saw earlier compressed in the person of Savonarola. Her struggle is exacerbated by the fact that Savonarola's dogmatic emphasis makes a division between the personal and the religious spheres, forcing upon Romola an either-or choice which entails either her personal love and loyalty for Bernardo del Nero or the moral fortitude which she has found in Savonarola's teaching. But Romola sees that on both sides there are both worthy and unworthy elements. With Savonarola she finds 'moral energy' but at the same time 'fanaticism' and 'repulsion'; with Bernardo del Nero 'memory and affection' yet 'some secret plotting'. Like George Eliot, Romola needs the 'wider faith', the faith which incorporates everything: - a religious life which extends to the personal realm without ever losing it as a basis, which recognizes the personal and gives it wider scope not as itself simply but as what it truly stands for.[32]

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[32] Evidence of George Eliot's own desperate craving for the 'wider faith' comes in the letter which she wrote to her father after refusing to go to church: 'if ever I loved you I do so now, if ever I sought to obey the
(footnote continued on next page)

She finds herself caught in between two worlds: the personal tradition and the religious tradition which is more than merely personal have finally become conflicting rivals.

The conflicting claims of rival traditions are discussed in a recent book by Alasdair MacIntyre entitled *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* He writes:

> What each person is confronted with is at once a set of rival traditions embodied, more or less imperfectly, in contemporary forms of social relationship and a set of rival communities of discourse, each with its own specific modes of speech, argument, and debate, each making a claim upon the individual's allegiance.

Alasdair MacIntyre believes that at crucial historical moments, as in the nineteenth century, traditions and beliefs come into conflict and competition with other beliefs:

> What rationality then requires of such a person is that he or she confirm or disconfirm over time this initial view of his or her relationship to this particular tradition of enquiry by engaging, to whatever degree is appropriate, both in ongoing arguments within that tradition of enquiry and with one or more of its rivals.[33]

As a result of this conflict men and women have to reassess, adapt, and modify their position in order to relocate a tradition in which to exist. Romola feels the conflicting claims for her allegiance but she cannot unreservedly devote herself to Savonarola's tradition when it calls on her to deny her personal tradition, symbolized in the sacrifice of her godfather, Bernardo del Nero. Yet neither can she sacrifice those elements in Savonarola's religious teachings which have become an integral part of her.

I have argued that Romola's wider faith cannot simply be *given*. It is something which she has to strive for and *create* herself. Thus she needs still more time and experience to resolve the conflicts of the separate traditions ('rent in two') in a new form.

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laws of my Creator and to follow duty wherever it may lead me I have that determination now and the consciousness of this will support me though every being on earth were to frown upon me' (*George Eliot's Letters*, 9 vols, ed. by Gordon S. Haight, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954-1978), vol.I, 130: hereafter cited as '*Letters*'. Most important in this small extract is George Eliot's belief that obedience to her Creator's 'laws' and her 'duty' are not given up in her mind when she refuses to attend Church. Instead, these concepts continue to exist in her as a powerful guide, even though she felt compelled to step outside the organized religious framework. Like Romola, George Eliot's greatest problem is to find a new form.

33 Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality*? (London: Duckworth, 1988), p.394.

The point at which the conflict is resolved in Romola's consciousness occurs, after her long, demanding work in the Green Valley is finished. Romola has time for reflection and self-judgement and, although she dreads her return to Tito, she asks herself:

> What if Fra Girolamo had been wrong? What if the life of Florence was a web of inconsistencies? Was she then something higher, that she should shake the dust from off of her feet, and say, 'This world is not good enough for me'? If she had really been higher she would not so easily have lost all her trust.
>
> Her indignant grief for her godfather had no longer complete possession of her, and her sense of debt to Savonarola was recovering predominance. Nothing that had come, or was to come, could do away with the fact that there had been a great inspiration in him which had waked new life in her. (*Romola*, p.652)

Romola's question - 'what if Savonarola had been wrong?' - is concerned with her final realization that his shortcomings as a conduit of religious sentiment do not diminish the great influence that his ideas of themselves have had upon her life. Romola had idealistically expected, after following Savonarola's teaching as an the explanation of life's sorrows, that her life in Florence would be tidy, free from loose ends. But her new consciousness reveals to her all the more clearly that Florence's 'web of inconsistencies', which Savonarola himself represents, is not to be eradicated but is a part of the human lot. Romola's readjusted stance corresponds to George Eliot's own experience. For in a letter to M. D'Albert in 1859 she explains her own revised position since her initial 'rebellion towards my own lot' in severing herself from her Christian tradition:

> When I was at Geneva, I had not yet lost the attitude of antagonism which belongs to the renunciation of *any* belief: also I was very unhappy, and in a state of discord and rebellion towards my own lot. Ten years of experience have wrought great changes in that inward self. I have no longer any antagonism towards any faith in which human sorrow and human longing for purity have expressed themselves; on the contrary, I have sympathy with it that predominates over argumentative tendencies. (Cross, p.298)

Like George Eliot ten years on, looking back on her antagonism as a thing now past, Romola weighs the events of her life in a new light. Time has placed in the distance her immediate anger in 'indignant grief' against Savonarola. Just as George Eliot writes that her 'sympathy [...] predominates over argumentative tendencies', so too Romola recognizes that 'her sense of debt to Savonarola was recovering

predominance'. Only with hindsight is Romola accorded a more balanced judgement of her own actions rather than merely the narrow, blind judgement of Savonarola.

What is needed, George Eliot understood, is a tradition which is more than merely the substitution of the personal instead of the religious, or the religious in place of the personal. Romola succeeds in realizing this where Savonarola and Tito, in their different ways, alike fail: Savonarola, struggling to incarnate the religious idea but caught up in the complexities of his own personality and the conflicting two egos that Buber describes; Tito, narrowly pursuing his personal desires but forced into half seeing the impersonal law of human bonds through the demands of Feuerbach's double consciousness. Both men live partial lives. Ultimately, Romola finds a higher consciousness as she modifies, readjusts and reassesses her own position in her search for a wider faith, where the religious and human, the impersonal and the personal exist together as interrelated parts of a whole life. This problem is the subject matter of this thesis. *Romola*, so often the neglected novel, offers all the problems and possible solutions which I must investigate.

I have already briefly mentioned Dorothea's mistaken understanding in her relationship with Casaubon, making him the embodiment of ideas outside herself. In Chapter Two I will turn to examine more fully Dorothea's sense of her motives as purposes contained in Casaubon and the gradual translation and readjustment which results as her illusions are broken: her own purposes must become both independent from Casaubon and then directed towards him. For Dorothea is Romola's successor in the struggle for faith and purpose.

CHAPTER 2

THE LAWS OF SELF-TRANSFORMATION

I. The Redirection of Motive

In her relationship with Casaubon, Dorothea believes she has found an ideal hero-figure (as Savonarola at first appeared to Romola after her conversion), an embodiment of all her motive-force. Dorothea's problem is like Romola's, for her youthful powers, early motives and energies are all too involved in a personal realm which they simultaneously seek to transcend. Dorothea originally believed that she could live her life through Casaubon, thinking that by helping him with his life's work she would simply share or borrow his best ideas and motives. It takes her sheer *time* to learn otherwise, to find that her flawed life with Casaubon, rather than Casaubon himself, will be her teacher.

When Dorothea learns from Will Ladislaw, while still on honeymoon, that Casaubon's studies are worthless, she begins to reconsider her husband's irritable response to her that morning after she had offered her assistance with his work. She begins, in fact, to reconsider her whole life's prospects:

> Dorothea remembered it to the last with the vividness with which we all remember epochs in our experience when some dear expectation dies, or some new motive is born. Today she had begun to see that she had been under a wild illusion in expecting a response to her feeling from Mr Casaubon, and she had felt the waking of a presentiment that there might be a sad consciousness in his life which made as great a need on his side as on her own.
>
> We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves: Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity, but yet it had been easier to her to imagine how she would devote herself to Mr Casaubon, and to become wise and strong in his strength and wisdom, than to conceive with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling - an idea wrought back to the directness of sense, like the solidity of objects - that he had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadow must always fall with a certain difference.[1]

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[1] *Middlemarch*, first published 1871-2, ed. by W.J. Harvey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.243: hereafter cited in the text.

Dorothea's initial thoughts of Casaubon's 'strength' and 'wisdom' stand out painfully in Dorothea's mind as symbols of her own naiveté in the face of his now perceived weaknesses and inadequacies. Thus she begins to recognize the acute pressure of her expectation set against his own need.

Dorothea's emergence from moral stupidity is to do with making the painful transition from a merely second-order mentality in which 'it had been easier' for Dorothea to depend upon becoming 'wise and strong in his [Casaubon's] strength and wisdom', than to operate as a more free-standing individual. For the first time Dorothea is made partially aware of the nature of Casaubon's 'sad consciousness', a consciousness which is more completely articulated by George Eliot's own fuller consciousness. For George Eliot actively describes the unseen aspect of Casaubon's character ('spiritually a-hungered like the rest of us', *Middlemarch*, p.312), where Dorothea must try to interpret it. The emergence from moral stupidity and the development of an adult morality do not necessarily coincide, as Dorothea had mistakenly thought, with the growth to womanhood.

The only external place for her ideals to exist seems to be, in her view, through her devotion and service in marriage.[2] For as George Eliot told us earlier:

> All Dorothea's passion was transfused through a mind struggling towards an ideal life; the radiance of her transfigured girlhood fell on the first object that came within its level. (*Middlemarch*, p.68)

Dorothea, fuelled by her strong desire to make ideals have some real external embodiment but lacking in worldly experience, mistakes the first object of her attention for the best incarnation of her ideals. But it is out of the gradual growth of Dorothea's realization that the qualities she had believed in are themselves absent in Casaubon, that the birth of something larger than expectation emerges: a 'new motive', born even in the very death of her dear illusion.

The term 'moral stupidity' is one which is used again by George Eliot in a long and detailed reply to Mrs Ponsonby in December 1874 concerning the principles of

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[2] Gillian Beer states: 'Dorothea is not utterly wrong about Casaubon. He does represent a way out of safety. She needs risks as well as usefulness and her enclosed environment has not taught her to recognize worse imprisonment' (*George Eliot* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1986), p.173: hereafter further references cited in the text as 'Beer', *George Eliot*).

development. In this chapter I will be concerned with much of what George Eliot tells Mrs Ponsonby in this letter, for in it she expresses some of her most strongly held convictions. She writes:

> My books have for their main bearing a conclusion the opposite of that in which your studies seem to have painfully imprisoned you.

Imprisonment by one's own studies is the fate of such as Casaubon, who is:

> never to be liberated from a small hungry shivering self - never to be fully possessed by the glory we behold, never to have our consciousness rapturously transformed into the vividness of a thought, the ardour of passion, the energy of an action, but always to be scholarly and uninspired, ambitious and timid, scrupulous and dim-sighted. (*Middlemarch*, p.314)

The words 'transfused' and 'transfigured', used in relation to Dorothea, meet with the untransformed Casaubon. But George Eliot continues:

> What sort of 'culture of the intellect' is that which, instead of widening the mind to a fuller and fuller response to all the elements of our existence, isolates it in moral stupidity? - which flatters egoism with the possibility that a refined human society can continue, wherein relations have no sacredness beyond the inclination of changing moods? [...]
>
> With regard to the pains and the limitations of one's personal lot, I suppose there is not a single man, or woman, who has not more or less need of that stoical resignation which is often a hidden heroism, or who, in considering his or her past history, is not aware that it has been cruelly affected by the ignorant or selfish action of some fellow-being in a more or less close relation of life. And to my mind, there can be no stronger motive, than this perception, to an energetic effort that the lives nearest to us do not suffer in a like manner from *us*. (Cross, p.533)

George Eliot describes the intelligence behind the mental turn-around that Dorothea herself undergoes. Dorothea's own reflection on having been 'cruelly affected by the ignorant or selfish action of some fellow-being in a more or less close relation to life', brings forward a clear consciousness of her own pain and causes her to hold back from replicating that example in her relation to Casaubon. Dorothea's test rests in whether or not she will fail to meet Casaubon's need, as he has failed to meet her own. Dorothea reflects upon her own past history - 'she had *begun* to see that she was under a wild illusion' - and, on the basis of that gradually forming *new* memory, she reappraises her present life with Casaubon. Like Romola, Dorothea's emergence

from moral stupidity is a gradual one that needs much more time: Dorothea cannot at once change the future she has so quickly begun now to foresee.

But even before Will Ladislaw's revelation concerning the limitations of Mr Casaubon's 'Key to all Mythologies', Dorothea had experienced an ominous sense of realigned vision concerning her real future. The following is concerned with Dorothea's more immediate feelings after her quarrel with Casaubon. Dorothea rides with her husband to the library, where they will part company:

> To have reversed a previous arrangement and declined to go out would have been a show of persistent anger which Dorothea's conscience shrank from, seeing that she already began to feel herself guilty. However just her indignation might be, her ideal was not to claim justice, but to give tenderness. So when the carriage came to the door, she drove with Mr Casaubon to the Vatican, walked with him through the stony avenue of inscriptions, and when she parted with him at the entrance to the Library, went on through the Museum out of mere listlessness to what was around her. She had not spirit to turn round and say that she would drive anywhere.

Casaubon leaves her whilst he continues with some further research on his project and Dorothea, feeling almost numb under the pressure of a new-encroaching consciousness with regard to the nature of her own new marriage, wanders on through the Museum:

> She did not really see the streak of sunlight on the floor more than she saw the statues: she was inwardly seeing the light of years to come in her own home and over the English fields and elms and hedge-bordered highroads: and feeling that the way in which they might be filled with joyful devotedness was not so clear to her as it had been. But in Dorothea's mind there was a current into which all thought and feeling were apt sooner or later to flow - the reaching forward of the whole consciousness towards the fullest truth, the least partial good. There was clearly something better than anger and despondency.
>
> (*Middlemarch*, pp.234-235)

Dorothea stifles the response of 'persistent anger' towards her husband, actively trying to force into real life some version of her 'ideal of tenderness' in the midst of extreme disappointment. Dorothea's feeling of 'listlessness' is a sensation that could quite easily render her emotionally static towards her unresponsive husband. But half-consciously, Dorothea vaguely taps the beginning of what will be her new consciousness towards Casaubon. In her thought 'there was clearly something better than anger and despondency', the word 'clearly' comes out as a faith but it is

juxtaposed with the word 'something', for still that something is the missing necessity which Dorothea needs in order to reach the better way. But Dorothea is moving towards the realization that the clarity from life which she had first blindly expected is a fantasy. The fact that things are 'not as clear as they used to be' is a sign of her emergence from moral stupidity. For, elsewhere in her letter to Mrs Ponsonby, George Eliot states that:

> Difficulties of thought - acceptance of what is, without full comprehension - belong to every system of thinking. The question is to find the least incomplete.
> (Cross, p.533)

Dorothea is breaking away from the simple illusion that everything would be complete. She is starting to revise her romantic idea of an 'initiation' in life which would come through Casaubon. She had thought:

> That more complete teaching would come - Mr Casaubon would tell her all that: she was looking forward to higher initiation in ideas, as she was looking forward to marriage, and blending her dim conceptions of the two. (*Middlemarch*, p.112)

In real life the nearest to 'whole', that George Eliot recognized, is 'least partial'; the nearest to 'full' is 'least incomplete'. In Dorothea's case even her own initial selfishness is a partial good in so far as it helps her to have a sense of Casaubon's equivalent self-concern. As Dorothea puts together in this present both her future and her past expectations, the narrator foretells what Dorothea's future will be - if only her nature is given the time it needs to achieve its true potential:

> In Dorothea's mind there was current into which thought and feeling were apt sooner or later to flow - the reaching forward of the whole consciousness towards the fullest truth, the least partial good.

The narrator seems to represent the future itself, promising changes 'sooner or later' in Dorothea which she herself cannot yet know. 'George Eliot' is almost herself that 'current into which all thought and feeling flow'. Dorothea's aim must be to reach as close to a present sense of the future ideal as possible. What George Eliot recognizes in the meantime is a need for a kind of strengthening faith and belief, consonant with Dorothea's thought that 'there was clearly something better than anger and despondency'.

A contrasting example to Dorothea is to be found in Daniel Deronda who, in his adult life, finds himself stuck in sheer listlessness. Dorothea's life is to do with reappraising her mistaken *past*. Deronda's life in contrast is concerned with waiting for a *future* shape, a context and a function for his ideas. Daniel feels an equivalent need for that vital something which leads to better motives, but unlike Dorothea he does not have a place from which to begin. He cannot define his motivation for action or inaction: he acts only on the prompting of a personality which does not fit in with his surroundings, and Daniel is himself unable to understand the origins of that personality:

> Certainly Deronda's ambition even in his spring-time, lay exceptionally aloof from conspicuous, vulgar triumph, and from other ugly forms of boyish energy; perhaps because he was early impassioned by ideas, and burned his fire on those heights. One may spend a good deal of energy in disliking and resisting what others pursue, and a boy who is fond of somebody else's pencil-case may not be more energetic than another who is fond of giving his own pencil-case away. Still, it was not Deronda's disposition to escape from ugly scenes: he was more inclined to sit through them and take care of the fellow least able to take care of himself.

Daniel's childhood characteristics remain with him into adulthood:

> The impression he made at Cambridge corresponded to his position at Eton. Everyone interested in him agreed that he might have taken a high place if his motives had been of a more pushing sort, and if he had not, instead of regarding studies as instruments of success, hampered himself with the notion that they were to feed motive and opinion - a notion which set him criticising methods and arguing against his freight and harness when he should have been using all his might to pull. (*Deronda*, pp.218-219)

It is a significant variation which makes Deronda 'aloof from [the] conspicuous, vulgar triumph' of the other boys. Deronda is a powerful contrast to Tito Melema who asks: 'what motive could any man really have, except his own interest? (*Romola*, pp.560-561). For Deronda's disinclination to escape from an ugly scene is matched only by Tito's inclination so to do. Deronda is fuelled by his 'disposition' and 'inclination' rather than by distinct motives, but disposed and inclined are still weak words. In Daniel's case it is not from any conscious obedience to theoretic ideals that he restrains himself from hurting others, nor is it that he is simply less capable of taking advantage than of giving in. He holds back from selfish claims out of a

reluctance or unwillingness which is a facet of that mystery called his personality. Within Deronda there is a vague, uprooted sense that he is already holding back from actions because he is waiting for a different opportunity.

Deronda is determined not to use his studies merely to feed an ambitious mentality. His conception of ideas as food for motive is one which Lewes explores in *The Problems of Life and Mind*:

> It is by residua or modifications impressed by past experience that fresh perceptions are cognized and old ones recognized. The formation of one idea in itself seemingly insignificant will often be the nidus or starting point of a whole system. Physiologically speaking, no food is assimilable by the organism in its crude state; it has to be dissolved, taken up into the plasma, thence passing into the plasmodes where it is assimilated molecule by molecule. The carbonate of lime, for example, will not directly add itself to osseous tissue; it must be soluble and pass into the osseous plasmode And the new object presented to Sense or the new idea presented to Thought must also be soluble in old experiences, be recognized as like them, otherwise it will be unperceived, uncomprehended.
> (*Problems of Life and Mind*, II, 107-108)

Lewes is describing how a whole web arises from the combination of thoughts and ideas digested in experience: anger and despondency, in contrast, are like poison. In Deronda's view greater motives could all too easily be supplanted by vulgar success, when they should really be kept hungry, waiting for the real objects to be sought out. George Eliot told us that Deronda was 'early impassioned by ideas and burned his fires on those heights'. But Deronda pulls back from action prompted by that 'residua' of old experience secretly contained in him as a tradition: a Jewish inheritance which is as yet unknown to him.[3]

The residue in Dorothea is made up of an organic mixture of experiences - memories of the death of 'dear expectation', the defeated danger of 'persistent anger' - all of which, in time, provide the concentrated energy which fuels her best motives. After Lydgate's visit, during which Dorothea is sure her husband has received bad

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[3] Daniel Deronda's development differs from Dorothea's - time has a different significance for him. Ulrich Knoepflmacher explains: 'Deronda's heart like Dorothea's, is in need of schooling. But his schooling is not that of experience. It is providence that prepares him as the new Daniel by furnishing him with a ready-made tradition already tested by the experiences of history and heredity' (Knoepflmacher, pp.144-145). Daniel's inheritance, his 'ready-made tradition' and his specific type, are all matters to which I will return in my fourth chapter.

news concerning his failing health, Dorothea tries, more actively, to put in force her ideal 'not to claim justice but to give tenderness' (*Middlemarch*, p.243):

> Dorothea had been aware when Lydgate had ridden away, and she had stepped into the garden, with the impulse to go at once to her husband. But she hesitated, fearing to offend him by obtruding herself; for her ardour, continually replused, served, with her intense memory, to heighten her dread, as thwarted energy subsides into a shudder; and she wandered slowly round the nearer clumps of trees until she saw him advancing. Then she went towards him, and might have represented a heaven-sent angel coming with a promise that the short hours remaining should yet be filled with that faithful love that clings the closer to a comprehended grief. His glance in reply to hers was so chill that she felt her timidity increased; yet she turned and passed her hand through his arm.
>
> Mr Casaubon kept his hands behind him and allowed her pliant arm to cling with difficulty against his rigid arm.
>
> There was something horrible to Dorothea in the sensation which this unresponsive hardness inflicted on her. That is a strong word, but not too strong: it is in these acts called trivialities that the seeds of joy are forever wasted, until men and women look round with haggard faces at the devastation their own waste has made, and say, the earth bears no harvest of sweetness - calling their denial knowledge. (*Middlemarch*, p.462)

It is the 'George Eliot' consciousness which locates a space in time where the opportunity of a better action towards Casaubon (better than his own 'continual repulsion' of Dorothea) could exist: she '*might* have represented a heaven-sent angel coming with a promise that the short hours remaining could *yet* be filled with faithful love'. There is a powerful contrast between those 'short hours' wasted by being empty of Dorothea's tenderness and those same short hours '*filled*' with her loving sympathy. But when George Eliot writes: 'his glance in reply to hers was so chill that she felt her timidity increased; *yet* she turned and passed her hand through his arm', we witness the rush of time in which an opening to allow a theoretical idea a practical, external presence is almost simultaneously closed. In *The Problems of Life and Mind* Lewes argues the motive behind the study of psychology itself is divided on two levels - the 'speculative' and the 'practical':

> The speculative motive is that of ascertaining the relation of the sentient organism to the cosmical and social conditions in which and through which it exists. The practical motive adds the further aim of modifying our impulses and adjusting our actions to these external conditions, or modifying these conditions and adjusting them to our needs.

He continues:

> But for both the practical and theoretic purposes a knowledge of actual and possible human motives is required, and a knowledge of psychological laws is as necessary here as the knowledge of physical laws in any practical or theoretic efforts to modify the external world. (*Problems of Life and Mind*, I, 39, 46)

Lewes believes that once man can understand the determinants of his nature or character - the 'psychological laws' - he can learn to use those very determinants for the sake of greater freedom, instead of being merely a passive player in the evolutionary process. That is Dorothea's implicit aim: to return from speculation to the modification of practical motive. Casaubon becomes the outward object of Dorothea's reappraised theoretic ideals, the added external factor which challenges Dorothea to bridge the gap between her theoretic and practical motives. But Dorothea fails when her ideal sympathy ('clinging the closer to a comprehended grief') is painfully contrasted with the humiliating reality of Casaubon's response (he 'allowed the pliant to cling with difficulty against his rigid arm'). Her anticipation of another rejection, which had truly made her so hesitant and fearful of obtruding herself in the first instance, is confirmed.

Dorothea has failed, at this stage, in her attempt to bridge that gap between what Lewes called speculative and practical motive. But that failure is not wasted. For it is the sheer energy generated by Dorothea's anger towards Casaubon on which she must work during the whole of her relation to Casaubon, modifying and reworking the basic life-substance of her continually 'thwarted energy':

> Dorothea sat almost motionless in her meditative struggle, while the evening slowly deepened into night. But the struggle changed continually, as that of a man who begins with a movement towards striking and ends with conquering his desire to strike. The energy that would animate a crime is not more than is wanted to inspire a resolved submission, when the noble habit of the soul reasserts itself. That thought with which Dorothea had gone to meet her husband - her conviction that he had been asking about the possible arrest of all his work, and that the answer must have wrung his heart, could not be long without rising beside the image of him, like a shadowy monitor looking at her anger with sad remonstrance. It cost her a litany of pictured sorrows and of silent cries that she might be the mercy for those sorrows - but the resolved submission did come; and when the house was still, and she knew that it was near the time when Mr Casaubon habitually went to rest, she opened her door gently and stood outside in the darkness waiting for his coming upstairs with a light in his hand. If he did not come she would go down and even risk incurring another pang. She would never again expect anything else. (*Middlemarch*, pp.464-465)

The coming of night mirrors Dorothea's slow, deepening thought: Dorothea needed to sit still for some while in this secular meditation in order to internalize her situation. She needs those hours to remember her original thought of pity towards Casaubon, her 'impulse to go to him at once', as it was before her own anger and pain took over. She must make that time real to herself once again. The good thought does not return to Dorothea through the reasoning of words or in the language of an ideal 'stronger motive' of the kind which George Eliot articulated in her letter to Mrs Ponsonby: that those who 'live nearest to us shall not suffer in a like manner from *us*'. Dorothea might be able to follow that directive more easily if only she were remembering times in her life when she had been hurt by a close fellow-being *other* than Casaubon himself. A multiple effort is required of Dorothea. It is her husband's *image* through which Dorothea remembers and makes sense of her ideal. There has to be something better than anger, the very thought of his mortality says in sad remonstration - as though an angry response to Casaubon's plight were itself sadder even than his sadness. George Henry Lewes writes:

> It is in imagination that must be sought the first impulse towards Explanation, and therefore all primitive explanations are so markedly imaginative. Images being the ideal forms of Sensation, the Logic of images is the first stage of intellectual activity; and is therefore predominant in the early history of individuals and of nations. The first attempts to explain a phenomena must be to combine the images of the past sensations with the sensations now felt, so as to form a series. In the next stage, words representative of abstractions take the place of both images and objects. (*Problems of Life and Mind*, II, 169)

Lewes is concerned with the process whereby the human mind learns to form a chain linking images to sensations and, eventually, to words as abstract representatives of images - all in the effort to reunite past with present in the resettling light of full explanation and psychological continuity. Lewes has explained that as man develops (from child to man, from the primitive to the civilized man), understanding once based on images begins to use words as representatives or recollecting abstractions of those images, and George Eliot is the larger version of that monitor in the mind - the most complete user of 'words representative of abstractions'. Using Dorothea as a living model, George Eliot illustrates the two-fold psychological process which allows Dorothea to 'form a series' in her mind: images of her husband reconnect her to abstract thoughts and ideals and she confronts her own mistaken position in relation

to both. For there is a shadowy presence running parallel with that of her husband's - Dorothea's memory of her old self and her romantic vision of the future:

> Dorothea, with all her eagerness to know the truths of life, retained very child-like ideas about marriage. She felt sure that she would have accepted the judicious Hooker, if she had been born in time to save him from that wretched mistake he made in matrimony; or John Milton when his blindness had come on; or any of the other great men whose odd habits it would have been a glorious piety to endure. (*Middlemarch*, p.32)

Dorothea's 'resolved submission' as a victorious state truly earned is a corrected development from her belief that it would be a 'glorious piety to endure' a man like Casaubon. It is not that Dorothea must simply give in to Casaubon, but rather that she must first defeat an impulsive desire in herself to return the injury, and this she achieves for the sake of her own better deep self applied strictly in relation to Casaubon's feelings.

George Eliot wrote of Dorothea's sitting still for a long while innerly grappling with her impulse to hit back at Casaubon:

> The struggle changed continually, as that of a man who begins with a movement towards striking and ends with conquering his desire to strike. The energy that would animate a crime is not more than is wanted to inspire a resolved submission, when the noble habit of the soul reasserts itself.

What Herbert Spencer says about the restraint of impulsiveness in man, as evolution proceeds, is significant in relation to this description of Dorothea's struggle.[4] For Dorothea's efforts to conquer her desire is related to that evolution of less impulsive behaviour which Herbert Spencer discussed in his essay 'The Comparative Psychology of Man'. Spencer, following Darwin, wrote that in the evolutionary processes which lead to a more advanced mind or 'a more complex emotional structure', man could control the mixture of contrary emotions and avoid the impulse to strike:

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[4] In July 1854 George Eliot wrote to Sara Hennell predicting how Herbert Spencer might be remembered in the 20th century: 'He will stand in the Biographical Dictionaries of 1954 as "Spencer, Herbert, an original and profound philosophical writer, especially known by his great work, [...] which gave a new impulse to psychology and which has mainly contributed to the present advanced position of that science, compared with that which it had attained in the middle of the last century. The life of this philosopher, like that of the great Kant, offers little material for the narrator. Born in the year 1820," &c.' (Cross, p.168).

> before excitement of any one has been communicated to others - often antagonistic ones - and the conduct becomes modified in adjustment to the combined dictates. Hence results a decreased impulsiveness, and also a greater persistence. The conduct pursued, being prompted by several emotions co-operating in degrees which do not exhaust them, acquires a greater continuity; and while spasmodic force becomes less conspicuous, there is an increase in the total energy.[5]

Spencer's analysis of development presents a picture of man in his environment gradually evolving, even by mental inhibitions, into a more rational being. In a similar way Dorothea must use her thoughts powerfully so that, whilst taking the future revenge into her mind, she must make it past without carrying it out, *before* ever it is communicated to Casaubon.[6] Confirming the connection between Spencer's description and Dorothea's situation, is another part of George Eliot's letter to Mrs Ponsonby:

> 'The progress of the world' - which you say can only come at the right time - can certainly never come at all save by the modified action of the individual beings who compose the world; and that we ourselves have to say to ourselves with effect, 'There is an order of considerations which I will keep myself continually in mind of, so that they may continually be the prompters of certain feelings and actions'.

Spencer's chosen phrases are of greater significance when aligned with George Eliot's own:

modified in adjustment	modified action
prompted by several emotions	prompters of certain feelings and actions
greater continuity and increase in total energy	keep myself continually in mind, energetic effort

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5 Herbert Spencer, *Essays Scientific, Political & Speculative*, first published 1858, 3 vols (London: Williams & Norgate, 1878), p.431.

6 Sally Shuttleworth argues that George Eliot uses physiology in accordance with Spencer's belief that it is both possible and necessary to interpret mental evolution in terms of a redistribution of Matter and Motion: 'Spencer employs the principle of the persistence of force to demonstrate necessary psychic evolution, and thus to support his theory of history as unified progress. Mental evolution occurs as wider and wider channels of communication are carved in the mind' (Shuttleworth, p.163). She connects the idea of persistence to George Eliot's own terminology in *Middlemarch* (the 'persistent self' in *Middlemarch*, p.182). Spencer argues that discharges of energy are carried down nervous lines of communication and that as certain impulses are discharged in different forms or are re-channelled, new lines of nervous communication arise. In effect, by forcibly redirecting the energy which would have resulted in a violent external act Dorothea cuts new nervous paths for herself.

As a scientist, Spencer was concerned with the evolutionary processes manifesting themselves in men over a long historical period. As a novelist, George Eliot examines the development away from primitive impulsiveness in the making of her particular characters. Dorothea's struggle not to strike Casaubon is described in a metaphorical sense, just as earlier Casaubon's rigid arm was, metaphorically, a blow inflicted on Dorothea. Characteristically, George Eliot then used her metaphor to illustrate with greater precision the reality of that invisible emotional world which lies behind the metaphorical language, correctively adjusting the language which screens the underlining meanings of events: lives are devastated by events which are merely '*called* trivialities', just as denial is evasively '*called* knowledge'. Casaubon's cold response to Dorothea had a wider implication for the condition of human life with which George Eliot is concerned, for his response and the effect of it on Dorothea represented another one of those tragedies, as when Dorothea lay weeping on her honeymoon, 'which lie in the very fact of frequency', but have 'not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind' (*Middlemarch*, p.226). Dorothea must not now compound the tragedy by herself 'striking' Casaubon. What evolved thought tries to do is to substitute mental metaphor for physical action.[7]

It is as a consequence of Dorothea's self-restraint on this one occasion that the suppressed external act of the moment brings inner 'persistence' and 'continuity': the initial resistance to impulsiveness begins a way of life.

Indeed, the persistence which Dorothea develops in relation to her husband gradually spreads out and has an effect on her whole life. Her ability to re-channel impulsive energy into a dynamic motive-force is illustrated, later, in her efforts to help Lydgate in his difficult marriage to Rosamond. Here are Dorothea's feelings after her long night of struggle over her suspicion of intimacy between Rosamond and Will:

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[7] Gillian Beer discusses how Darwin used metaphor in his scientific work: 'Darwin was seeking to create a story of the world - a fiction - which would not entirely rely upon the scope of man's reason nor upon the infinitesimally small powers of observation he possesses, as they act within the world spread all about him and as they enclose him through the shortness of his time span' (*Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Kegan Paul, 1983), p.99: hereafter further references cited in the text as 'Beer', *Darwin's Plots*). What Gillian Beer is asserting is that both Darwin as a scientist and George Eliot as a novelist seek to reach understanding not merely by reporting the facts but by making an imaginative model or creative substitution.

> She had waked into a new condition: she felt as if her soul had been liberated from its terrible conflict; she was no longer wrestling with her grief, but could sit down with it as a lasting companion and make it a sharer in her thoughts. For now the thoughts came thickly. [...] She said to her own irremediable grief, that it should make her more helpful, instead of driving her back from effort.
>
> (*Middlemarch*, pp.845, 846)

It is only after an exhausting night of personal agony, jealousy and disappointment that Dorothea more fully understands the concept of her initiation into real life which had, at the beginning of *Middlemarch,* merely been a romantic notion. Dorothea sees her grief outside herself as an objective presence with which she enters into dialogue. In doing so Dorothea prevents herself from statically remaining the victim of the emotions wrought in her by her grief. But Dorothea's pain cannot simply be cured. The reaction caused in her when she witnessed the supposedly intimate liaison between Rosamond and Will forced upon her consciousness the realization that she has herself loved Will for a long time. Yet the recognition is itself bitter-sweet, for in the same moment that loving Will becomes real to her, Dorothea understands that Will's involvement with Rosamond has made the chance of any future union between them *forever* impossible: it is for this reason that her grief is almost unspeakably 'irremediable'. Yet in addressing her grief Dorothea speaks to an aspect of her innermost self as if it were a being outside - a 'companion' and a 'sharer in her thoughts'. The external presence gives a greater force to her sense of desperate need for resolve. But in coming to terms with her own sense of injury and loss, Dorothea makes a transition from the consciousness of her own particular inward grief which belongs to her alone, to the recognition that grieving has a wider external relation to the common suffering of men generally. She needs such thoughts to reconnect her with a fuller understanding to the selfless motive which had prompted her to visit the Lydgate's home the previous day.

The development of Dorothea's habit of inwardly hearing herself forms a continuous thread throughout *Middlemarch*. After Casaubon's death, when Dorothea has had time to digest the terms of Casaubon's will concerning any future relation with Will Ladislaw, Dorothea returns to Lowick:

> At first she walked into every room, questioning the eighteen months of her life, and carrying on her thoughts as if they were a speech to be heard by her husband. Then, she lingered in the library and could not be at rest till she had carefully ranged all the note-books as she imagined that he would wish to see them, in

> orderly sequence. The pity which had been the restraining compelling motive in her life with him still clung about his image, even whilst she remonstrated with him in indignant thought and told him that he was unjust.
>
> (*Middlemarch*, pp.582-583)

Even after Casaubon's death, the external body remains in the form of an inward image - a thought contained within Dorothea which dictates her silence for her - as if Casaubon were still outside as a physical presence, demanding self-restraint in her conduct. The better motive lingers as a permanent force projected into her present by her memory - the very words from Chapter Forty-Two 'image' and 'remonstrated' instinctively cling on. She continues to be fuelled by her sense of compulsion to pity Casaubon; hence her outward act is not to destroy his notebooks as she knew would have distressed him, but to carefully arrange the notebooks 'as she imagined that he would wish to see them'.

The scene at Lowick is clearly related to Dorothea's reaction immediately after the incident in Chapter Forty-Two when she had tried to take hold of her husband's arm. Then Dorothea had been thinking angrily to herself:

> 'What have I done - what am I - that he should treat me so? He never knows what is in my mind - he never cares. What is the use of anything I do? He wishes he had never married me.'
>
> She began to hear herself, and was checked into stillness. Like one who has lost his way and is weary, she sat and saw as in one glance all the paths of her young hope which she should never find again. (*Middlemarch*, p.463)

Barbara Hardy has analysed part of this passage. She writes:

> Hostile reproach is stopped by one of those moments of self-awareness recorded so steadily and imaginatively in Dorothea. 'She began to hear herself and was checked into stillness'. The most amusingly, and the most chillingly self-absorbed characters in the novels never hear themselves, and most of the sensitive souls don't manage it as often as Dorothea. Even with her, self-awareness doesn't come easily. It checks and silences, but silence is not followed by a quick recovery.[8]

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8 Barbara Hardy, *Particularities: Readings in George Eliot* (London: Peter Owen, 1982), pp.91-92.

The part of Dorothea brought into being even by hearing herself becomes her deeper self - quieter, more inward and more reflective. Whilst Casaubon is still alive Dorothea remains dedicated in her commitment to him. But after his death, Dorothea's earlier developed habit of self-listening must be regenerated as a source of critical self-analysis: she must consider at what point her duty to Casaubon must end, and a life independent from him, yet forever connected in its wider motives to him by her past with him, should begin.

There is a helpful passage in Iris Murdoch's book *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* in which she is concerned with the distinction between different kinds of moral obligation:

> There is the idea of a sovereign good, but there are also compartments, obligations, rules, aims whose identity may have to be respected. These separate aspects or modes of behaviour occasion some of the most difficult kinds of moral problems, as if we have to move between *styles*, or to change gear. We have to live a single moral existence, and also to retain the separate force of various kinds of moral vision. Jeanie Deans in Scott's novel loves her sister, but she cannot lie to save her life. Isabella in *Measure for Measure* will not save her brother by yielding her chastity to Angelo. Duty is one thing, love is another. These are dramatic examples; one can invent many more homely ones of the conflict of moral requirements of entirely different kinds, wherein one seems to have to choose between being two different kinds of person. This may be a choice between two paths in life, or it may be some everyday matter demanding an instant response.[9]

When Iris Murdoch writes of the 'two paths', and argues that the choice of either may be the equivalent of having to 'choose between being two different kinds of person', she describes the moral struggle from which Dorothea has already emerged. But Casaubon creates another moral dilemma for Dorothea when he asks her to consent to all the stipulations of his will without former knowledge of the nature of the promise which she must give:

> And yet, could she deny him? Could she say, 'I refuse to content this pining hunger?' It would be refusing to do for him dead, what she was almost sure to do for him living. If he lived, as Lydgate had said he might, for fifteen years or more, her life would certainly be spent in helping him and obeying him.

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[9] Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), p.483: hereafter cited in the text as 'Murdoch'.

> Still there was a deep difference between that devotion to the living, and that indefinite promise of devotion to the dead. While he lived, he could claim nothing from her that she would not still be free to remonstrate against, and even to refuse. (*Middlemarch*, pp.520-521)

Dorothea's hesitancy to make her promise to Casaubon is fuelled by different concerns from those which had caused her to hesitate in approaching him after Lydgate's visit. Casaubon's will seeks to remove the moral choice from Dorothea which, ironically, has been Dorothea's greatest strength in her relation to him. It is at this point that Dorothea feels the tension between living a 'single moral existence' and the 'compartments, obligations, rules, [and] aims whose identity may have to be respected'. George Eliot articulates this thought in Dorothea: 'there was a deep difference between that devotion to the *living*, and that indefinite promise of devotion to the *dead'*. In her emergence from moral stupidity Dorothea's whole concept of a single moral existence has been in relation to her husband. But to compromise herself now, by promising an unspecified devotion of duty to Casaubon, would be a terrible error, a step backward. For, as George Eliot told us earlier: 'she looked with unbiased comparison and healthy sense at probabilities on which he had risked all his egoism' (*Middlemarch*, p.519). Dorothea is made suddenly conscious that she has a duty to herself as well as to Casaubon. Iris Murdoch provided two dramatic examples (Jeanie Deans in Scott's novel and Isabella in *Measure for Measure*), where the tension between duty to oneself and love of others is deeply felt. If Dorothea were to obey Casaubon it would be self-destructively to force her 'healthy sense' to become a willing prisoner to Casaubon's own diseased vision concerning his worthless project: she would commit herself to becoming all too like him, dead, without any living place for her ideals to exist. She would be returning to a position of moral stupidity when the whole lesson of her marriage to Casaubon has sought to liberate her from that position. It is precisely because Dorothea is better able to understand the nature of own self - and her wider inheritance and ideals in relation to, but now independently of, their embodiment in the person of Casaubon - that she must, ultimately, disobey his will.

II. Moral Habits: The Refusal to Remake Oneself

In *Middlemarch* George Eliot depicts a scene between Rosamond and Lydgate in which Lydgate summons the courage to confide in his wife about the debts which have been incurred, both leading up to and since their marriage. He tells her:

> 'I took pains to keep it from you while you were not well; but now we must think together about it, and you must help me.'

Here is Rosamond's reply to Lydgate, and George Eliot's analysis of it:

> 'What can *I* do, Tertius?' said Rosamond, turning her eyes on him again. That little speech of four words, like so many others in all languages, is capable by varied inflexions of expressing all states of mind from helpless dimness to exhaustive argumentative perception, from the completest of self-devoting fellowship to the most neutral aloofness. Rosamond's thin utterance threw into the words: 'What can *I* do!' as much neutrality as they could hold. They fell like a mortal chill on Lydgate's roused tenderness. (*Middlemarch*, p.640)

A great deal rests, George Eliot recognized, on how Rosamond articulates 'that little speech of four words' in answer to her husband: therein lies the range of difference between 'self-devoting fellowship' or a 'mortal chill on Lydgate's roused tenderness'. Contained within the minute differences of inflexion and tone is the multiple potential of a common life-force: 'capable of expressing all states of mind'. George Eliot regarded her novels as experiments in life, and within her novel, I am arguing, such minute differences actually become embodied as people, themselves expressions or versions of the general life-force incarnate in subtle, particularized forms as characters. Thus whereas Dorothea acts to harness the raw energy of her anger and powerfully reformulate that energy into mercy and tenderness towards Casaubon, Rosamond, in contrast, remains inwardly inactive, and unhelpfully 'neutral' towards Lydgate. As well as the differences which manifest themselves in the contrasting relations between characters within a single novel, the breadth of George Eliot's scope and sense of human potential is such that her consciousness works across her novels in a whole imaginative world-view, of which the single novel comprises but a part. Characters are connected across her different novels as differently evolved versions of one another. Furthermore, George Eliot incorporates and tests the ideas which affected her own life - Spinoza, Feuerbach, Bray, Lewes and Spencer - and

thus adds a density to her vision of human relations that goes beyond a simple story-line. Using these thoughts about George Eliot's wider vision as a framework, in this section I will argue that, aside from gender distinctions, Gwendolen Harleth and Arthur Donnithorne are related in their expression of a common life-force.

In my preceding section I considered Dorothea and Daniel as examples of individuals who are developing out of existing patterns of behaviour, new habits of thought which nonetheless are still in touch with their underlying need and potential. Gwendolen Harleth operates on the basis of a different set of concerns altogether. Her efforts at self-restraint, far from arising out of an habitual concern for others, are used instinctively as a defensive weapon. This is illustrated in the scene in which Gwendolen has just learned of the future financial arrangements made by Grandcourt regarding his son by Lydia Glasher:

> She was not again going to be hysterical, or take to her bed and say she was ill. That was the implicit resolve adjusting her muscles before she could have framed it in words, as she walked out of the room, leaving Lush behind her. She was going to act in the spirit of her message, and not to give herself time to reflect. She rang the bell for her maid, and went with the usual care through her change of toilet. Doubtless her husband had meant to produce a great effect on her: by-and-by perhaps she would let him see an effect the very opposite of what he intended; but at present all that she could show was a defiant satisfaction in what had been presumed to be disagreeable. It came as an instinct rather than a thought, that to show any sign which could be interpreted as jealousy, when she had just been insultingly reminded that the conditions were what she had accepted with her eyes open, would be the worst self-humiliation. She said to herself that she had not time today to be clear about her future actions; all she could be clear about was that she would match her husband in ignoring any ground for excitement. (*Deronda*, pp.663-664)

Gwendolen finds that her old methods, used to exert a measure of control within her family, are ineffectual against Grandcourt. Gwendolen's great difficulty is how to deal with her new crisis without the separate moral habits which Dorothea is able to fall back on as a hidden strength. Readjustment in Dorothea's case revolved around hearing herself, taking time, and in being checked into stillness, thus innerly containing the energy for greater future purposes. But in Gwendolen's case she hears her will's desire for future revenge - 'by-and-by perhaps she would let him see an affect the opposite of what he intended' - and in the meantime readjusts her muscles in physical substitution for thinking and feeling, defiantly steeling herself against her husband, and waiting. Gwendolen uses the idea of routine to mask her inward turmoil, acting

almost mechanically - 'she went with the usual care through her change of toilet'. Instantaneous instinct acting as defensive inhibition exists in Gwendolen in place of thought. If Gwendolen were to 'give herself time to reflect' ('[...] she had not time today') that reflection would force her to inwardly concede that she had acted badly in accepting Grandcourt initially: she would feel even more compromised inside. Instead, Gwendolen has to speed up in order to keep ahead of that memory of the past. Gwendolen's instinctive 'implicit resolve' acts as a block against the 'self-humiliation' which would arise as a result of making her distress explicit to Grandcourt. Gwendolen's intense egoism quickly foresees all the implications of Grandcourt witnessing her agitation. For Gwendolen has used her superior judgement of Grandcourt's deeds to distract her from her own moral responsibility in choosing to set aside Lydia Glasher's claims and marry Grandcourt. By not presenting Grandcourt with any visible signs of distress, Gwendolen feels she can salvage some sense of her aloof superiority, if only by matching his own aloofness with a 'defiant satisfaction in what had been presumed to be disagreeable'.

Gwendolen has no sense of future actions precisely because her life has been lived on the basis of her own presently improvised desires. She lacks any memory from her past which could guide her present response to her husband or determine her course for the future. Gwendolen's defensively-learned, instinctive sense of her own present well-being is untrained and, moreover, unconnected to what Lewes describes as human 'common experience':

> The mind is a growth and a development - as the body is. Because men inherit a common structure, and are inevitably placed under similar conditions of stimulation, they have common experiences and develop common faculties. We all see distances, movements, forms, colours; we all gain the same intuitions of co-existence and succession, of space and time, of causality, &c.; we are all praised and blamed; we all struggle and we are hurt; we all find pleasure and pain following certain actions; we all feel our dependence on others. But it is necessary for the development of these dispositions and intuitions that there should be a certain order in the succession of experiences. Even the instincts of animals may be undeveloped if the stimuli be withheld at the proper moment: the cry of the mother fails to move the offspring, fails to have more significance for it than any other sound, if the first few days be suffered to pass over without the offspring hearing this cry. (*Problems of Life and Mind*, II, 15)

The absence of moral habit, rather than mere psychological strategy, means that Gwendolen has no concept of any correct chronological order to her life. When

Lewes writes that 'the cry of the mother fails to move the offspring [...] if the first few days be suffered to pass over without the offspring hearing this cry', he describes the lost or missing habit which in Gwendolen has been replaced by self-interested defensiveness. Gwendolen's relation to her mother illustrates her moral deficiencies:

> Mrs Davilow's motherly tenderness clung chiefly to her eldest girl, who had been born in her happier time. One night under an attack of pain she found that the specific regularly placed by her bed had been forgotten, and begged Gwendolen to get out of bed and reach it for her. That healthy young lady, snug and warm as a rosy infant in her little couch, objected to step out into the cold, and lying perfectly still, grumbled a refusal. Mrs Davilow went without the medicine and never reproached her daughter; but the next day Gwendolen was keenly conscious of what must be in her mamma's mind, and tried to make amends by caresses which cost her no effort.

The consequences of this and other faults constantly lurk behind Gwendolen's brave front:

> Though never even as a child a thoughtlessly cruel, nay, delighting to rescue drowning insects and watch their recovery, there was a disagreeable silent remembrance of her having strangled her sister's canary-bird in a final fit of exasperation at its shrill singing which had again and again jarringly interrupted her own. She had taken pains to buy a white mouse for her sister in retribution, and though inwardly excusing herself on the ground of a peculiar sensitiveness which was a mark of her superiority, the thought of that infelonious murder had always made her wince. Gwendolen's nature was not remorseless, but she liked to make penances easy, and now that she was twenty and more, her native force had turned into a self-control by which she guarded herself from penitential humiliation. (*Deronda*, pp.53-54)

In spite of Mrs Davilow's clinging attachment to her daughter, Gwendolen guards her own comfort as her first priority and remains unmoved by her mother's simple request for pain-relief, whatever her regrets afterwards. Gwendolen has no psychological or moral habit stored as a response in her beforehand, which could come forward instinctively. Gwendolen is only made to feel 'keenly conscious' after the event is made past, but even then her displaced affection is connected to her own egoism: she does not wish to be thought of badly. What Gwendolen finds most hard to bear, more than her own inward remembrance of selfishness or cruelty, is that her acts are contained and have a real existence within the memory of others, even though they are not spoken of: her mother 'never reproached her daughter', her sister has a 'disagreeable silent remembrance' of Gwendolen having murdered the canary-bird.

But although Gwendolen is herself made to wince at the memory of past actions, she does not use that sense of wrong-doing as a motive to control her future habits; instead, carried along by her own bad habits, Gwendolen's uncomfortable pang of guilt exists in her only half-reconciled with her childish efforts at remorse - to 'make amends by caresses which cost her nothing', 'to make penances easy'. Gwendolen attempts to compensate by way of material reimbursement and consoles herself, innerly, with the thought that all her actions are justifiable in the light of her 'peculiar sensitivity [...] a mark of her superiority'. What George Eliot describes as the 'native force' in Gwendolen is that energy which is essentially *given* to Gwendolen along with those 'common faculties' of which Lewes writes: the crucial difference, as I argued in relation to Rosamond and Lydgate, is how that force is used. Gwendolen gets along with what becomes her own story, neglecting to re-correct the order of her acts and consequences.

In George Eliot's description of Arthur Donnithorne as a child, it is possible to gain an earlier picture of the type of childish mentality which is manifest in Gwendolen in its adult form - the desire to make penances easy:

> Arthur's, as you know, was a loving nature. Deeds of kindness were as easy to him as a bad habit: they were the common issue of his weaknesses and his good qualities, of his egoism and his sympathy. He didn't like to witness pain, and he liked to have grateful eyes beaming on him as the giver of pleasure. When he was a lad of seven, he one day kicked down an old gardener's pitcher of broth, from no motive but a kicking impulse, not reflecting that it was the old man's dinner; but on learning that sad fact, he took his favourite pencil-case and a silver-hafted knife out of his pocket and offered them as compensation. He had been the same Arthur ever since, trying to make all offences forgotten in benefits.
> (*Adam Bede*, pp.356-357)

The unreflecting child in Arthur is carried with him in his deep consciousness into adulthood. If unchecked, that natural 'kicking impulse' transforms itself into a dangerous weakness towards his own desires. Arthur uses his misdirected sympathy towards others only *after* his own foolish or thoughtless action has affected their lives, rather than as a preventative force. In adulthood Arthur's strong egoism cannot bear to carry out an action which might make him unfavourable for a time in Hetty's eyes, even if the long-term result of being temporarily unfavourable would bring better end-results. He cannot bear to acknowledge that things are bad, even if only to make them better, and thus cannot break the sequence of ill-doings. Arthur's desires are those of

an adult, but his thoughts about the consequences of acting upon the promptings of his desires are sheerly childish. George Eliot conveys Arthur's vision of the future:

> [Arthur], if he should unfortunately break a man's legs in his rash driving, will be able to pension him handsomely; or if he should happen to spoil a woman's existence for her, will make it up to her with expensive *bon-bons*, packed up and directed by his own hand. (*Adam Bede*, p.170)

In his own mind, as Arthur matures, he develops a strong series of thought associations, a habit of mind by which he affirms his position. In the *Ethics* Spinoza suggests that habits, by the accidental association of ideas, can take over from a more essential and impersonal sense of a logical conclusion:

> Each person, according as he is accustomed to join and link together the images of things in this or that manner, will have this or that succession of ideas. (*Ethics*, p.63)

Arthur comes to link together the imaginative idea of an injury with compensation as a kind of heal-all. The crucial difference is that as a child Arthur genuinely did act without any concept of constraining rules to obey and only considered consequences when he could recognize them visibly. In adulthood Arthur should have broken the links established by the expression of impulses, forging new mental links via a morally adult sense of foresight and motives. Instead, Arthur banishes his adult vision of consequences and continues his actions regardless.

Arthur fails to make the transition from the impulsive, thoughtless child to the moral, self-principled adult. Yet deeper within his guilty consciousness Arthur has to make himself believe that he, rather than Hetty, is a victim of circumstance. He cannot accept the responsibility of the consequences which he has brought on himself by his deviously passive choices. Thus Arthur contemplates writing his letter to Hetty to end their affair:

> He *could* do nothing but comfort her and lull her into dreaming on. A letter would be a dreadfully abrupt way of awakening her! Yet there was truth in what Adam said - that it would save her from a lengthened delusion, which might be worse than a sharp immediate pain. And it was the only way of satisfying Adam, who *must* be satisfied for more reason than one. If he could have seen her again! But that was impossible; there was such a thorny hedge of hindrances between them, and an imprudence would be fatal. And yet, if he *could* see her again, what good would it do? Only cause him to suffer more from the sight of her distress and the remembrance of it. Away from him, she was surrounded by all the motives to self-control. [...] Arthur told himself, he did not deserve that things

> should turn out badly - he had never meant beforehand to do anything his conscience disapproved - he had been led on by circumstances.
>
> (*Adam Bede*, pp.360-361)

Arthur's thought that he has been 'led on by circumstances' is one which Arthur uses to salve his conscience. The thought allows Arthur to believe that his action is determined for him by his environment, and creates a gap in which excuses may lodge. In his conversation with Mr. Irwine, Arthur insisted that man is often forced into actions by circumstance: 'in spite of his resolutions' (*Adam Bede*, p.217). George Eliot had a great dislike of the psychological strategy by which Arthur ties to blame his actions on to his determined situation and in another letter to Mrs Ponsonby in August 1875 she explains why:

> 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, whence it is clear that there is nothing in truth to hinder you from it - except you will say the absence of a motive. But that absence I don't believe in, in your case - only in the case of empty barren souls.
>
> (Cross, p.542)

George Eliot recognized that the externalized idea that all life is determined by circumstance could be innerly manipulated by men such as Arthur in order to create excuses for themselves. The force which might enable him to control his actions is contained in George Eliot's powerful doublet of 'willing strongly' and 'willing to will strongly'. The energy to inhibit a bad act is born out of that secondary power of re-self-generation towards something other than self. But Arthur never really knows how determined his situation is because he refuses to try to force himself to act against the circumstances. At a distance, the 'sharp immediate pain' of a final letter is something which Arthur concedes would be better for Hetty. But he does not reflect for one moment that, long before the necessity to write a letter arose, the 'sharp immediate pain' should have been a violence turned inward and used against his own weak self. That is the Christian ethic espoused by Thomas à Kempis:

> If we would use some little violence at the beginning, then afterwards should we be able to perform all things with ease and delight. It is a hard matter to leave off that to which we are accustomed, but it is harder to go against our own wills. But if thou dost not overcome little and easy things, how wilt thou overcome harder

> things? Resist thy inclination in the very beginning, and unlearn an evil habit, lest perhaps by little and little it draw thee to greater difficulty. (*The Imitation*, p.18)

'Violence against our own wills' is what Arthur avoids, not wanting to inhibit himself internally or make himself unfavourable to Hetty outside. So the 'order' as George Henry Lewes describes it, remains personally distorted. For Arthur has transferred the problem, which he himself created, onto Hetty.[10]

Using Spinoza's work, George Eliot might have argued that Arthur's situation originates from his lack of understanding as to the real cause of his wish to see Hetty again. For humans do not fully understand the causes of things:

> What is called a final cause is nothing else than a human desire considered as the originating principle or primary cause of anything. For example, when we say that habitation was the final cause of this or that house, we mean nothing else than that a man, because he imagined to himself the conveniences of domestic life, had a desire to build a house. Hence habitation, considered as a final cause, is nothing more than this particular appetite or desire, which in fact is the efficient cause; and this men consider as the primary cause, being commonly in ignorance as to the causes of their appetites. (*Ethics*, pp.154-155)

Spinoza shows acts are not bound to any human perception of final cause or motive. The emotions which become entwined with overlapping endings and beginnings in time are not 'confused ideas' to God as they are to men. Thus, Spinoza's explanation illuminates why Arthur, a man with inadequate ideas of time and weak motives, thinks that the final cause for seeing Hetty once more would be to undeceive her gently - 'a letter would be an awfully abrupt way of awakening her!' In fact, the cause, which ironically prevents his finally severing himself from Hetty, is the motive of creating another sexual encounter with her. Arthur's sexual desire is blindly directed towards continual consummation. He has not been strengthened by a powerful sense of motive (other than the sexual motive) before the encounter with Hetty, nor does he feel strongly enough during their affair to break the bad habit. He tries to justify himself by

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[10] In his essay 'Determinism and Responsibility' George Levine argues: 'A character, for George Eliot, becomes what he makes himself: he can in some limited degree, move counter to the push of external circumstance, and by allowing himself to become aware of his own motives, can even at times overcome them by changing them' (*A Century of George Eliot Criticism*, ed. by Gordon S. Haight (London: Methuen, 1966), p.375). What Levine articulates is George Eliot's insistence that by the effort of continually overcoming themselves, men could forge new and better habits instead of merely being the victims of inadequate ideas of time.

thinking that he 'never meant beforehand' to cause so much pain, but since he does his settled habits take the place of conscience, his thought is only a means of evading the original deep motive itself.

It is only the external force of Adam's impulsive reaction (when he catches Arthur kissing Hetty in the wood), which causes Arthur belatedly to give Hetty up. In Adam, George Eliot provides an instance where the most selfish, primitive, impulsive response is mingled with, and fed by, deeper sources of moral rightness. Adam refuses to allow Arthur to shrug off his meeting with Hetty as if it were merely a trivial encounter:

> 'No, by God!' Adam burst out, with rage that could be controlled no longer, throwing down the basket of tools, and striding forward till he was right in front of Arthur. All his jealousy and sense of personal injury, which he had been hitherto trying to keep under, had leaped up and mastered him. What man of us, in the first moments of a sharp agony, could ever feel that the fellow-man who has been the medium of inflicting it, did not mean to hurt us? In our instinctive rebellion against pain, we are children again, and demand an active will to wreak our vengeance on. Adam at this moment could only feel that he had been robbed of Hetty - robbed treacherously by the man in whom he had trusted; and he stood close in front of Arthur, with fierce eyes glaring at him, with pale lips and clenched hands, the hard tones in which he had hitherto been constraining himself to express no more than a just indignation, giving way to a deep agitated voice that seemed to shake him as he spoke. (*Adam Bede*, p.345)

Herbert Spencer wrote of how the more advanced mind could contain antagonistic feelings 'before excitement of any one has been communicated to others', and how conduct is 'prompted by several emotions co-operating in degrees which do not exhaust them'. We saw that Dorothea was able to re-channel her anger towards Casaubon into tenderness. But Arthur is almost the product of too much tenderness. Adam's first 'instinctive rebellion against pain' is his primitive way of trying to release, as well as escape, the different and accumulated pains which he suffers after his realization. If, as Spinoza believes, man is diminished by pain, the desire to eradicate pain is naturally strong. 'Conatus' is primitively striving for survival in Adam, so powerfully that it is not able at this point in Adam's life to be channelled into a more rational and active thought as Spinoza might like. In the 'first moments of a sharp agony', Adam could 'only' feel that Arthur had 'meant' to hurt him. Spinoza can help to explain why Adam's feelings are so intense:

> If any one has begun to hate the being he once loved to the degree of entirely extinguishing his love, his hatred will be greater than if he had never loved this being, and it will be greater in proportion to his former love. If any one begins to hate the being he loves, more of his desires will be counteracted than if he had never loved this being. For love is a pleasure which man, as far as possible, strives to preserve; namely, by contemplating the beloved being as present, and by giving him pleasure as far as possible; and this effort is greater in proportion as the love is greater, as also is the effort to cause the beloved being to love him in return. But these efforts would be restrained by hatred towards the beloved object. Therefore this hatred will affect him who has loved painfully, and the more so, in proportion as the love had been greater, i.e. to this pain which was the cause of hatred will be added the pain arising from the fact that he once loved; and consequently, he will contemplate the being with greater pain, i.e. he will feel greater hatred towards him than if he had never loved him, and the hatred will be in proportion to the former love. (*Ethics*, pp.120-121)

Spinoza's assertion - 'he will feel greater hatred towards him than if he had never loved him' - is relevant to the sheer basic energy of feeling which Adam has towards Arthur, a being whom he has admired and loved, and who now hurts and disappoints him. The energy that goes into love for, or hatred of, Arthur is the same life-stuff. Adam's love for Hetty seems to him such an old familiar thing that he does not realize that to another person the notion might be a completely new one, and thus even if Arthur's motive towards Hetty was wrong, it was not carried out through this 'medium' with any intent to wound Adam personally. Adam's pain is increased because he has lost not only his friend, but also his beloved, all at once, and the latter through the former.

Adam does make great efforts to force down his rage and redirect his energy into administering justice - 'his jealousy and sense of personal injury which he had hitherto been trying to keep under', 'the hard tones which he had hitherto been constraining' - these are all signs of Adam's attempts at self-restraint. But the rationality of one version of justice is overpowered by a more primitive physical response which rushes on: his 'fierce eyes glaring', 'pale lips' and 'clenched hands', the 'voice which seemed to shake him as he spoke' - all these changes happen to Adam in spite of himself. Whereas Dorothea had *time* to re-channel her energies, the scene between Adam and Arthur is immediately confrontational, by dint of their surroundings. Arthur cannot make a swift entry into the library as Casaubon had done when he rejected Dorothea. Adam can 'only' react in that 'moment' - 'Adam at this moment could only feel that he had been robbed of Hetty'; the rationale of justice is

set aside by Adam's primitive sense of injury, struggling for a place and justifying its existence by older notions of just revenge. In addition, Adam's masculine pride and aggressiveness mingles with a desire to use his anger to place external restraints on Arthur: in a sense Adam over-compensates physically for that lack of self-restraint in Arthur. Yet Adam is still closer to Dorothea than to Arthur. Adam needs time to modify the old form in which his active moral purpose is expressed solely by his primitively harsh responses. It is only very slowly with hindsight, throughout the whole length of *Adam Bede*, that Adam becomes conscious of the need to modify his own nature and rechannel that energy force which Spinoza calls 'conatus'.

Adam's presence runs through Arthur's mind as extra thoughts breaking in on his own desires - 'a lengthened delusion might be worse than a sharp immediate pain', 'away from him she was surrounded by all the motives to self control' - yet these thoughts can hardly be said to fully belong to Arthur. Adam remains in Arthur's mind only as a potential source of further violent humiliation. For when Arthur thinks about writing the letter of goodbye to Hetty later on, even though he is away from Adam's direct influence, the memory of the encounter returns to him - 'the *only* way of satisfying Adam, who *must* be satisfied'. The word 'must' in Adam's own consciousness implies a sense of moral necessity which corresponds to Kant's 'Categorical Imperative':

> It is law only that involves the conception of an *unconditional* and objective necessity, which is consequently universally valid; and commands are laws which must be obeyed, that is, must be followed, even in opposition to inclination.[11]

For Kant the categorical imperative does not come out of the careful consideration of circumstances but from the violent 'no' of a belief. It is a belief which in this instance has no existence in Arthur other than through the external presence of Adam: later it exists in him only as the memory contained inside his mind of Adam's violent

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[11] A.E. Teal, *Kantian Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), p.152. Kant would argue that the development of good habits is essential to help men be better than basic human nature allows them to be. He writes: 'Man is not so delicately made that he can be moved by objective grounds; he is not endowed by nature with a spring which could be wound up to produce the desired result. But we can produce a ***habitus*** which is not natural, but takes the place of nature, and is produced by imitation and oft repeated practice' (*Kant's Lectures on Ethics*, a reconstruction by Paul Menza, trans by Louis Infield (London: Methuen, 1930), p.46). In Lewes's *Biographical History of Philosophy* Kant was one of the philosophers whose ideas were considered morally vital.

assertion that Arthur would not play down his involvement with Hetty - 'No, by God!'. Adam's image comes back to Arthur and disperses the thought - 'If he could have seen her again!'. Inwardly, Arthur still remains the selfish child, wishing he could see Hetty once more, or, better still, that he could carry on seeing Hetty and satisfy Adam too. He wants persons, not thoughts. But since George Eliot is very discriminating in her analysis of motive, she also shows through Adam that motives, even when good, can be connected to man's selfishness. Dorothea's own egoism gave her a sense of Casaubon's 'equivalent self'; equally, in this instance Adam's egoism is a 'least partial good', the best that can be expected in imperfect man. Adam is selfishly motivated: he wants Hetty for himself. But in Adam's case his selfish desire makes the driving power behind his selfless motive. He recognizes that he must prevent Arthur from behaving selfishly and immorally in his relation to Hetty.

The psychological evasion of blame and the failure to shoulder the responsibility for one's actions which is witnessed in the character of Arthur Donnithorne is, for all the gender difference, a strategy which is employed by Gwendolen Harleth in her marriage to Grandcourt. She is not, like Arthur, a sexual predator. But, fuelled by her own egoism and her own desires, she passively allows herself to be pursued by Grandcourt. She tells herself that her mother's financial predicament is the cause which forces her choice (although she could have chosen to become a governess at Mrs Mompert's). She rushes on to make a choice which itself will avoid 'deliberate choice':

> A few minutes before she was looking along an inescapable path of repulsive monotony, with hopeless inward rebellion against the imperious lot which left her no choice: and lo, now, a moment of choice was come. (*Deronda*, p.336)

In her decision to act in that moment, rather than 'willing to will', Gwendolen is doing the opposite - willing *not* to will. Felicia Bonaparte in *Will and Destiny* states:

> Gwendolen sees herself as one who controls but is not controlled. The choices are always hers to make. This, in effect, is the vision of total freedom.

But she continues a little further on:

> But of the fact that Gwendolen is blind even to the curtailment of personal choice imposed by the existence of specific individuals we already have abundant evidence. It is not only on a moral level that Gwendolen errs in this respect.

> When she chooses to ignore Lydia Glasher's claim on Grandcourt, it is her selfishness that chooses to place her own wishes above the rights of others; but that selfishness is also a blindness that refuses to acknowledge the sinister prophecy implicit in Grandcourt's behaviour to Lydia.[12]

On one level Gwendolen does see herself as able to control her submissive mother and, to an extent, men too, simply because she is beautiful. However, on another level Gwendolen is acutely if confusedly conscious of the limitations on her control and power. When Gwendolen is first introduced to Grandcourt, George Eliot reveals Gwendolen's thoughts during repeated pauses in their conversation. She considers what marriage to such a man would mean, not so much in terms of her potential power over Grandcourt, but with regard to Grandcourt as a symbol of power, through which she, as his wife, could find power by association. Ultimately, Gwendolen does not see herself as a controller. Rather than actively trying to harm Lydia's position in relation to Grandcourt, Gwendolen needs to make her action against Lydia as passive and inadvertent as possible. Gwendolen decides to accept Grandcourt:

> But her state of mind was altogether new: she who had been used to feel sure of herself, and ready to manage others, had just taken a decisive step which she had beforehand thought that she would not take - nay, perhaps, was bound not to take. She could not go backward now; she liked a great deal of what lay before her; and there was nothing for her to like if she went back. But her resolution was dogged by the shadow of that previous resolve which had at first come as the undoubting movement of her whole being. While she lay on her pillow with wide-open eyes, 'looking on darkness which the blind do see,' she was appalled by the idea that she was going to do what she had once started away from with repugnance. [...] She seemed on the edge of adopting deliberately, as a notion for all the rest of her life, what she had rashly said in her bitterness, when her discovery had driven her away to Leubronn:- that it did not signify what she did; she had only to amuse herself as best she could. That lawlessness, that casting away of all care for justification, suddenly frightened her: it came to her with the shadowy array of some possible calamity behind it - calamity which had ceased to be a mere name for her; and all the infiltrated influences of disregarded religious teaching, as well as the deeper impressions of something awful and inexorable enveloping her, seemed to concentrate themselves in some vague conception of avenging powers.
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> (*Deronda*, pp.355-356)

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12 Felicia Bonaparte, *Will and Destiny: Morality and Tragedy in George Eliot's Novels* (New York: New York University Press, 1975), pp.86, 87-88.

As Gwendolen's imagination moves through different bands of time, she is uncomfortably conscious that she is on the other side of a decision which in the past she had said to herself, she 'would not take' - which looking to the future, she had even felt 'bound not to take'. Now, as she remembers the past - 'beforehand' - she views herself existing in a now present future which she had previously felt with 'undoubting' conviction could never be. The temporal disorder is almost palpably felt by her. The energy which had originally pushed her away from Grandcourt is now transmuted into an energy forcing her towards him. Her moral repugnance is replaced by childish self-justification ('she liked a good deal of what lay before her'), and a sort of despair of despairing ('it did not signify what she did; she had only to amuse herself the best she could'). Gwendolen's insistence on *only* amusing herself is a symptom of her half-guilty desire to obliterate the thoughts of Lydia Glasher and her children. But there is no real escaping the demands of right order. Instead of the forward propulsion which she had felt moving her towards the future - 'she could not go backward now' - Gwendolen feels herself stationary under the weight of time fast advancing towards her. Involuntarily, she sees the future rushing upon her imagination - 'it came to her with the shadowy array of possible calamity *behind* it' - with the distant future (which she dreads) waiting as if predeterminedly. Yet her approach to dread remains in keeping with her general state of mind. As with the picture behind the wainscoting panel at her Uncle Gascoigne's house which had filled Gwendolen with a strange terror, the fears of her imagined future with Grandcourt are locked away, banished from Gwendolen's conscious mind. Her sense of initial freedom which rested in 'lawlessness', 'casting away all care', and 'disregarded religion' are contrasted with the feelings from which she cannot escape - the 'infiltrated influences', 'deeper impressions' and 'vague conceptions' and the sense of 'something awful and inexorable enveloping her'. Yet she has still half-willingly resigned herself and her will to Grandcourt, in place of such scruples.

In contrast to both Gwendolen and Arthur, that other evader, Godfrey Cass in *Silas Marner* believes himself freer to act within his circumstances than he actually is:

> For four years he had thought of Nancy Lammeter, and wooed her with tacit patient worship, as the woman who made him think of the future with joy: she would be his wife, and would make a home lovely to him, as his father's home had never been; and it would be easy, when she was always near to shake off

> those foolish habits that were no pleasures, but only a feverish way of annulling vacancy. Godfrey's was an essentially domestic nature, bred up in a home where the hearth had no smiles, and where the daily habits were not chastised by the presence of household order.

George Eliot tells us:

> And yet the hope of this paradise had not been enough to save him from a course which shut him out of it forever. Instead of keeping fast hold of the strong silken rope by which Nancy would have drawn him safe to the green banks where it was easy to step firmly, he had let himself be dragged back into mud and slime, in which it was useless to struggle. He had made ties for himself which robbed him of all wholesome motives and were a constant exasperation.
>
> (*Silas Marner*, pp.80-81)

Bad habits for Godfrey Cass are simply a means of filling in present time - 'annulling vacancy' - whilst he is waiting for some better future-assured habit to arrive through his relations to Nancy. He is apparently unaware that change requires an individual to make an active effort first. Godfrey differs from Gwendolen and Arthur only in his relation to time, for where they rush on to avoid moral choice, Godfrey passively waits for the moral life to come to him in the form of Nancy Lammeter. Godfrey reveals his inadequate understanding of time through his perception of what is 'transitory' and what is 'permanent'. For he has no real understanding of the consequential relationship to activities entered into now and who he will become as a result. It is George Eliot as narrator who *already* registers the connection which Godfrey fails to be aware of - 'yet the hope of this paradise had not been enough to save him from the course which shut him out of it forever'.

Godfrey, Gwendolen, and Arthur all share a common need for surrogates in their lives, so that the moral responsibility for organizing and reordering their inner self is put out onto other people. Godfrey has no belief in the present life as a preparation for the future. He believes in the existence of goodness only outside himself in the form of Nancy, and thinks that moral action is reserved for the new phase which he will enter via his second marriage. Gwendolen uses Grandcourt's proposal of marriage as an ordering device in her life, and later tries to use Daniel as an external container for her responsibility. Furthermore, Arthur transfers his own guilt onto Hetty, convincing himself that the events have been caused sheerly by her sexual irresistibility and, later, Adam becomes the outside representative of Arthur's

best motives towards the girl which are not alive inside Arthur himself. For Gwendolen and Godfrey, the entrance into a new life is seen in the form of marriage whereas Arthur looks ahead to a new moral life on becoming the future squire. All three engineer external, artificial ordering devices in their lives in substitution for making the transition into the second stage of moral life which centres in moral thinking adulthood.

III. The Second Stage of Life

In my first section, I cited an extract from a letter which George Eliot had written to Mrs Ponsonby, and related it to what Dorothea must try to do in her life. In her letter George Eliot urged upon Mrs Ponsonby the necessity for an individual to constantly remind himself of: 'an order of considerations which I will keep myself continually in mind of, so that they may continually be the prompters of certain feelings and actions'. In Dorothea, George Eliot provides an example of an individual who struggles to remake herself moving out of her egoistic, childish fantasy-world into a higher moral realm in her relation to Casaubon. George Eliot recognized that not all natures could force that transformation of the selfish self as effectively as Dorothea managed to. But, equally, George Eliot believed that ignoring or avoiding the challenge to implement change does not simply result in that challenge's disappearance. For the challenge to operate at higher levels of being returns throughout one's life and must be dealt with if not sooner (as is the case with Dorothea), then later. In the final section of this chapter I will deal with the consequences of eschewing the life-challenges which are faced in making the transition to a moral life.

In the *The Philosophy of Necessity*, Charles Bray asserts that it is the chronological order of one's considerations (the order in which man entertains his thoughts) which can strongly affect the whole development of an individual as a moral being. In Bray's view the only way to secure moral action is to always have the best moral thoughts first:

> The main thing to be sought is the *habitual* predominance of the moral feelings; the maintenance of them in a state in which 'the prospect of advantage through unlawful means should never present itself to the mind;' or if it did, that its

expulsion should follow instinctively, without any calculation on the subject as to whether the 'particular circumstances' do not make it lawful; for he that hesitates is lost. If an action be considered at all doubtful, the thought of it is occasionally entertained, the mind becomes accustomed to the possibility of its performance, and will then generally yield to the first strong temptation. Thus even thoughts at variance with the highest purity of the mind should never be permitted to gain entrance, for evil thoughts invariably lead to evil deeds, as minor crimes to greater. So the habitual indulgence of *one* fault lowers the tone of the whole of moral sentiments and is incompatible with the higher virtues. It acts physically as well as morally by depriving the moral organs of the nervous energy requisite for their full activity.[13]

Bray places emphasis on the importance or danger of 'the first strong temptation'. The first thought, Bray argues, by virtue of the influence of order on the mind, tends to be the strongest and is most likely to be remembered in the sequence of thoughts and, therefore most likely to be acted upon. In Bray's view, it is necessary to recognize bad thoughts as they arise and expel them before they have time to develop fully.

As we have seen, Arthur Donnithorne's problem is precisely that his first thoughts towards Hetty are sexually motivated. In his habitual thought-pattern his sense of moral duty is always secondary to his sexual desire for Hetty. Arthur resolves not to see Hetty again, but to go fishing at Eagledale. This plan is cancelled when his horse is found to be lame, and thus he decides to avoid Hetty by having lunch with a friend at distant Norburne. However, after his long ride, the purpose of which had been to avoid Hetty, Arthur gallops home with the intention of meeting her after all. These are his thoughts later that day in the same room where before lunch he ended his 'debate with himself' with the resolve *not* to see Hetty again. The reader can see here, externally expressed, his inconstancy:

When Arthur went up to his dressing-room again after luncheon, it was inevitable that the debate he had had with himself there earlier in the day should flash across his mind; but it was impossible for him now to dwell on the remembrance - impossible to recall the feelings and reflections which had been decisive with him then, any more than to recall the peculiar scent of the air that had refreshed him when he had first opened the window. The desire to see Hetty had rushed back like an ill-stemmed current; he was amazed himself at the force with which this trivial fancy seemed to grasp him; he was even tremulous as he

[13] Charles Bray, *The Philosophy of Necessity*, first published 1841 (London: Longman Green, Longman & Roberts, 1863), pp.110-111. George Eliot read the work in 1841 and in 1852 wrote a review of it for the Analytical Catalogue of Mr Chapman's publications.

> brushed his hair - pooh! it was riding in that break-neck way. It was because he had made a serious affair of the idle matter, by thinking of it as if it were of any consequence. He would amuse himself by seeing Hetty today, and get rid of the whole thing from his mind. (*Adam Bede*, p.174)

George Eliot recognizes that no memory is as physically powerful to Arthur as the original sexual instinct on the promptings of which he has already acted. The pleasurable physical sensations which the memory of Hetty bring to him are, George Eliot says, 'like an ill-stemmed current', for the force of self-violence has never been applied by Arthur in an effort to re-channel his energies elsewhere. His good intentions before lunch are not supported by any firm course of action which could have changed his inner imaginative resolution into an actualized renunciation of Hetty. The second better thought, which made him concerned with the potentially serious consequences of his actions, had only temporarily suppressed the force of his sexual impulse. It is the physical manifestation of the urgency of his sexual desire which causes him to rush back from resolution 'in that break-neck way'. Now he cannot or will not allow himself to feel, rather than merely recall, the thought of giving Hetty up.

Whilst George Eliot tests, as it were, Bray's assertions in the person of Arthur Donnithorne, it is also clear that she saw a great problem with Bray's idea. For, being a realist novelist, George Eliot recognized that it is not practical or possible, and perhaps not even desirable, to prescribe an ideal philosophy where the noble, moral thought should always come first. George Eliot's deep interest is centred in the secondary modes in which humans operate, at various levels of being. In George Eliot's novels it is often the second, modifying thought which is vital to the remaking of an individual, as we have seen in the case of Dorothea.

The great difficulty with Gwendolen and Arthur is that they are unable powerfully to *use* the second thoughts which they have to effect any better issue. Gwendolen and Arthur cannot modify themselves inwardly like Dorothea; instead they have to be modified by having thoughts about them, belonging to others outside, forcibly imposed on their respective consciousnesses. When Gwendolen goes to Klesmer, exploring the possibility of her having a career as a singer, she finds his honest appraisal of her limited talents a painful awakening which wrenches her away from her otherwise ego-centred mentality:

> Certainly Klesmer seemed cruel, but his feeling was the reverse of cruel. Our speech even when we are most single-minded can never take its line absolutely from one impulse; but Klesmer's was as far as possible directed by compassion for poor Gwendolen's ignorant eagerness to enter on a course of which he saw all the miserable details with a definiteness that he could not even if he would have conveyed to her mind. (*Deronda*, p.301)

George Eliot states:

> Every word that Klesmer had said seemed to have been branded into her memory, as most words are which bring with them a new set of impressions and make an epoch for us. Only a few hours before, the dawning smile of self-contentment rested on her lips as she vaguely imagined a future suited to her wishes [...] Why not? At home, at school, among acquaintances she had been used to have her conscious superiority admitted. [...] She had at least shown some rationality in consulting the person who knew the most and had flattered her the least. In asking Klesmer's advice, however, she had rather been born up by a belief in his latent admiration than bent on knowing anything more unfavourable that might have lain behind his slight objections to her singing; and the truth she had asked for with the expectation that it would be agreeable, had come like a lascerating thong. (*Deronda*, pp.306-307)

Klesmer's uncompromising criticism of Gwendolen forces on her a crucial break-point from which new consciousness can begin to grow. Klesmer represents the external counterpart to the better thought which, already *in* Gwendolen, had initially prompted her to ask for his advice: 'she had shown some rationality in consulting the person who knew the most and had flattered her the least'. But her better thought is subsumed in the deep-seated habit of mind which rests in defensive egoism: 'she had been born up by a belief his latent admiration'. Gwendolen has two thoughts here, yet there is no sense of conflicting tension between the two: they co-exist in her without any conscious struggle.

In *Daniel Deronda* George Eliot is deeply concerned by the grave dangers of over-tolerance, more so than in her previous novel, *Middlemarch*: a far greater importance and emphasis is placed on the uses of 'cruel compassion', such as Klesmer inflicts on Gwendolen. Here then George Eliot's thoughts are connected in tone to Spencer's ideas concerning the 'specialization of sympathy'. In the *The Principles of Psychology* Herbert Spencer notes that the repetition of a demanding physical task causes frayed skin to toughen and create callouses. As a result of such toughening man is able to complete with greater success that task which at first he found difficult and even painful. He expands the idea by considering the duties of a medical student:

> Where the circumstances are such as frequently excite a sympathetic pain, that pain will become less and less excitable sympathetically by those circumstances - there will result in that direction a moral callousness. This is sufficiently shown by the example which surgeons furnish. Though, when he first sees an operation, a student not unfrequently faints from sympathetic pain, he becomes gradually less sensitive; so that he is enabled by and by to perform an operation himself, if not without pain, still with a greatly-diminished amount of it. And the surgeon further shows us how very special this limitation of sympathy may be; since, while ceasing to be so sympathetic as the student in respect of these directly inflicted physical pains, he retains an equal sympathy, or gains a greater sympathy, with his patients in respect of their general sufferings.[14]

In George Eliot's work, the difficulty for individuals is to maintain these different levels of being - the toughness of the surgeon with the sympathy of the student - in endeavouring to carry out mental and moral surgery. Such surgery is often a painful but necessary cure for the morally sick. Klesmer, by rendering that first sharp pain of criticism, is performing an act of mental and moral surgery on Gwendolen.

A more primitive version of Klesmer's criticism of Gwendolen can be located in Felix Holt's vitriolic attack on Esther. He jolts her into new consciousness concerning herself and her father. Felix's voice comes as a secondary force instating a habit of mind that was lacking in Esther from the outset:

> For the first time in her life Esther felt herself seriously shaken in her self-contentment. She knew there was a mind to which she appeared trivial, narrow, selfish. Every word Felix had said to her seemed to have burnt itself into her memory. She felt as if she should forever more be haunted by self-criticism, and never do anything to satisfy those fancies on which she had piqued herself before without being dogged by inward questions. Her father's desire for conversion had never moved her; she saw that he adored her all the while, and he never checked the unregenerate acts as if they had degraded her on earth, but only mourned over them as unfitting her for heaven. Unfitness for heaven (spoken of as 'Jerusalem' and 'glory'), the prayers of a good little father, whose thoughts and motives seemed to her like the *Life of Dr Doddridge*, which she was content to leave unread, did not attack her self-respect and self-satisfaction. But now she had been stung - stung even into new consciousness concerning her father. Was it true that his life was so much worthier than her own? (*Felix Holt*, pp.213-214)

Where the too gentle encouragement had not caused Esther to question her own motives, but to remain aloof from her father's ideas and criticism, the violence of Felix's strong criticism leaves her feeling abruptly awoken by a new consciousness

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[14] Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Psychology*, first published 1855, 2 vols (London: Williams & Norgate 1899), vol.II, 638.

'burnt' and 'stung' into her memory. Felix creates in Esther an extra thought towards an understanding of her father's life-concerns, in contrast to her own. Esther is suddenly conscious that she has blindly dismissed her father's life as trivial without ever enquiring what his thoughts and feelings are. 'For the first time', a new current of self-questioning is scored into Esther's mind where, previously, only narrow, egoistic conceit existed. What I am arguing, through my examples of Klesmer and Felix, is that George Eliot recognized the crucial role of leading individuals in correctively reordering habits of mind which are defective or which have been lost or denied to an individual during his or her chronological development. In *Daniel Deronda*, Klesmer operates within the same realm as Deronda, foreshadowing the significance that Deronda will have in Gwendolen's life. Still, Klesmer can function much better in his relation to Gwendolen than Deronda because he is not confused in his intentions towards her or sexually tempted by her. Daniel has to form callouses in order to help Gwendolen: using Spencer's model, Daniel is the student who is still too soft in his sympathy whilst, acting on what is a facet of his whole personality, Klesmer is the accomplished moral surgeon.

It was Charles Bray's view that the moral thought should habitually be made the first to occur in the mind chronologically. But in the person of Daniel Deronda, George Eliot concentrates on that tension, which creates demands yet often confuses choice, of balancing two thoughts simultaneously. Gwendolen, we have seen, is unable fully to register the significance of her two thoughts in relation to Klesmer's criticism. It is Daniel who comes forward in Gwendolen's life as the external container of the better thought which, innerly, Gwendolen cannot properly sustain or take responsibility for. Feuerbach says that at an advanced stage of development man can 'double himself' and play the part of both 'I and thou' within his own consciousness (Feuerbach, pp.118, 20). Deronda is capable of operating at this advanced level of being: internally, he holds and struggles with his two opposing thoughts about Gwendolen. But Gwendolen cannot balance two thoughts in her mind and for this reason she needs Daniel, as another person outside, to compensate for her own inadequacy. In the scene which follows, Gwendolen begs Daniel's advice. With the painful knowledge in her mind that she has denied the claims of Mrs Glasher and her children by marrying Grandcourt, Gwendolen asks Daniel how he himself would

live his life after having wronged another. He replies: 'Order my life so as to make any possible amends, and keep away from doing any sort of injury again'. Daniel's instruction to break with the old habit and sin and to enforce an order on her life is an impossible riddle from Gwendolen's viewpoint. She regards order as events enforced on her life by determined external agencies. What she craves from Deronda is a simple answer to undo past ills without going back upon them. In answer to him she cries:

> 'But I can't - I can't; I must go on,' said Gwendolen, in a passionate loud whisper. 'I have thrust out others, I have made my gain out of their loss - tried to make it - tried. And I must go on. I can't alter it.' (*Deronda*, p.506)

Gwendolen has no order, only a terribly determined career forwards. But Deronda's final response to Gwendolen comes as a half-angry retort to his own past will -

> 'The refuge you are needing from personal trouble is the higher, the religious life, which holds an enthusiasm for something more than our own appetites and vanities. The few may find themselves in it simply by an elevation of feeling; but for us who have to struggle for our wisdom, the higher life must be a region in which the actions are clad with knowledge.'
>
> The half-indignant remonstrance that vibrated in Deronda's voice came, as often happens, from the habit of inward argument with himself rather than from severity towards Gwendolen; but it had a more beneficent effect on her than any soothings. Nothing is feebler than the indolent rebellion of complaint; and to be roused into self-judgement is comparative activity. For the moment she felt like a shaken child - shaken out of its wailings into awe, and she said humbly -
>
> 'I will try. I will think.' (*Deronda*, pp.507-508)

Deronda is a young man - 'only a few years older than herself' (*Deronda*, p.484) - and has not that strength which comes out of 'a mere residue from weary experience' (*Deronda*, p.485). It would be safer if Deronda were an old, truly wise man who, as a more formal mentor in a more ordered society, could help and advise Gwendolen with the benefit of long experience, and without the complication of his sexual attractiveness. There is a struggle in Daniel between his two thoughts - his sexual attraction towards Gwendolen, opposed by the thought that only greater harm would come from the fulfilment of that temptation. But Daniel's best thoughts do not immediately follow a chronological order, simply coming *before* the impulsive sexual attraction to Gwendolen as Bray might wish them to. Instead, in the midst of life, Deronda's own thoughts are inwardly corrected, hierarchically rearranged and brought into line with his principles by 'the habit of inward argument'. Spinoza

recognized that man has only an inadequate understanding of time's order and that man's intellect can be confused by conflicting emotions affecting the body. For this reason mentally reordering the thoughts, on the basis of strongly held principles which answer to a higher order of being, is essential:

> By this power of rightly ordering and concatenating the affectations of the body, we can preserve ourselves from being easily affected with an evil emotion. For more force is required for emotions ordered and concatenated according to the order of the intellect than for uncertain and vague emotions. The best thing we can do, therefore, as long as we have not a perfect knowledge of our emotions, is to conceive a right theory of life or certain guiding precepts, to fix them in the memory and apply them to particular cases of frequent occurrence that our minds may be deeply impressed by them, and that they may always be at hand.
>
> (*Ethics*, p.224)

Spinoza illustrates that chronology and principles function on two different levels - time and its order is not the same as the revalued order of moral being. When Spinoza writes of 'rightly ordering and concatenating the affectations of the body' by habitually applying a fixed moral rule of conduct and thus of 'guiding precepts', he describes the inward struggle which Deronda experiences: that Deronda is 'half-indignant' is an external signal of the internal efforts to rearrange his priorities on a morally adult level in the midst of his conflicting emotions towards Gwendolen. In contrast to Daniel, Gwendolen is a child - 'a shaken child' - who lacks the conviction of principles by which to live. Lewes stated: 'the cry of the mother fails to move the offspring, fails to have more significance for it than any other sound, if the first few days be suffered to pass over without the offspring hearing this cry' - but it is Daniel's voice which now comes in place of the earlier missing necessity in Gwendolen as Felix had, more primitively, shaken Esther into reconsidering her father. Deronda's indignation, which prompts him to tell Gwendolen to look to the 'higher religious life', is the violent force which must counter Gwendolen's own sense of indignant superiority towards others. It is what Feuerbach called the species voice which demands that Gwendolen must struggle to convert her self-orientated, passive insistence ('I can't, I can't alter it') into the 'comparative activity' of the words 'I will try. I will think' - just as Romola had been prompted by Savonarola during her conversion to answer: 'I will go back. I will be taught'. What is offered by Daniel, in more explicit terms of expression than by Klesmer, is a sort of violence - the pain of

criticism, the pain of recognizing a need for changing, even when change seems least possible to implement and order.

Deronda's influence on Gwendolen is a finer use of sexuality than that which is used by Arthur Donnithorne in his relation to Hetty. For even as Gwendolen is possessed by her desire that Daniel might rescue her from her unhappy marriage to Grandcourt, Gwendolen becomes suddenly conscious that she is causing Deronda pain, and compounding his already difficult struggle, through the nature of his relation to her:

> It was as if he saw her drowning while his limbs were bound. The pained compassion which was spread over his features as he watched her, affected her with a compunction unlike any she had felt before, and in a changed imploring tone she said -
>
> 'I am grieving you. I am ungrateful. You *can* help me. I will think of everything. I will try.' (*Deronda*, p.509)

Here at last the visible signs of Daniel's inner conflict has a startlingly new effect upon Gwendolen. For it is only when Gwendolen herself witnesses Daniel's pained expression that, inwardly, Gwendolen has the thought that she is selfishly causing Deronda emotional pain. Suddenly, she stops her outburst and for the first time takes a personal responsibility to limit events being motivated from a stronger desire to spare Deronda's feelings. She quickly reminds herself of her earlier resolve: 'I will try'. Gwendolen makes an important thinking transition, wherein her own wants are subordinated by her second thoughts concerning Daniel's own personal needs. She is made to realize the lonely, relative and mature thought that his needs are separate from her own interests.

It is the urgency of her situation with Deronda which causes Gwendolen to re-evaluate her initial stance, as Deronda urges upon her the necessity of following a religious example. In *Ecce Homo*, John Seeley examines the life of Jesus Christ as the greatest example of the 'higher religious life'. Christ's 'higher motive', Seeley explains, transcended that of 'personal interest':

> Sacrifice, the crowning act of human goodness when it rises above itself, was made by Christ, not in some moment of elevation, not in some extreme

> emergency, but *habitually*; this is meant when it is said, he went about doing good; nor was the sacrifice made for relative or friend or country, but for all everywhere who bear the name of man.[15]

But, morally, Jesus was already the supreme adult, the true father's son. He did not need emergency to enable him to be good and to make him act morally. He was the man of men who acted well habitually because his nature itself was goodness. In the coarser, ordinary nature of men, reaching towards that example of an impersonal religious life - 'something more' than the personal - is not easy without the second thoughts and second nature of habit to supplement the want of consistent inner constitution. George Eliot believed that in human life, generally, emergency frequently operated as a moral reordering device: towards the end of *Daniel Deronda*, the change brought about in Gwendolen through the horror of her marriage to Grandcourt and his subsequent death is described as a 'tragic transformation' (*Deronda*, p.836). Daniel's development throughout the novel, in contrast, is not reliant on emergency and tragedy. For in Deronda's philosophy, habits, thoughts, and the active anticipation of possible future consequences replace the necessity of emergency which is the dominant feature of Gwendolen's life.

Gwendolen tries to change because she thinks that she has been sought out by somebody who believes in her capabilities to change and even needs her to do it. In a contrasting example, in *Middlemarch*, after his full confession to Dorothea concerning the Raffles affair, Lydgate feels himself restored by Dorothea's belief in his innocence:

> The presence of a noble nature, generous in its wishes, ardent in its charity, changes the lights for us: we begin to see things again in their larger, quieter masses, and to believe that we too can be seen and judged in the wholeness of our character. That influence was beginning to act on Lydgate, who had for many days been seeing all life as one who is dragged and struggling amid the throng. He sat down again, and felt that he was recovering his old self in the presence of one who believed in it. (*Middlemarch*, p.819)

Lydgate absorbs the force of Dorothea's belief in him, and it is by being judged worthy by a person outside himself that Lydgate becomes able to see more clearly his own motives once more inside. The external belief that Dorothea displays in Lydgate

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[15] John Seeley, *Ecce Homo: A Survey of the Life and Work of Jesus Christ*, first published anonymously 1865, ed. by Ernest Rhys (London: Dent, 1907), p.151.

is incorporated into his consciousness inwardly, marked by the 'recovery of his old self'. I shall return to this vital passage in Chapter Five but for the moment I conclude thus: that there is a crucial difference between Gwendolen's belief in Deronda as a priest and Lydgate's speculative comparison between the Virgin Mary and the importance to him personally of Dorothea's sympathy and friendship. Gwendolen's concentration of religious language is mingled with the language of sexual attraction - 'reverence' juxtaposed with 'temptation' - as if Gwendolen's sexual desire for Deronda acts as a fuel for her belief in him. The contrast between Lydgate and Gwendolen's respective positions is more clearly illustrated by Deronda's feelings when Gwendolen forces her confession on him after her husband's death by drowning:

> She was bent on confession, and he dreaded hearing her confession. Against his better will, he shrank from the task that was laid on him: he wished, and yet rebuked the wish as cowardly, that she could bury her secrets in her own bosom. He was not a priest. He dreaded the weight of this woman's soul flung upon his own with imploring dependence. (*Deronda*, p.754)

Daniel has to push himself to go beyond his early inclination not to 'escape from an ugly scene' (*Deronda*, p.219). But it is Gwendolen's 'imploring dependence' that Daniel, rightly, fears: he will never be able to convert her dependence upon him into thinking independence, into a thought contained inside her, as Dorothea restores a motive for goodness in Lydgate. Deronda is conscious that, all the while Gwendolen is unburdening her problems onto him, she is less likely to become a free-standing, responsible individual, yet simultaneously both his morality and her need seem to require some measure of his continuance to institute change. It is Daniel's physical being and personality alone which makes her believe in a higher motive mysteriously embodied in his external form but not alive in herself. Gwendolen is less influenced by the actual ideas that Daniel represents, separate from his representation of them: that is why this novel insists he must, ultimately, be taken away from her. For Gwendolen's moral childishness, like Arthur's, like Godfrey's, is a regression from the challenge of the second stage of life when new habits need to be formed. There is no *natural* transition from the moral stupidity of childhood to moral adulthood; only the painful, self-imposed wrench away from old habits. It is only the sense of the final violent parting from Daniel at the end of *Daniel Deronda* which forces Gwendolen

out of her child-like mode of living - a state in which she relies on Daniel as a surrogate for thoughts which need to be made incarnate in her - into a life where she must begin to *try* to be more independently adult.

George Eliot did not believe that the chronological order of an individual's life necessarily coincides with the ontological order of being. Habits which are established on the basis of chronology can result, as we have seen in Arthur, Gwendolen and Godfrey, in people outside being understood as merely external representatives - or even scapegoats - for better thoughts which do not exist in them inwardly. In George Eliot's view, making the transition into the second stage of life is begun only when an individual *recognizes* that their passively formed bad habits are truly bad: a determined effort to change cannot be brought about without first suffering what Feuerbach calls an 'humiliating consciousness' of one's own inadequacies (Feuerbach, p.117). The chronology of a life can be innerly corrected, reordered and reformulated by acting after a belief in a higher moral order, or by following the example of an individual who himself is concerned with a superior understanding of moral considerations, such as Christ. But the beginning of moral independence only occurs when the shift in consciousness is made so that, instead of requiring the physical continuance of a person who stands, externally, for better thoughts, a person is actually internalized and incorporated in the mind as ideas and as better thoughts.

CHAPTER 3

BEYOND FEUERBACH AND THE EFFORTS OF THE SELF

I. Arthur and Godfrey: Eschewing True Double Consciousness

In her review of *Wilhelm Meister* George Eliot defended Goethe's work against the charges of immorality which had been levelled against it. She cited her admiration for Goethe's 'large tolerance' and argued that what made *Wilhelm Meister* a moral book was Goethe's recognition that: 'the line between the virtuous and the vicious so far from being a necessary safeguard to morality, is itself an immoral fiction'.[1]

George Eliot's defence of Goethe's work is a valuable clue towards tracing her own intentions as a novelist.

It was precisely her opposition to the idea of simply defined right and wrong that meant that Marian Evans was strongly conscious of the need for critical judgement. In *The Emergent Self* Ruby Redinger argues that, in her novels, 'George Eliot' became 'the critical half' of Marian Evans:

> The need for dual technique by which to tell a story stemmed from George Eliot herself. It can perhaps be traced back at least to the Strand days, when she 'complained' to Herbert Spencer 'of being troubled by double-consciousness - a current of self-criticism being an habitual accompaniment of anything she was saying or doing; and this naturally tended towards self-deprecation and distrust.' 'George Eliot', although only a name, became the critical half of this consciousness, thus converting the force which had undermined her self-confidence into one which critically analysed characters. In its final form this force was perhaps the 'not herself' which George Eliot told Cross had taken possession of her in all that she considered her best writing, so 'that she felt her own personality to be merely the instrument through which [...] this spirit was acting'.[2]

It can be argued that the duality which Ruby Redinger locates was already apparent in Marian Evans even before her career as a novelist began. The necessity for an inward critical consciousness had been made stronger in Marian Evans after she had come to

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1 'The Morality of *Wilhelm Meister*', first published 1855 in *The Leader*, *Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*, ed. by A.S. Byatt & Nicholas Warren (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.310.

2 Ruby Redinger, *The Emergent Self* (London: The Bodley Head 1975), pp.334-335.

question the idea of God as an external being, the final critical overseer of man's inward life. In a letter of February 1842 to Mrs Pears she writes:

> Do not fear that I will become a stagnant pool by a self-sufficient determination only to listen to my own echo; to read the yea, yea on my own side, and be most comfortably deaf to the nay, nay. Would that all rejected *practically* this maxim! (Cross, p.65)

When the young Marian writes to reassure Mrs Pears that she will not become comfortably deaf to the arguments in opposition to her new stance, she also describes what she must now learn to do inwardly in all matters: to give play to the critical side of her self. In this section I must return to the early development of 'George Eliot' in *Adam Bede* and *Silas Marner*, examining in this chapter how she comes to function as a counter-balancing thinking half to Arthur Donnithorne and Godfrey Cass, before she can be said to exist fully - in the distinct presence of 'George Eliot' in *Middlemarch*.

In the following scene Arthur Donnithorne 'debates with himself' about the probable outcome of continuing his clandestine affair with Hetty:

> He was ready to pitch everything else - no matter where - for the sake of surrendering himself to this delicious feeling which had just disclosed itself. It was no use blinking the fact now - they would get too fond of each other, if he went on taking notice of her - and what would come of it? He should have to go away in a few weeks, and the poor little thing would be miserable. He *must not* see her alone again; he must keep out of her way. What a fool he was for coming back from Gawaine's!
>
> He got up and threw open the windows to let in the soft breath of the afternoon, and the healthy scent of the firs that made a belt round the Hermitage. The soft air did not help his resolutions, as he leaned out and looked into the leafy distance. But he considered his resolutions sufficiently fixed: there was no need to debate with himself any longer. He had made up his mind not to see Hetty again; and now he might give himself up to thinking how immensely agreeable it would be if circumstances were different - how pleasant it would have been to meet her this evening as she came back, and put his arm round her again and look into her sweet face. He wondered if the dear little thing were thinking of him too - twenty to one she was. How beautiful her eyes were with the tear on their lashes! He would like to satisfy his soul for a day with looking at them, and he *must* see her again:- he must see her, simply to remove any false impression from her mind about his manner to her just now. He would behave in a quiet, kind way to her - just to prevent her from going home with her head full of wrong fancies. Yes, that would be the best thing to do, after all. (*Adam Bede*, pp.178-179)

Whilst inside the Hermitage, Arthur's resolution was sustained by the physical barrier between himself and Hetty. But when he opens the windows the action itself shows

his stronger desire to escape from the stifling commitment of resolution. Outside, Hetty exists, as a close sexual presence which he allows in under the guise of fresh air and pleasant-smelling trees. In *The Principles of Success in Literature* George Henry Lewes describes how the mind functions on the basis of 'apparent' and 'unapparent details':

> The mental vision by which in Perception we see the unapparent details - i.e., by which sensations formerly co-existing with the one now affecting us are reinstated under the form of ideas which *represent* the objects - is a process implied in all Ratiocination, which also presents an *ideal series*, such as would be a series of sensations, if the objects themselves were before us.[3]

What Lewes asserts is that if the senses have once been stimulated in particular surroundings, then even when the object of attention is no longer present to the senses, the action of mental perception and memory will link the surroundings psychologically with the object. Thus the 'soft breath of the afternoon', the 'healthy scent of the firs' and 'the soft air' represent to Arthur Hetty's own physical presence there in the recent past: her softness, her breath, her scent. Equally, these details anticipate her return in the near future, as if the future were a space waiting to be filled: 'he leaned out and looked into the leafy distance'. Suggestively, from the point at which he opens the window, the 'surrender' which he had denied to himself in the first sentence of the paragraph is immediately granted to himself imaginatively. His thoughts noticeably accelerate and each of the leading sentences is followed by a second clause which loosens the first assertion - 'he considered his resolutions sufficiently fixed: there was no need to debate with himself any longer' - for 'he had made up his mind not to see Hetty again; and now he might give himself up to thinking how immensely agreeable it would be if circumstances were different'. Even the conditional tense, which Arthur uses regretfully, is loaded with the excitement of an alternative future: 'how pleasant it would have been to meet her this evening as she came back, and put his arm round her again and look into her sweet face'. The tense is used as a device which is employed to disguise matters: imaginatively he finds himself seeking a future sexual encounter with Hetty without having to realize he is

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[3] George Henry Lewes, *The Principles of Success in Literature,* first published 1865, ed. by T. Sharper Knowlson (London: Walter Scott, [n.d.]), p.31.

doing so. The limitations which he places on time ('for a day', 'he would have to go away in a few weeks'), do not allow room for consequences to exist. The conditional tense acts as a gateway to his imaginative desires and becomes a temptation both physically and psychologically. By believing himself to be safe from temptation he loses any concern about wrong-thinking, as if wrong-thinking and wrong-doing are entirely unrelated. Spinoza states in the *Ethics* that 'under the guide of reason we choose the greater good and the smaller evil' (*Ethics*, p.202). But Arthur loses the guide of reasoned consciousness ('he *must not* see her alone again') in the imaginative shift towards desire ('he *must* see her again'). The fear of committing a wrong act needs to be more urgently and powerfully *present* to his imagination. Instead, Arthur adopts a stance of quasi-sensibility, transferring his desire into the necessity of duty towards Hetty: '*simply* to remove any false impression from her mind about his manner to her just now', '*just* to prevent her from going home with her head full of wrong fancies'. George Eliot as narrator writes down Arthur's own change of resolve for him so as to make his weakness alarmingly visible to her readers while Arthur himself is never fully conscious of the significance of his shift in thinking from morality's 'must not' to desire's 'must'.

In *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, that recent work on philosophy which makes its author truly a descendent of nineteenth-century thinkers such as George Eliot and Feuerbach, Iris Murdoch argues that we should not unthinkingly trust ourselves. Our inner will is too easily manipulated even by our own selves:

> Sudden conversions and dramatic new starts can be significant if a new external regime can be established, which then gradually assists the inward change, which cannot happen all at once, upon its way. A new outward landscape assists the imaginative creation of a new inward one. Old associations must be broken in the mind, new ones made. One escapes (often) from really seductive temptation, not by a sudden violent inward 'act of will' which redirects the character, but by an external change such as literally running away, making something impossible, winning time to develop other attachments, to imagine how things might be different. The outward not the inward move may often (as I said earlier) initiate the change; one stops going to a certain place or seeing a certain person. Falling out of love (with a person, possession or activity) is a skill we should all have access to. The background to all such change is our general (moral, spiritual) tendency to descend rather than to rise, which Simone Weil called gravity. Better conduct is often harder and less natural than mediocre or bad conduct. It is not easy to sacrifice strong egoistic attachments or break bad habits. We 'satisfy our conscience' by doing half the task; surely more cannot be required of us. We can always say: well, other people do this. (Murdoch, pp.330-331)

In Chapters One and Two, I considered individual efforts at self-conversion, largely unaided by a religious framework. Yet the presence of counter-examples such as Arthur, Godfrey Cass or Tito Melema only serves to dramatize problems and weaknesses in secular individuals as such. How much can one man or woman do virtually on their own, from within themselves? Emphatically, there is a need for external aids, forms, encouragements and deterrents. For, as Iris Murdoch suggests, in modern man it may be that often the only means of conversion is through working outside-in: 'the outward not the inward move may often initiate change'. Yet even here Arthur repeatedly tries to change his tempting external environment and fails precisely because of the lack of inner resolve that required external reinforcement to begin with. After his conscious resolution to remove the false ideas from Hetty's mind has developed into another sexual encounter, Arthur rushes away - by then too late - through the woods:

> As for Arthur, he rushed back through the wood, as if he wanted to put a wide space between himself and Hetty. He would not go to the Hermitage again; he remembered how he had debated with himself there before dinner, and it had all come to nothing - worse than nothing. He walked right on into the Chase, glad to get out of the Grove, which surely was haunted by his evil genius. Those beeches and smooth limes - there was something enervating in the very sight of them; but the strong knotted old oaks had no bending languor in them - the sight of them would give a man some energy. Arthur lost himself among the narrow openings in the fern, winding about without seeking any issue, till the twilight deepened almost to night under the great boughs, and the hare looked black as it darted across the path.
>
> He was feeling much more strongly than he had done in the morning: it was as if his horse had wheeled round from a leap, and dared to dispute his mastery. He was dissatisfied with himself, irritated, mortified. He no sooner fixed his mind on the probable consequences of giving way to the emotions which had stolen over him today - of continuing to notice Hetty, of allowing himself any opportunity for such slight caresses as he had been betrayed into already - than he refused to believe such a future possible for himself. (*Adam Bede*, p.183)

Arthur's physical effort to distance himself from Hetty is simultaneously almost a reflex action designed to drive him away from the bad life. Arthur is unnerved at finding himself on the other side of his imagined future, and now half-consciously associates the trees - 'those beeches and smooth limes' - and the Hermitage itself with temptation. The 'strong knotted old oaks', in contrast, are symbols of moral energy and firmness of resolve. But the change of scenery is not practically effective, as Iris

Murdoch wishes. It is still psychologically no more than an external representation of Arthur's failed attempt to deal with his sexual feelings for Hetty inwardly. Accordingly, the scene symbolizes his repetitive failure to take inner responsibility. For once Arthur finds himself cloaked and self-contained in the 'narrow openings in the fern', the physical pace of that first 'rush' of moral energy and forward direction fades. From the point at which George Eliot states 'Arthur lost himself' the passage takes on a doubleness typical in George Eliot's writing. Throughout the action of the scene there is a telling parallel consciousness, which is one form of what Ruby Redinger calls George Eliot's dual technique. Arthur has not simply physically lost himself amongst the trees: inwardly he no longer knows whether his real self is the horse or the rider. Arthur vaguely begins to tap the lesson of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* which George Eliot believed was so valuable. The virtuous character is not simply fixedly separate from the vicious. For as evening draws in and Arthur imaginatively reviews the course of his thinking that day, he is uncomfortably made aware that, at some indistinct point in time, his consciously registered moral resolves concerning Hetty were superseded by his tacit sexual desire towards her. He cannot separate good and bad, horse and rider in himself, - Sally Shuttleworth quotes William Carpenter: 'although the muscles furnish the power [...] the role and direction of movement are determined by the Will of the rider, who impresses his mandates on the well trained steed with as much readiness and certainty as if he were acting on his own limbs' (Shuttleworth, p.188) - and so George Eliot has to become the missing moral second half and second life we discussed at the end of Chapter Two.[4]

It is Feuerbach's belief that man has evolved to the degree that inwardly he is capable of exercising restraint upon future actions which would otherwise have been primitively controlled only by the external constraints of society:

> Only in speech, a social act, awakes the reason. To ask a question and to answer, are the first acts of thought. Thought originally demands two. It is not until man has reached an advanced stage of culture that he can double himself, so as to play the part of another within himself. To think and to speak are therefore with all ancient and sensuous nations, identical; they think only in speaking; their thought is only conversation. (Feuerbach, p.118)

[4] Sally Shuttleworth takes her reference from *The Principles of Mental Physiology* and notes that George Henry Lewes read the work in 1874.

Feuerbach believes that man can 'play the part of another' internally and 'double himself'. As well as being the sinner, man may also incorporate within him the external judge of his own actions. But Arthur wishes to banish that other part of himself which, for Feuerbach, is vital. George Eliot described Arthur in an earlier scene 'holding a discussion with himself' as he makes plans to go fishing for a week to Eagledale for the purpose of avoiding further liaisons with Hetty. It is apparent that Arthur's use of direct speech is not a genuine inner doubling of the self, but a one-sided distorted version of Feuerbach's idea:

> No young man could confess his faults more candidly; candour was one of his favourite virtues; and how can a man's candour be seen in all its lustre unless he has a few failings to talk of? But he had an agreeable confidence that his thoughts were all of a generous kind - impetuous, warm-blooded, leonine; never crawling, crafty, reptilian. It was not possible for Arthur to do anything mean, dastardly, or cruel. 'No! I'm a devil of a fellow for getting myself into a hobble, but I always take care the load shall fall on my shoulders.' (*Adam Bede*, p.169)

Arthur's 'agreeable confidence' in himself does not equate with a critical analysis of his general behaviour. For in the midst of his plans to stay away from Hetty, as he thinks of the 'failings' which his role as Hetty's secret seducer would bring, he equally considers how his very admission of failings seems both a guarantee against them and a countervailing tribute to his own worth: 'how can a man's candour be seen in all its lustre *unless* he has a few failings to talk of?' Arthur is corruptly using direct speech as a means of trying to separate the consequences of his actions from Hetty: 'I always take care that the load shall fall on my shoulders'. The 'shall' of the future is supposed to be contained within his present sense of 'always'. But while Arthur one-sidedly asserts his frankness concerning his general failings, it is clear that he precisely does not speak out in detail the specific nature of his weaknesses in relation to Hetty. Throughout the course of *Adam Bede* it is George Eliot who writes Arthur's thoughts out for him so that the process of thought is not the Feuerbachian internalization of *speaking* but George Eliot's externalized and tacit *written* corrective.

In his relations with Hetty, Arthur has a strong desire to remain in the agreeable present. But after the death of his uncle, Arthur's desire for the pleasures he has enjoyed with Hetty begins to be superseded by a stronger desire of a future with more wide-ranging prospects:

> *Now* his real life was beginning, now he would have room and opportunity for action, and he would use them. He would show the Loamshire people what a fine country gentleman was; he would not exchange that career for any other under the sun. He felt himself riding over the hills in the breezy autumn days, looking after the favourite plans of drainage and enclosure; then admired on sombre mornings as the best rider on the best horse in the hunt; spoken well of on market-days as a first-rate landlord; by-and-by making speeches at election dinners, and showing a wonderful knowledge of agriculture; the patron of new ploughs and drills, the severe upbraider of negligent landowners, and withal a jolly fellow that everybody must like, - happy faces greeting him everywhere on his own estate, and the neighbouring families on the best of terms with him.
>
> (*Adam Bede*, pp.483-484)

Arthur's imaginary vision of the future rests in his inadequate thought that he can begin - '*now*' - disowning the past and moving into a new realm entirely separate from his past actions. Arthur plays the part of two, and doubles himself but only in a corrupted version of Feuerbach's idea. Arthur does not 'play the part of another *within* himself' but rather more primitively he splits himself into playing the parts of two people externally in real life: the seducer and the fine country gentleman.[5] If individuals refuse to think, as George Eliot as narrator does so often in their stead, then what they do not want to allow themselves to think about becomes the narrative, the story of what happens to them and others as a result of their not thinking, since thinking ought to anticipate what otherwise will happen in the future. Arthur draws a distinction between trivial time-filling activities with Hetty and the time when he will achieve his full potential and re-invent himself as the judge: the 'severe upbraider of the negligent landowners'. But it is the latter, not the former, which is really the play-acting.

In *Adam Bede* George Eliot writes of her own responsibility as a novelist to be truthful to the realism of her tale rather than paint an imaginatively false picture of attractiveness:

> Falsehood is so easy, truth so difficult. The pencil is conscious of a delightful facility in drawing a griffin - the longer the claws, and the larger the wings, the better; but that marvellous facility which we mistook for genius, is apt to forsake us when we want to draw a real unexaggerated lion. (*Adam Bede*, pp.222-223)

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[5] In *Romola*, Tito Melema more consciously articulates Arthur's thoughts as he lays plans to leave Florence and re-establish himself elsewhere: 'Could he not strip himself of the past, as of rehearsal clothing, and throw away the old bundle, to robe himself for the real scene?' (*Romola*, p.562).

The realist novel provides George Eliot with a form in which to examine simultaneously the internal and external lives of her characters. But realism is not merely a chosen form or a style: this would be as mistaken premise as that from which Arthur operates. He concentrates on the outward life which he intends to present as the *real* Arthur Donnithorne ('generous, impetuous, warm-blooded, leonine'), believing that only the characteristics which are seen represent his whole personality. Arthur surrenders himself to falsehood by failing to recognize that the inward life truly exists. Instead, it is George Eliot who testifies to the real existence of his inner life.

In 'Janet's Repentance', Janet manages a better version of Iris Murdoch's ideal when she endeavours to defeat her dependency on alcohol. George Eliot refers to Janet's work in the community, her mother, friends and particularly Mr Tryan as crucial 'secondary helps':

> And she needed these secondary helps, for her wrestling with her past self was not always easy. [...] Janet showed the strong bent of her will by taking every outward precaution against the occurrence of a temptation. Her mother was now her constant companion, having shut up her little dwelling in Orchard Street; and Janet gave all dangerous keys into her keeping, entreating her to lock them away in some secret place.

Sometime later, after her husband's death, whilst looking for legal papers in Dempster's bureau Janet is tempted by the discovery of a half-filled decanter of brandy:

> Alone, in this way, she was powerless. If she could see Mr Tryan, if she could confess all to him, she might gather hope again. She *must* see him; she must go to him. ('Janet's Repentance', pp.392, 396)

Janet succeeds where Arthur fails, for she recognizes her weakness, and taking responsibility for it she also confides in others. With their extra help she creates an environment in which she is forced to be more fixed in her resolve. She actively enlists help to put temptation out of her way. Arthur, in contrast rushes to confess all to Mr Irwine, but his great desire for Hetty, coupled with his naturally strong egoism, causes him to want to rely too heavily on his own ability of self-control.

The closest that Arthur comes to breaking the downward spiral himself and creating a unity between his own actions and their consequences is in his attempted confession to Mr Irwine. Significantly, his attempt is made in a chapter which George

Eliot entitles 'Links', almost as a marker for those connections which Arthur refuses to recognize himself or fails to see. But at the point of confession Arthur pulls back:

> Brought suddenly and involuntarily to the brink of confession, Arthur shrank back, and felt less disposed towards it than ever. The conversation had taken a more serious tone than he had intended - it would quite mislead Mr Irwine - he would imagine there was a deep passion for Hetty, while there was no such thing. He was conscious of colouring, and was annoyed at his boyishness.
>
> 'O no, no danger,' he said, as indifferently as he could. 'I don't know that I'm more liable to irresolution than other people; only there are little incidents now and then that set one speculating on what might happen in the future.'
>
> Was there a motive at work under this strange reluctance of Arthur's which had a sort of backstairs influence, not admitted to himself? Our mental business is carried on much in the same way as the business of the State: a great deal of hard work is done by agents who are not acknowledged. In a piece of machinery, too, I believe there is often a small unnoticeable wheel which has a great deal to do with the motion of the large obvious ones. Possibly there was some such unrecognized agent secretly busy in Arthur's mind at this moment - possibly it was the fear lest he might hereafter find the fact of having made a confession to the Rector a serious annoyance, in case he should *not* be able quite to carry out his good resolutions? (*Adam Bede*, pp.218-219)

Arthur recognizes that to confess would limit his situation more effectively than do his own inward resolves. At the same time, however, when faced with the finality that confession would place on his future, he resists it. I cited Iris Murdoch earlier, stating that:

> It is not easy to sacrifice strong egoistic attachments or break bad habits. 'We satisfy our conscience' by doing *half* the task; surely more cannot be required of us. We can always say: well, other people do this.

This assertion has further significance here. For Arthur's effort at confession is precisely a half-hearted attempt to dismiss from his mind the seriousness of his actions and at the same time justify himself. In failing to do so he is no worse than others; he consoles himself: 'I don't know that I'm more liable to irresolution than other people'. He attempts to veil the strength and significance of his actions and feelings behind his limiting phrases: 'no such thing' and 'little incidents'. But his blush, his efforts at 'indifference', and his inward refusal to accept that there is any 'deep passion' towards Hetty are signs of his duplicity. He operates in a double mode - not thinking about the future is something that Arthur does, almost actively, in order to

have that future with Hetty available later, as he now subconsciously half-knows. Elsewhere in *Adam Bede* George Eliot advises:

> Examine your words well, and you will find that even when you have no motive to be false, it is a very hard thing to say the exact truth, even about your own immediate feelings - much harder than to say something fine about them which is *not* the exact truth. (*Adam Bede*, p.223)

The critical analysis of Arthur's words can only seemingly be rendered by the 'George Eliot' consciousness: 'was there a sort of backstairs influence not admitted to himself?' George Eliot is the other voice - the back-up for those half-and-half men on that dubious line between virtue and vice in whom double-consciousness is present only in distortion. She is a counter backstairs influence:

> It was sometimes observed of her, that in her conversation elle s'ecoutait quand elle parlait - she seemed to be listening to her own voice while she spoke. It must be allowed that we are not always free from an impression of self-listening, even in the most caressing of the letters before us.[6]
>
> (Morley, *Critical Miscellanies* III, 99)

Inside and outside the novels, self-listening in George Eliot does not exist out of egoism but out of self-criticism: the double consciousness is a faculty which she conscientiously developed.

In lieu of self-development George Eliot was clearly conscious of the need for some additional form of external enforcement in the case of Arthur. George Henry Lewes had commented on Adam's passivity in the story and George Eliot wrote in her journal that his doubts had bothered her:

> While we were at Munich, George expressed his fear that Adam's part was too passive throughout the drama, and that it was important for him to be brought into a more direct collision with Arthur. This doubt haunted me, and out of it grew the scene in the woods between Arthur and Adam; the fight came to me as a *necessity* one night at the Munich opera, when I was listening to 'William Tell'.
>
> (Cross, p.256)

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[6] George Eliot was equally perceptive to detail when she met people. When she met Strauss again in July 1858 she found him more agreeable for having a quarter-of-an hour's conversation with him. She told Sara Hennell: 'He speaks with very choice words, like a man strictly truthful in the use of language' (Cross, p.252).

The felt necessity of the fight, following upon George Eliot's doubt, includes her conscious recognition that an external restraint was needed to force a change in Arthur. Literal, physical and psychological coercion in some situations is required. Adam acts as an externalized reminder in another person of Arthur's own guilt and sense of inadequacy. Here I return to Arthur's remembered thoughts about his encounter with Adam in the woods:

> He stood like an immovable obstacle against which no pressure could avail; an embodiment of what Arthur most shrank from believing in - the irrevocableness of his own wrong-doing. The words of scorn, the refusal to shake hands, the mastery asserted over him in their last conversation in the Hermitage - above all, the sense of having been knocked down, to which a man does not very well reconcile himself, even under the most heroic circumstances, - pressed upon him with a galling pain which was stronger than compunction. Arthur would so gladly have persuaded himself that he had done no harm! And if no one had told him the contrary, he could have persuaded himself so much better. Nemesis can seldom forge a sword for herself out of our consciences - out of the suffering we feel in the suffering we may have caused: there is rarely metal enough there to make an effective weapon. Our moral sense learns the manners of good society, and smiles when others smile; but when some rude person gives rough names to our actions, she is apt to take part against us. And so it was with Arthur: Adam's judgement of him, Adam's grating words, disturbed his self-soothing arguments.
> (*Adam Bede*, p.357)

In this passage George Eliot locates her own sense of belief in the need not only for inward restraint but also for external controls: to the characters she herself is still the invisible external. In the fight Arthur was physically brought to a tangible sense of moral obligation, for where he would have normally 'persuaded himself that he had done no harm', he is forced to listen to 'rough words'. Feuerbach states that the morally perfect being is understood thus:

> Moral perfection depends, at least for the moral consciousness, not on the nature, but on the will - it is a perfection of will, perfect will. I cannot conceive perfect will, the will which is in unison with law, which is itself law, without at the same time regarding it as an object of will, i.e., as an obligation for myself. The conception of the morally perfect being, is no merely theoretical, inert conception, but a practical one, calling me to action, to imitation, throwing me into strife, into disunion with myself; for while it proclaims to me what I ought to be, it also tells me to my face, without flattery, what I am not. (Feuerbach, p.73)

Instead of the embodiment of will through God, Adam is the embodiment of will through a common man: 'the embodiment of what Arthur most shrank from believing

in'. Feuerbach's idea of 'disunion with myself' takes effect inside Dorothea in the form of a mental struggle to secure her best self in relation to Casaubon. But in this instance Adam is the physical force outside Arthur who, in the most literal sense, throws Arthur into disunion with his otherwise comfortable self.

George Eliot's narrating function in relation to Arthur acts as that forward-looking imaginative faculty which is itself deficient in him: she indirectly reports the thoughts which originate from Arthur himself, although he is not fully conscious of them. The life that Arthur engineers for himself by failing to internalize thought is a source of great concern for George Eliot, and begins to show why 'George Eliot' needed to develop in her novels as she did. For in *Felix Holt* George Eliot illustrates a use of imagination contrary to that which Arthur evasively employs. Felix shows the true connection between the imaginative faculty and real life, a connection which George Eliot repeatedly reinforces in her novels. Rather than merely being a tempter to the darker side of human nature, imagination can be enlisted as the guardian of the 'best self'. The scene between Esther and Felix which follows shows imagination in the process of being used to restrain future consequences:

> 'You talk to me like an angry pedagogue. Were *you* always so wise? Remember the time when you were foolish or naughty.'
>
> 'That is not far off,' said Felix, curtly, taking away his hand and clasping it with the other at the back of his head. The talk, which seemed to be introducing a mutual understanding, such as had not existed before, seemed to have undergone some check.
>
> 'Shall we get up and walk back now?' said Esther, after a few moments.
>
> 'No,' said Felix, entreatingly. 'Don't move yet. I dare say we shall never walk together or sit here again.'
>
> 'Why not?'
>
> 'Because I am a man who am warned by visions. Those old stories of visions and dreams guiding men have their truth: we are saved by making the future present to ourselves.'
>
> 'I wish I could get visions, then,' said Esther, smiling at him, with an effort at playfulness, in resistance to something vaguely mournful within her.
>
> 'That is what I want,' said Felix looking at her very earnestly. 'Don't turn your head. Do look at me, and then I shall know if I may go on speaking. I do believe in you; but I want you to have such a vision of the future that you may never lose your best self. Some charm or other may be flung about you - some of your atta-of-rose fascinations - and nothing but a good and terrible vision will save you.'
>
> (*Felix Holt*, pp.365-366)

When Esther asks Felix to think back to his weaknesses in a time past ('remember the time when you were foolish or naughty'), his response reflects the fact that he can operate at different levels on a psychological time-scale, for he answers her in the future tense: 'that is not far off'. Felix tells Esther that he is 'warned by visions', and thus he describes a secular version of the prophetic vision: using the imaginative faculty to anticipate the outcome of actions. George Eliot, I have said, constitutes that imaginative faculty if the characters will not embody their own.

In his essay 'Spinoza and the Bible' Matthew Arnold writes of Spinoza's rationalization of the older forms of belief:

> The power of imagining, the power of feeling what goodness is, and the habit of practising goodness, were therefore the sole essential qualifications of a true prophet. But for the purpose of the message, the revelation, which God designed him to convey, these qualifications were enough. The sum and substance of this revelation was simply: *Believe in God, and lead a good life.*
>
> (*Essays in Criticism*, p.187)

George Eliot is, in her novels, like a visionary and a prophetess working within the realms of 'words and images; not, as Christ, through the immediate communication of the mind with the mind of God' (*Essays in Criticism*, p.186). This use of imagination provides a means of psychologically making links and leaps - the very shifts of thought in relation to time that Arthur denies. It is a faculty which in Felix Holt's case comes forward as a powerful foresight, a perception developed almost into an instinctive intuition. His physical behaviour towards Esther signals the external controls that result from his inward concerns. When Felix is said to be 'clasping' his hands together behind his head it is in physical resistance to his desire to act on his attraction towards Esther. He limits the situation by physically fixing his resolution (in direct contrast to Arthur's physical surrender, throwing open the windows of the Hermitage when believing 'his resolutions sufficiently fixed'). Unlike Arthur, Felix prevents time from becoming narrative; instead time is absorbed by him as experience.

*

In his *Ethics* Spinoza argues that men do not, as some religious traditionalists might suggest, simply cease to try to be good once they have lost the foothold of

formalized religion and no longer fear the otherworldly consequences of their actions on their souls:

> If men were not influenced by this hope and fear, if, on the contrary, they believed that the soul perished with the body, and that there remained no other life for those who are oppressed by the burthen of piety, they would give way to their innate disposition, would hand all things to their passions, and would prefer obeying fortune to governing themselves. This view of things seems to me no less absurd than if anyone, because he does not believe that he can nourish his body with good food to all eternity, should choose to saturate himself with deadly poisons and deadly potions; or than if because he sees that the mind is not eternal or immortal, he should prefer to be mindless and destitiute of reason: absurdities so gross that they scarcely deserve to be mentioned. (*Ethics*, p.242)

Spinoza's argument assumes that there will be an active decision made in man's irrational choice to 'saturate himself with deadly poisons'. But in George Eliot's characters it is precisely by the choices *not* made and decisions *not* taken that gradual moral poisoning very often results in time.

In *The Lifted Veil* which George Eliot completed in April 1859, Latimer experiences 'double consciousness' via his clairvoyant visions. He actually sees the future consequences of self-poisoning which will result from a liaison with Bertha Grant but tells us, 'the fear of poison is feeble against the sense of thirst'. Furthermore Latimer asks:

> Are you unable to imagine this double consciousness at work within me, flowing on like two parallel streams which never mingle their waters and blend into a common hue? Yet you must have known some of the presentiments that spring from an insight at war with passion; and my visions were only like presentiments intensified to horror. You have known the powerlessness of ideas before the might of impulse; and my visions, when once they have passed into memory, were mere ideas - pale shadows that beckoned in vain, while my hand was grasped by the living and the loved.[7]

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[7] *The Lifted Veil*, first published 1859 in *Blackwood's Magazine*, Cabinet edition with *Silas Marner* and *Brother Jacob* 1878, afterword by Beryl Gray (London: Virago, 1992), pp.30, 32. Valerie Sanders argues: 'George Eliot uses the autobiographical figure of Latimer to explore from within the psychological contours of a life distorted by egoism and alienated from the rest of the human race. At the same time, he embodies many of the characteristics of George Eliot as omniscient novelist, whose interpretive wisdom penetrates the hidden processes of human thought and emotion'. Furthermore she suggests, 'Latimer's clairvoyant powers reduce society to a darkling plain of vapid clashing egos: a distortion of the petty lives that George Eliot was to demonstrate in *Middlemarch*, aided by similar images of the web and instruments of scientific precision' (*The Private Lives of Victorian Women: Autobiography in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p.96).

Even within the realm of this extreme version of Feuerbach's double consciousness, Latimer finds himself unable to find the rational means to prevent a future disaster which is already so prophetically apparent to him.

But George Eliot tests Spinoza's assertions more fully in the case of Godfrey Cass who, with Arthur Donnithorne, is a prime case of 'the powerlessness of ideas before the might of impulse'. It is not that Cass has consciously registered a positive preference for following contingencies but, again on the other side of affairs, that he has accepted such an attitude by default, in lieu of strong beliefs:

> In this point of trusting to some throw of fortune's dice, Godfrey can hardly be called old-fashioned. Favourable Chance is the god of all men who follow their own devices instead of obeying a law they believe in. Let even a polished man of these days get into a position he is ashamed to avow, and his mind will be bent on all the possible issues that may deliver him from the calculable results of that position. Let him live outside his income, or shirk the resolute honest work that brings wages, and he will presently find himself dreaming of a possible benefactor, a possible simpleton who may be cajoled into using his interest, a possible state of mind in some possible person not yet forthcoming. [...] Let him betray his friend's confidence, and he will adore that same cunning complexity called Chance, which gives him hope that his friend will never know. Let him forsake a decent craft that he may pursue the gentilities of a profession to which nature called him, and his religion will infallibly be the worship of blessed Chance, which he will believe in as the mighty creator of success.
>
> (*Silas Marner*, p.126)

Chance takes the place of God and, almost automatically George Eliot believes, becomes a replacement for religion. Man will 'find himself' 'bent' on a certain way of thinking which will affect the directional pull of all resulting actions. It is George Eliot's voice which articulates these thoughts, for in order to act like this a person must not fully admit it to himself - again, as narrator, she is Spinoza's banished reason. Whereas Arthur's reliance on opportunity was connected to the active desire for a sexual future with Hetty, further down the line and deteriorating into devious passivity, Godfrey hopes for the chance to escape the sexual mistake he made with his first wife. He is tempted by the virtuous other life which Nancy Lammeter represents, reclaiming virtue through the luck of finding another person with whom to begin a fresh life, rather than like Romola in Chapter One or Dorothea in Chapter Two through his own established tradition.

George Eliot shows the psychology behind the religion of Chance in the following scene. Godfrey sets out with Dolly Winthrop to the stonepits, where his

uncle, Mr Kimble, has already arrived to attend the woman supposed dead. Unknown to the others who praise his selfless sense of duty, Godfrey has gone to ensure that his first wife, Molly, is truly dead:

> Godfrey was too painfully preoccupied to feel a twinge of self-reproach at this undeserved praise. He walked up and down, unconscious that he was plunging ankle-deep in snow, unconscious of everything but trembling suspense about what was going on in the cottage, and the effect of each alternative on his future lot. No, not quite unconscious of everything else. Deeper down, and half-smothered by passionate desire and dread, there was the sense that he ought not to be waiting on these alternatives; that he ought to accept the consequences of his deeds, own the miserable wife, and fulfil the claims of the helpless child. But he had not moral courage enough to contemplate that active renunciation of Nancy as possible for him: he had only the conscience and heart enough to make him forever uneasy under the weakness that forbade the renunciation. And at this moment his mind leaped away from all restraint toward the sudden prospect of deliverance from his long bondage. (*Silas Marner*, p.174)

Godfrey's negative endeavour is to disown his deeds; but although he is mentally pushing forward, away from the deeds towards his 'future lot', there is a backward-running thrust whereby the deeds own him through their consequences. Godfrey imagines that his second chance of a happy future life with Nancy is dependent upon his first wife's death. He assesses the effect of Molly's life or death in terms of 'each alternative', not fully realizing that at this crucial point he is considering two alternative lives: a selfishly deteriorating life with Nancy or the other moral life which entails owning his child. But here again is a distorted double consciousness. Godfrey's inability to even 'contemplate [...] that active renunciation of Nancy' illustrates precisely how Godfrey operates. He is desperate to keep his 'desire' for Nancy apart from his 'dread' past behaviour: otherwise he would not only be losing Nancy, he would be virtually giving her up for the sake of a past from which she herself is his escape route.

Yet the moral sense does exist in Godfrey as a second consciousness in subdued undercurrent. In a review of George Eliot's work, James Sully wrote that she was: 'ready to spy the grains of ethical gold in what looks like rubbish, and to cherish every single member of the human family as something worth studying, something that will

offer points of attraction for our sympathy'.[8] Yet the securing presence of morality is experienced by Cass as pain, as poison. William Myers argues in *The Teaching of George Eliot*, that 'her villains and seducers simply exhibit a more or less psychopathic deficiency in positive moral qualities'. Myers states:

> Once she had accepted that there were stores laid up in our nature that our understandings can take no inventory of, she could only protect the purity of altruism by making the unconscious - that is (to use her own endlessly repeated analogy) the 'musical' potentialities of human nature - a source of good feelings only. As a result the majority of corrupt characters in the novels are not only denied a memory, as we have noted already, but also an unconscious.[9]

But it is not that Godfrey has a psychopathic deficiency, nor is it that he is denied an unconscious. What George Eliot explores through the person of Godfrey Cass is a far more complicated mix of conscious and unconscious thoughts and feelings. For Godfrey actively tries to banish his better conscious thoughts about Eppie; in effect, he wants to be unconscious of them. But when he finds himself distractedly 'not quite unconscious' it is due to the trapped better thoughts finding a space and leaking out. Furthermore the very language used to locate Godfrey's untapped inner goodness is not kept safely distinct from his moral failure: 'deep', 'buried', 'half-smothered' are words which intermingle themselves with his evil hopes that his first wife is truly dead. George Eliot constantly reinforces that complex interchange which makes Godfrey the half-and-half man rather than a man of truly self-monitoring double consciousness. He has 'not *enough* moral courage' and, 'only enough [conscience] to be forever uneasy'. Godfrey makes events happen precisely by not acting; conversely he experiences his own moral sense only negatively. Godfrey is neither quite free nor quite trapped. The awful compromise which Godfrey finally accepts is encapsulated in 'forever uneasy' when set against 'deliverance from his long bondage'. But the 'sudden prospect' of escape makes the continual uneasiness an apparently worthwhile position to adopt, as a part of a deal - so much escape for so much underlying suffering within the escaped life.

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8 James Sully, 'George Eliot's Art', *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Psychology & Philosophy*, vol. 6 (1881), 378-394 (p.391): hereafter cited as '*Mind*'.

9 William Myers, *The Teaching of George Eliot* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984), p.142: hereafter cited as 'Myers'.

When Dunstan tries to blackmail Godfrey, threatening to tell their father about Godfrey's first marriage, Godfrey momentarily considers the possible results of confession as a means to counter Dunstan's betrayal. But Godfrey very quickly reconsiders: 'the results of confession were not contingent, they were certain; whereas betrayal was not certain (*Silas Marner,* p.77). He begins to develop what becomes, characteristically, an opportunistic mode of thinking. But the unseen resulting damage to Godfrey's whole nature is measured only by George Eliot:

> The yoke a man creates for himself by wrong-doing will breed hate in the kindliest nature; and the good-humoured, affectionate-hearted Godfrey Cass was fast becoming a bitter man, visited by cruel wishes, that seemed to enter, and depart, and enter again, like demons who had found in him a ready-garnished home. (*Silas Marner*, p.82)

There are repeated waves coming through Godfrey, the ebbs and flow of which, George Eliot sees, are wearing into Godfrey's thinking. This process is mirrored in her sentence structure:

> [Godfrey] would have, perhaps, to turn his back on that hereditary ease and dignity which, after all, was a sort of reason for living. [...] The longer the interval, the more chance there was of deliverance from some, at least, of the hateful consequences to which he had sold himself. (*Silas Marner*, p.81)

There are constant asides made: 'perhaps', 'after all', 'at least'. These embryonic clauses, in the midst of the sentences, act as *spaces* woven in and out of the text so as to 'enter, and depart and enter again'. George Eliot uses her syntax to mark the re-entry of the demons. When Silas arrives, clutching Eppie in his arms, to fetch a doctor for the child's mother whom he supposes to be dead, George Eliot again uses the structure of her sentences to illustrate the nature of Godfrey's internal corruption:

> Godfrey felt a great throb: there was one terror in his mind at that moment: it was, that the woman might *not* be dead. That was an evil terror - an ugly inmate to have found a nestling-place in Godfrey's kindly disposition; but no disposition is a security from evil wishes from a man whose happiness hangs on duplicity.
> (*Silas Marner*, p.171)

George Eliot uses her text to map-out precisely how the 'evil wishes', which Godfrey experiences only as sensations, have worked themselves into the landscape of his mind. In the final clause of the first sentence the reader's eye registers almost

immediately the shock of the word '*not*' which is placed in italics by George Eliot. The telling syntax of the sentence is such that Godfrey's reaction *would* be a moral impulse were the negative taken out of the sentence structure. The very word 'not' in the midst of the sentence is the 'ugly inmate' which Godfrey fails to see. But George Eliot recognizes that this is the outcome of Godfrey's repeatedly selfish single-mindedness in place of Feuerbachian doubling. It is not, as Spinoza fiercely assumes, that moral poisoning can only result if men 'choose to saturate themselves with deadly poisons': Godfrey has only ever passively allowed his goodness to be subsumed in his bad life. What George Eliot shows is that Godfrey is corrupted precisely by his decision *not* actively to choose a good life - unknown to Godfrey, his evil wishes are predatory upon his kindly disposition, for evil becomes itself only by not being goodness.

Where morality is experienced only as panic and terror, Godfrey is never fully conscious that the pattern of his thoughts constitutes despicable changes in him. Even after he has given Eppie up to Silas Marner, he still clings to the idea that the life with Nancy will be his salvation:

> He felt a reformed man, delivered from temptation; and the vision of his future life seemed to him as a promised land for which he had no cause to fight. He saw himself with all his happiness centred on his own hearth, while Nancy would smile as he played with the children.
>
> And that other child, not on the hearth - he would not forget it; he would see that it was well provided for. That was a father's duty. (*Silas Marner*, p.192)

All the while Godfrey has a distracted understanding of the situation: for this is less salvation than escape, less religion than luck. The list of religious words that he chooses ('reform', 'delivered', 'temptation', 'promised land', 'duty') comprises ideals which in themselves become covers for the moral and psychological temptations to which he has surrendered himself. The fantasy position of 'the future life' in which 'he saw himself' is entirely egocentric and wholly separated from that reality which he includes only as a secondary after-thought represented as such in the paragraph following. The emotions which Godfrey plans to invest in Nancy are given at the expense of Eppie's mental and physical exile. She becomes unlovingly objectified: 'that other child' and 'it' are phrases designed to disown and disavow his relation to his daughter, like descendants of that word '*not*' before. His imagined future

eradicates the mistakes embodied by the past in his first child. Fatherly duty, which he should be exercising towards Eppie, is propelled forward into future time as duty towards those children who, as yet, do not exist. He thinks that his financial duty to Eppie will be sufficient, but in fact the financial links towards her are designed to compensate himself for the fatherly duty which he has guiltily denied.

It would be easier, though also morally worse, if Godfrey truly were indifferent towards Eppie; but as the particular anxieties of a specific narrative recede, there is room for more general thoughts, as Feuerbach suggests:

> The understanding is the power which has relation to species: the heart represents particular circumstances, individuals, - the understanding, general circumstances, universals; it is the superhuman, i.e., the impersonal power in man. Only by and in the understanding has man the power of abstraction from himself, from his subjective being, - of exalting himself to general ideas and relations, of distinguishing the object from the impressions which it produces on his feelings, of regarding it in and by itself without reference to human personality.
> (Feuerbach, p.58)

George Eliot is herself concerned with these more general human thoughts, which for once Godfrey Cass admits as he gives up Eppie:

> The wide-open blue eyes looked up at Godfrey's without any uneasiness or sign of recognition: the child could make no visible audible claim on its father; and the father felt a strange mixture of feelings, a conflict of regret and joy, that the pulse of that little heart had no response for the half-jealous yearning in his own, when the blue eyes turned away from him slowly and fixed themselves on the weaver's queer face. (*Silas Marner*, pp.175-176)

The image crafted in this scene, coupled with the complicated mix of feelings, is George Eliot's testimony to the resilience and the power of that general human bond:- 'distinguishing the object from the impressions which it produces on his feelings' means that the child as a human creature is separate from the story-links surrounding it, the guilt momentarily giving way to something more innocently biological in its ties.

Time is of crucial importance as Godfrey resists his own responsiveness to his child while Eppie turns her eyes 'slowly' but irrevocably from her father to Silas. The difference lies between time from then on as tied to story and living time as a genuine human possibility. In *The Problems of Life and Mind* George Henry Lewes writes:

> We let the irrevocable opportunity slip by, to regret it when it's gone. We are always going to reform our habits, and beautify our lives. [...] We neglect the strenuous duties of this daily life in favour of a barren contemplation of a future.
> (*Problems of Life and Mind*, II, 422)

Godfrey is a man who has two alternative lives, neither of which he has fully chosen but one of which he has engineered by relying on external luck. At this point with the baby he experiences a disturbing sense of a time overlap. For it is not merely with hindsight that he will 'regret' the loss of his opportunity to claim Eppie, but that in the very moment of disowning her, and in the midst of his present 'joy' that she can make no 'visible audible claim' on him, he is in a state of future 'regret', one alternative life already mixed up in another, because he eschewed a truly responsible double consciousness.

Although the mixed-up Godfrey is able to 'weigh all the possible alternatives', this is not sufficiently equivalent to the wider understanding which George Eliot represents - as a later matching scene illustrates. Godfrey comes to reclaim Eppie but he has no real understanding of the permanence of Silas's feelings towards her:

> It had never occurred to him that Silas would rather part with his life than with Eppie. Surely the weaver would wish the best to the child he had taken so much trouble with, and would be glad that such good fortune should happen to her: she would always be very grateful to him, and he would be well provided for to the end of his life - provided for as the excellent part he had done by the child deserved. Was it not an appropriate thing for people in a higher station to take a charge off the hands of a man in a lower? It seemed an eminently appropriate thing to Godfrey, for reasons that were known only to himself; and by a common fallacy, he imagined the measure would be easy because he had private motives for desiring it. This was rather a coarse mode of estimating Silas's relation to Eppie; but we must remember that many of the impressions which Godfrey was likely to gather concerning the labouring people around him would favour the idea that deep affections can hardly go along with callous palms and scant means; and he had not had the opportunity, even if he had had the power, of entering intimately into all that was exceptional in the weaver's experience.
> (*Silas Marner*, p.218)

At the start of this chapter I reproduced a letter from George Eliot in which she stated:

> Do not fear that I will become a stagnant pool by a self-sufficient determination only to listen to my own echo; to read the yea, yea on my own side and be most comfortably deaf to the nay, nay

- but this is precisely Godfrey's predicament. His question ('was it not an appropriate thing for people in a higher station to take a charge off the hands of a man in a lower?') is not evidence of a critical consciousness at work; instead, it is a rebounding echo in lieu of genuine Feuerbachian doubling. Moreover, his assurances that his hopes for Eppie's future are 'surely [...] best for the child' is Godfrey-think, designed both to engineer his desires and to impose his own belief in good fortune onto the lives of Silas and Eppie. On the face of it, socially, Godfrey has power, but it is not equivalent to that power of which Feuerbach spoke earlier: 'the understanding is the *power* which has relation to species'. Of course Godfrey is not conscious of George Eliot's deeply critical analysis of him in this light, for it is not 'George Eliot' as such so much as the split-off truth about him which he himself disowns. She says: 'he had not had the opportunity, even if he had the power, of entering intimately into all that was exceptional in the weaver's experience'. But Godfrey destroys the power in him - the subordinate clause ('even if he had the power') shows the little hidden truth.

George Eliot's general voice thus again acts as a superior higher perspective that operates in relation to Godfrey in a way which he cannot articulate as double consciousness within himself:

> The prevarication and white lies which a mind that keeps itself ambitiously pure is as uneasy under as a great artist under the false touches that no eye detects but his own, are worn as lightly as mere trimmings when once the actions have become a lie. (*Silas Marner*, pp.176-177)

George Eliot is the great artist. It is the dangerous aspect of falsehood which, in her own artistic career as a realist-novelist, George Eliot was most conscious to eradicate. It is the general George Eliot voice which precedes Godfrey's own sense of events a little later on when she writes: 'when we are treated well we naturally begin to think that we are not altogether unmeritorious'. The first comma in the sentence, roughly half way through, marks the break-point from which Godfrey's consciousness continues: 'and it is only just that we should treat ourselves well, and not mar our own good fortune'. But posited in between these two separate halves of one sentence is a sort of psychic space wherein other inward self-judging thoughts should exist. Instead, Godfrey looks once more to luck. For when Godfrey 'begins to think' that he

deserves praise, this itself is a secondary substitution for really thinking about his treatment of Eppie and serves only as means of *not* truly thinking.

Whilst believing strongly in the inward will of men to follow their best actions George Eliot recognized that there were dangerous pitfalls without the external critical enforcement that God had been. The inward vision is sometimes powerful enough, as in Dorothea's case, to act on the noblest impulses. In other cases the critical voice of judgement comes from another person: Adam to Arthur, Savonarola to Romola, Felix to Esther, Klesmer and Daniel to Gwendolen. But in the absence of such external enforcers, it is George Eliot's role as the novelist to play the monitor or be a parallel critical consciousness placed in between the inner and outer worlds.

In the half-and-half men, Arthur Donnithorne and Godfrey Cass, two alternative lives stand in substitution for genuine internal Feuerbachian double consciousness. Likewise, Feuerbach writes that 'to think is to be God' (Feuerbach, p.65) but in these men their duplicity occupies the space where true and real thought should exist. Thus it is 'George Eliot' who operates as the vitally banished thinking part of the half-and-half men who, like Tito, damn themselves without ever knowing it or by never quite knowing it.

II. The Double Consciousness and the Double Life

In his book *R.H. Hutton, Critic and Theologian*, Malcolm Woodfield argues that Hutton viewed George Eliot's 'double consciousness' as an inadequate secular replacement for the Christian notion of the 'double life'. In explanation, Woodfield cites Hutton's essay, published in *The Prospective Review*, 1850, entitled 'Puseyite Novels':

> A 'character' to Hutton is one who is seen to be living out a personal history, but one who is also the subject of a story which has a meaning for that character alone: 'the simultaneous exhibition of the external and internal history of a human life [...] a double life'. He supposes that a character, both in life and in fiction, performs actions which are partly imposed from outside (by 'external fate') but which also belong to the character's real, essential nature. When the secular writer speaks of revealing the 'real' person beneath the role, he means the individual, whose inner conflicts are personal and arbitrary. When Hutton speaks of the real person, he means the essence of man as a servant of God.
>
> (Woodfield, p.161)

Later on Woodfield argues that for R.H. Hutton, especially in *Daniel Deronda*:

> George Eliot had failed to present what he called the 'double life' of staking inner beliefs on external circumstances, but had instead produced the impression of 'double consciousness', of habitually seeing things as they appeared to others. It was this 'double consciousness' which Feuerbach saw as both evidence of the non-existence of a personal god and as the product of a secularized self-conscious morality. (Woodfield, p.174)

It may be helpful to define further the differences between Feuerbach's idea of the 'double consciousness' and Hutton's understanding of the 'double life'. The 'double consciousness' is man's ability to be at once the subject and the object of his inner thoughts: to be at once the sinner and the judge of his actions; to see oneself as though from the outside and to see another as if from within. The Christian concept of the 'double life' is man's consciousness of himself, within, as an individual and, at the same time, as a creature in the eyes of God, the final *external* judge of man's actions. Woodfield emphasizes the tension between Hutton's position as a believer and George Eliot's as a 'secular' writer. What I will argue is that in many respects George Eliot is closer to Hutton than Hutton himself realized. George Eliot does not write about the 'essence of man as a servant of God', but she cannot be fully understood in terms of secular writing.[10] For George Eliot does not abandon, with formal Christianity, the sense of life's mystery. As I hope to illustrate in relation to the person of Silas Marner, she does not simply embrace, in substitution for her old faith, a rationalized Feuerbachian model.

George Eliot contrasts Silas with Godfrey. Silas is a traditional believer who has lost his faith but whose life is, in Wordsworthian terms, then transmuted in spite of himself; Godfrey conversely is a modern, secular non-believer who is trying to engineer transmutation without beliefs.[11] I will argue that through Silas Marner

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[10] Malcolm Woodfield does not strictly define George Eliot as a secular writer but rather vaguely states that her novels *'are* religious in giving an account of the complex and the contingent' (Woodfield, p.165).

[11] George Eliot intended that *Silas Marner* should be read in a Wordsworthian framework. In a letter to John Blackwood she wrote: 'I should not have believed anyone would have been interested in it but myself (since Wordsworth is dead) if Mr Lewes had not been strongly arrested by it. But I hope you will not find it at all a sad story, as a whole, since it sets - or is intended to set - in a strong light the remedial influences of pure, natural human relations' (Cross, p.334). Rosemary Ashton dedicates her fourth chapter in her book *George Eliot* to the influence of Wordsworth in George Eliot's writing. Of *Silas Marner*, she writes: 'The Wordsworthian influence merges, in the simple progress of the plot, with that of Feuerbach's

(footnote continued on next page)

George Eliot restores the sense of man's 'other' life from which Silas has become forgetfully detached in the midst of his pain.

After beliefs have failed Silas Marner, his life is reduced to that of mechanical production in place of religious purpose. George Eliot describes Marner in relation to his occupation and his gold:

> Marner wanted the heaps of ten to grow into a square, and then into a larger square; and every added guinea, while it was itself a satisfaction, bred a new desire. In this strange world, made a hopeless riddle to him, he might, if he had had a less intense nature, have sat weaving, weaving - looking towards the end of his pattern, or towards the end of his web, till he forgot the riddle, and everything else but his immediate sensations; but the money had come to mark off his weaving into periods, and the money not only grew, but it remained with him. He began to think it was conscious of him, as his loom was, and he would on no account have exchanged those coins, which had become his familiars, for other coins with unknown faces. He handled them, he counted them, till their form and colour were like the satisfaction of a thirst to him; but it was only in the night, when his work was done, that he drew them out to enjoy their companionship. (*Silas Marner*, pp.67-68)

Silas follows an habitual routine each evening:

> He spread them out in heaps and bathed his hands in them; then he counted them and set them up in regular piles, and felt their rounded outline between his thumb and fingers, and thought fondly of the guineas that were only half-earned by the work in his loom, as if they had been unborn children. (*Silas Marner*, p.70)

For Silas Marner the gold is both an end in itself (he does not use it to purchase goods to increase his material comforts) and a perpetuator of desire in an unending circle. Silas's 'web', created at his loom, acts almost as another second little world, parallel but distorted, in comparison with that wider web of life with which George Eliot is concerned. Silas even measures time only in relation to his gold which has 'come to mark off his weaving into periods'. It is his very making of a human relation to the coins which reveals the inadequacy of Silas's position. George Eliot writes that 'if he had had a less intense nature' mere production would have been sufficient; but it is precisely because he has such raw emotional energy that what would otherwise be

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religion of humanity' (Rosemary Ashton, *George Eliot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.48: hereafter cited in the text.

humanly-directed must find an outlet through his attachment to the gold coins. In *The Essence of Christianity* Feuerbach argues:

> In the object which he contemplates, therefore, man becomes acquainted with himself; consciousness of the objective is the self-consciousness of man. We know the man by the object, by his conception of what is external to himself; in it his nature becomes evident: this object is his manifested nature, his true objective *ego*. And this is true not merely of spiritual, but also of sensuous objects. Even the objects which are most remote from man, *because* they are objects to him, and to the extent to which they are so, are revelations of human nature. (Feuerbach, pp.23-24)

Thus Silas's relation to the coins lies in projecting his own needs, his hidden nature, onto the gold: 'he began to think it was conscious of him'. Silas makes his old emotional life at Lantern Yard external to himself because he is too emotionally damaged to sustain it inside. But by alienating his own feelings he becomes harder and more detached from his true nature. Thus although Silas's relation to the coins is described as 'like the satisfaction of a thirst to him', he only ever finds the gold to be a temporary and inadequate quenching of that thirst which is in fact a craving that demands the permanence of human interchange. Hence, all the while that Silas is bathing his hands in the coins, organizing them in 'regular piles' and feeling their 'rounded outlines between his thumb and fingers', George Eliot establishes the telling imagery of Silas going through the motions of bathing a child: 'as if they had been unborn children'. Silas is unable consciously to register that his relation to the gold is constantly shadowed by the *other* life to which he had looked forward in marrying Sarah at Lantern yard. There is a second, deeper tale buried beneath Silas's substitution. He thinks of the coins in terms of 'familiars' whose 'faces, form and colour' provide 'companionship', familiars which both 'bred a new desire', 'grew' and 'remained'. A part of Marner wants to console himself that this combination ('bred', 'grew' *and* 'remained'), is more enduring than children who would have left him in adulthood. It provides a level of permanence and security beyond 'immediate sensation' and differentiates the gold from the cloth which is made only to be sold.

But George Eliot is characteristically concerned with the second-order psychological consolations and substitutions which are adopted by alienated men and which, in *Silas Marner*, she calls the 'clinging life'. When Silas Marner's gold is stolen, George Eliot assesses the importance of his attachment to it in terms of

Marner's own survival: 'it had been a clinging life; and though the object round which its fibres had clung was a dead disrupted thing, it satisfied the need for clinging' (*Silas Marner*, p.129). His clinging to the 'dead' object was always motivated from his very deep, still living emotions and from a sense of a self-preserving need to keep alive his best emotions in some form. It is not surprising to find early Marx taking an interest in Feuerbachian alienation.

In different circumstances in *Felix Holt*, Mrs Transome finds herself, more self-consciously than Silas Marner, locating other outlets for her emotional needs. Unlike Silas Marner, rather than investing the best of her nature in external objects, Mrs Transome tries to compensate for her sense of powerlessness by exerting her power in 'smaller things':

> Under protracted ill every living creature will find something that makes a comparative ease, and even when life seems woven of pain, will convert the fainter pang into a desire. Mrs Transome, whose imperious will had availed little to ward off the great evils of her life, found the opiate for her discontent in the exertion of her will about smaller things.

George Eliot continues, after giving a long and detailed list of the social and domestic areas in which Mrs Transome asserts her authority:

> If she had only been more haggard and less majestic, those who had glimpses of her outward life might have said she was a tryrannical, griping harridan, with a tongue like a razor. No one said exactly that; but they never said anything like the full truth about her, or divined what was hidden under that outward life - a woman's keen sensibility and dread, which lay screened behind all her petty habits and narrow notions, as some quivering thing with eyes and throbbing heart may lie crouching behind withered rubbish. The sensibility and dread had palpitated all the faster in the prospect of her son's return; and now that she had seen him, she said to herself, in her bitter way, 'It is a lucky eel that escapes the skinning. The best happiness I shall ever know, will be to escape the worst misery.' (*Felix Holt*, pp.106-107)

When George Eliot writes that 'under protracted ill every living creature will find something that makes a comparative ease', she mirrors Spinoza's assertions concerning pain in the *Ethics*: 'the greater the pain the greater is the power of action with which man will strive to remove it, the greater the desire or appetite with which he will strive to banish pain' (*Ethics*, p.120). The forces which drive human actions are not ever eradicated, George Eliot believes, but *converted* into other forms: Mrs

Transome's reflex to turn 'the fainter pang into a desire' is comparable with Silas Marner's 'thirsty' desire towards his gold. Even in the midst of sorrow exists that primitive survival sense which Spinoza calls 'conatus'. Conversion here is manifestly not religious but closer to the desperation of what Mrs Transome herself calls 'escape'.

Where Marner's situation is to a great extent forced upon him by the cruelty of the external world, what is more awful in Mrs Transome's case is her own hidden consciousness, running parallel with her desire to eradicate her pain, that she is herself partly responsible for her position. That hidden consciousness is given a concrete reality through George Eliot's description of it as 'some quivering thing with eyes and throbbing heart'. As a novelist 'George Eliot' exists to expose the relation of the 'petty habits and narrow notions' to the hidden real life which expresses itself in such distorted modes. If this is not the spiritual 'double life' with which R.H. Hutton was concerned, it is the inner craving life that results from a lack of it. George Eliot at once balances the visible view of 'a tyrannical, griping harridan with a tongue like a razor' with the invisible, 'screened', but truer, terrified creature worthy of our pity. Later, in *Middlemarch*, George Eliot's understanding of the contrast between the outward and the hungry inward life is pivotal if we are to witness Casaubon's often hard treatment of Dorothea while at the same time still having sympathy for the unhappy husband. George Eliot describes Casaubon's suspicion of Dorothea and Will Ladislaw: 'All through his life Mr Casaubon had been trying not to admit even to himself the inward sores of self-doubt and jealousy' (*Middlemarch*, p.412). Although this is only a short statement about Casaubon, what makes the analysis so moving is that Casaubon does not only hide his weakness from Dorothea: he tries to hide even from his own conscious mind the '*inward* sores'. As Feuerbach might put it, he uses his inner resources negatively only to hide from the God within himself. Feuerbach, I am finally suggesting, is most useful in relation to characters who in George Eliot's novels are fleeing rather than seeking a God.

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There are, of course, major differences between Mrs Transome, Mr Casaubon and Silas Marner. Silas Marner's 'opiate' is to be found in his repetitive habit of weaving and hoarding. Mrs Transome's and Mr Casaubon's opiates are of a different kind. They turn their own pain outwards onto others. Silas Marner's story is one which is more closely allied to the Wordsworthian theme: it is more to do with the (misplaced) storing of emotion rather than the ejection of emotional poison. Marner's needs are heavily bound up with the symbolism of love, as the following scene shows through Silas's relation to an old earthenware pot:

> Yet even in this stage of withering a little incident happened, which showed that the sap of affection was not all gone. It was one of his daily tasks to fetch his water from a well a couple of fields off, and for this purpose, ever since he came to Raveloe, he had had a brown earthenware pot, which he held as his most precious utensil among the very few conveniences he had granted himself. It had been his companion for twelve years, always standing on the same spot, always lending its handle to him in the early morning, so that its form had an expression for him of willing helpfulness, and the impress of its handle on his palm gave a satisfaction mingled with that of having the fresh clear water. One day as he was returning from the well, he stumbled against the step of the stile, and his brown pot, falling with force against the stones that overarched the ditch below him was broken into three pieces. Silas picked up the pieces and carried them home with grief in his heart. The brown pot could never be of use to him anymore, but he stuck the bits together and propped the ruin in its old place for a memorial.
>
> (*Silas Marner*, p.69)

'*Even* in this stage of withering' is a measured assessment only accessible to George Eliot as the external monitor and measurer of time proper in the novel. The pot takes on a human aspect in Silas's thinking with its 'helpful expression', 'lending its handle to him' as if it were actively responsive towards him. This is closer to Wordsworthian piety than to what Marx might see as the idolatry of property. It is more vulnerably a replacement for life than a hardening substitute.

For far from being idolatry, Silas's attachment to the old pot is related to George Eliot's own sentiments expressed in her autobiographical poem 'Brother and Sister'. George Eliot writes of her own emotional and sensuous life as interwoven with material and natural objects:

> The wide-arched bridge, the scented elderflowers,
> The wonderous watery rings that died too soon,
> The echoes of the quarry, the still hours
> With white robe sweeping-on the shadeless noon,
> Were but my growing self, are part of me,

My present past, my root of piety.[12]

The significance of the bridge or of the scent of the elderflowers is not to be found in the material objects themselves but in what they memorably represent.[13] In the case of Silas, the pot provides him with the means of quenching that literal thirst, where the gold had metaphorically eased his emotional thirst. But like the gold coins, it reinstates the security which is gained from the safety of monotony in life and acts as an anchor in his otherwise uprooted existence. It 'remains' with him and even if it is broken, offers a truly symbolic significance which goes beyond both the pot itself and utilitarian calculation. Marner's own life is like that broken pot, consisting merely of fragments. The old life at Lantern Yard and his diminished Raveloe life are not aspects of an organically bound whole life but are merely 'bits' barely stuck together. Thus the early image of the broken pot is related to, yet distinctly contrasted with, Silas's thoughts about Eppie in the later half of *Silas Marner*. He thinks of her as: 'an object compacted of changes and hopes' (*Silas Marner*, p.184). Eppie comes in place of the unresponsive objects in which Marner has invested his own feelings without genuinely free human return. The word 'compacted' is crucial in reinforcing how his life with Eppie finally reunites his emotions with a human object and a whole living world.

In the person of Silas Marner George Eliot tests, through a Wordsworthian medium, her own beliefs in the resilience of man's deepest inner feelings and convictions. For this purpose, and through George Eliot's personal commitment to the realistic novel, Silas must necessarily be allowed to go on functioning while thinking of himself as a man without faith. George Eliot explores the nature of his 'clinging life' further:

> The light of his faith quite put out, and his affections made desolate, he had clung with all the force of his nature to his work and his money; and like all objects to which man devotes himself they had fashioned him into correspondence with

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[12] *George Eliot Collected Poems*, ed. by Lucien Jenkins (London: Skoob 1989), p.87: hereafter cited in the text as *Collected Poems*.

[13] In *The Mill on the Floss* George Eliot reiterates the same idea of human feelings bound up with those objects which surrounded the family as their life progresses: 'there is no better reason for preferring this elderberry bush than that it stirs an early memory - that it is no novelty in my life speaking to me merely through my present sensibilities to form and colour, but the long companion of my existence that *wove* itself into my joys when joys were vivid' (p.222 *my italics). See Chapter Five concerning Mr. Tulliver in relation to the 'crossed and complicated' nature of George Eliot's writing.

> themselves. His loom, as he wrought in it without ceasing, had in its turn wrought on him, and confirmed more and more the monotonous craving for its monotonous response. His gold, as he hung over it and saw it grow, gathered his power of loving together into a hard isolation like its own. (*Silas Marner*, p.92)

The emphasis is placed on the objects having 'fashioned' him and yet the objects to which Silas had devoted his life have no consciousness, nor could they provide any conscious effort to remake him. It is Silas who has fashioned himself by clinging so tightly 'with all the force of his nature'. The word 'all' conveys the extreme and concentrated re-channelling of energies by Marner towards the gold. Whereas a Christian would see this habitual practice of Marner's as serving Mammon not God, making Mammon his God, George Eliot, whilst witnessing the same situation, understands that Silas's responses are symptomatic of a need still in Marner for *some* God. The line between the vicious and the virtuous is not clear-cut.

It is a characteristic of George Eliot's novelistic vision that she is able to recognize the right sentiment even when it is caught up in the muddle of the wrong form. This aspect of her insight is illustrated after Silas's gold is stolen. Silas has a 'half-desperate' sense that if help is to come, it 'must come from without'. At least now he is driven out of his innerly absorbed little world. In the following scene George Eliot describes a visit from the kind-hearted Dolly Winthrop. She has come to fetch Marner some lard-cakes:

> Formerly, his heart had been as a locked casket with its treasure inside; but now the casket was empty, and the lock was broken. Left groping in darkness, with his prop utterly gone, Silas had inevitably a sense, though a dull and half-despairing one, that if any help came to him it must come from without; and there was a slight stirring of expectation at the sight of his fellow-men, a faint consciousness of dependence on their goodwill. He opened the door wide to admit Dolly, but without otherwise returning her greeting than by moving the armchair a few inches as a sign that she was to sit down in it.
>
> (*Silas Marner*, pp.134-135)

In Silas's mind it simply seems that one form of 'prop' has been replaced by another: he has no consciousness of any inner self-sustaining power nor any happiness in Dolly's companionship. Silas is too acutely aware of his loss of protective self-sufficiency at this stage - the loss of which makes his acceptance of Dolly into the cottage 'half-despairing'. Silas is so preoccupied with the major upheaval that the theft has caused to his life that he fails to see the smaller, apparently secondary and

yet more significant gains which the loss has begun to bring about. For the first time during his years at Raveloe he has nothing worth guarding in his cottage, and thus the removal of the gold makes way for Dolly to be allowed into the cottage: thus begins the other life he has ignored. For an equally important scene is that which takes place just prior to Eppie's arrival:

> During the last few weeks, since he had lost his money, he had contracted the habit of opening his door and looking out from time to time, as if he thought that his money might be somehow coming back to him, or that some trace, some news of it, might be mysteriously on the road, and be caught by the listening ear or the straining eye. (*Silas Marner*, p.166)

Silas has 'contracted the habit' of looking out in lieu of his old habit of counting his gold. But even though Marner is still mentally functioning in the same mode, overcome with the sense of his loss, the direction of his attention is, at least, forced outside the confines of his inner world. It is George Eliot who reveals the significance of these subtle movements when she writes shortly after the scene with Dolly:

> Nobody in this world but himself knew that he was the same Silas Marner who had once loved his fellow with tender love, and trusted in unseen goodness. Even to himself that past experience had become dim. (*Silas Marner*, p.141)

Nobody, says George Eliot, remembers Silas's past self 'but himself'. And even that self is losing touch with itself. For Silas's loss renders him unable to gain access to the old memory of himself before his betrayal at Lantern Yard. In fact it is George Eliot who, at this stage, has to remember for Silas. She functions as the narrator of memory outside to counteract the deficiency of memory inside Silas Marner. Only later is it Silas Marner who becomes more of the narrator of his own story within the narrative:

> He had begun to ponder over the elements of his old faith, and blend them with his new impressions, till he recovered a consciousness of unity between his past and present. [...] And as it grew more and more easy to him to open his mind to Dolly Winthrop, he gradually communicated to her all he could describe of his early life. (*Silas Marner*, pp.201-202)

In the meantime in her sustaining narrative George Eliot acts as the restorer of a sense of balance between his loss and his experience, offering the broader vision. Living in a different dimension from the author, Silas needs more time. For the slow evolution of change in Marner, and his eventual rejuvenation from the sorrow of his fragmentary

existence to feelings of joy, further illustrates the deficiencies of the engineered short-cut methods of transmutation, employed, as we have seen, by Godfrey Cass, the equivalent here of Mrs Transome or Mr Casaubon.

It is at the point when Silas Marner's clinging existence is at its most reduced that Eppie comes to him to test the idea that a re-fashioning of Silas Marner is possible. In this scene Eppie has just woken up at the hearth and begins to cry:

> There was a cry on the hearth: the child had awaked, and Marner stooped to lift it on his knee. It clung round his neck, and burst louder and louder into that mingling of inarticulate cries with 'mammy' by which little children express the bewilderment of waking. Silas pressed it to him, and almost unconsciously uttered sounds of hushing tenderness, while he bethought himself that some of his porridge, which had got cool by the dying fire, would do to feed the child if only it were warmed up a little.
>
> He had plenty to do through the next hour. The porridge, sweetened with some dry brown sugar from an old store which he had refrained from using for himself, stopped the cries of the little one, and made her lift her blue eyes with a wide gaze at Silas, as he put the spoon into her mouth. Presently she slipped from his knee and began to toddle about, but with a pretty stagger that made Silas jump up and follow her lest she should fall against anything that would hurt her.
>
> (*Silas Marner*, pp.168-169)

Silas responds instantly to Eppie's cry just as, in George Eliot's following novel *Romola*, her heroine finds she must answer the 'irresistable' cry of the child (*Romola*, p.641). It is in the distracted hurry of activity, as Silas tries to comfort Eppie, that the 'sap' of human feeling that George Eliot previously had shown alive in Marner truly begins to circulate. Her use of language is double-loaded. For when George Eliot writes of Silas returning to 'an old store which he had refrained from using for himself', it is also true that in his action of clumsy, thoughtful tenderness Silas returns to an old store of long untapped feeling which is *in him*. The now natural symbolism, the double meaning, is like something that attaches itself to reality, giving it the value which earlier his own projection had artificially tried to instil in it. In her 'Brother and Sister' sonnet George Eliot writes of her own earliest formative childhood memories:

> Thus rambling we were schooled in deepest lore,
> And learned the meanings that give words a soul,
> The fear, the love, the primal passionate store,
> Whose shaping impulses make manhood pure.
> ('Brother and Sister', *Collected Poems*, p.86)

These 'shaping impulses' of which George Eliot writes were forced out of Silas's life once he found his 'affections made desolate' (*Silas Marner,* p.92). The store of Silas's old life is reopened when Eppie unconsciously 'made' him follow her to prevent injury, and when there results a crucial change of direction in the clinging impulse.[14] Where Silas had clung to the unresponsive gold, Eppie 'clung around his neck' and, instinctively in answer to her, 'Silas pressed it to him'. Silas's relation to Eppie is a truer return in Feuerbach's sense of 'systole and diastole'. He writes:

> As the action of the arteries drives the blood into the extremities, and the action of the veins brings it back again, the life in general consists in a perpetual systole and diastole; so is it in religion. In the religious systole the man propels his own nature from himself, he throws himself outward; in the religious diastole he receives the rejected nature into his heart again. (Feuerbach, p.54)

Only through Eppie as someone genuinely other can Silas find his true nature and take it back into himself again: the dried-up, withered Raveloe life begins to be nourished from the real interchange of both inward and external forces. Echoes of Silas's past self were already united with the image of Eppie asleep by the fire:

> In utter amazement, Silas fell on his knees and bent his head low to examine the marvel: it was a sleeping child - a round fair thing with soft yellow rings all over its head. Could this be the little sister come back to him in a dream - his little sister whom he had carried about in his arms for a year before she died, when he was a small boy without shoes or stockings? (*Silas Marner*, pp.167-168)

As Silas falls on his knees to see Eppie better it is almost as a reflection of his old life in prayer. His own childhood and the attachments of that time are restored to him through a rush of memory. But this is closer to a double life - his own life in relation to Eppie's new one - than to projections and introjections of double consciousness with regard to the earthenware pot. For Wordsworthian interchange is different from

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[14] George Eliot reviewed Ruskin's *Modern Painters* III and in *George Eliot's Life* she connects his most 'sublime' thoughts with Wordsworth's in her thinking. In his *Principles of Success in Literature* George Henry Lewes comments on a passage from *Modern Painters* IV: 'Ruskin says of all great artists: "Imagine all that these men had seen or heard in the whole course of their lives, laid up accurately in their memories as storehouses, extending, with the poets, even to the slightest intonations of syllables heard in the beginning of their lives, and with painters down to the minute folds of drapery, and shapes of leaves or stones"' (pp.77-78). This store is a result of what Wordsworth calls an enobling interchange between within and without, rather than the projection of unwanted inner richness which Ruskin himself calls 'the pathetic fallacy'.

Feuerbach's: it is less self-reflecting by being in relation to *real* other beings, rather than *projected* others.

Wordsworth famously wrote thus about being sustained by the return of the spiritual life-blood through memory:

> In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
> Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart
> And passing even into my purer mind,
> With tranquil restoration: - feelings too
> Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
> As have no slight or trivial influence
> On that best portion of a good man's life,
> His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
> of kindness and of love.[15]

It is only in later years that these first scenes with Eppie will return to nourish Silas in 'hours of weariness'. Some of this present will itself have to be past before it consciously restores that past which goes even further back. But the transmutation of Silas's sorrow begins in the midst of soothing Eppie as he draws on latent memories. His '*unconsciously* uttered sounds of hushing tenderness' in response to Eppie's 'mammy' are drawn from an inner store as an echo of those sounds of tenderness which he himself heard his mother use: sounds which he too may have used as a boy, imitatively, in an endeavour to comfort the sister 'whom he had carried about in his arms for a year before she died'. Silas returns to what George Eliot described as 'shaping impulses' which previously lay hidden and half-forgotten in him. George Eliot maps the genuinely dual process of Silas's return to memory as a going backward which is also a means of moving forward into the community of Raveloe from which he had previously been ostracized:

> As the child's mind was growing into knowledge, his mind was growing into memory: as her life unfolded, his soul, long stupified in a cold narrow prison, was unfolding too, and trembling gradually into full consciousness.
>
> (*Silas Marner*, p.185)

This is a *truly* double movement. For as Silas witnesses and shares in the purely natural processes involved in Eppie's growth of consciousness towards the world

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[15] William Wordsworth, 'Tintern Abbey', *The Poems*, ed. by John Hayden, 2 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), vol.I, 385: hereafter cited as *Poems*.

outside herself, he finds himself echoing the child's development, although he has no conscious intent to do so. In the adult version of Eppie's childish growth, Silas turns inward and in doing so reawakens and rediscovers his true self.[16]

George Eliot's firm belief that sorrow is not wasted is rooted in her sympathy with Wordsworth's poetry. In his essay 'Wordsworth's Ethics', written shortly after the death of his own first wife, Leslie Stephen similarly describes Wordsworth's capacity to turn sorrow to account:

> The waste of sorrow is one of the most lamentable forms of waste. Sorrow too often tends to produce bitterness or effeminacy of character. But it may, if rightly used, serve only to detach us from the lower motives, and give sanctity to the higher. That is what Wordsworth sees with unequalled clearness, and he therefore sees also the condition of profiting. The mind in which the most valuable elements may be systematically strengthened by meditation, by association of deep thought with the most universal presences, by constant sympathy with the joys and sorrows of its fellows, will be prepared to convert sorrow into a medicine instead of poison. Sorrow is deteriorating so far as it is selfish. The man who is occupied with his own interests makes grief an excuse for effeminate indulgence in self-pity. He becomes weaker and more fretful. The man who has learnt habitually to think of himself as a part of a greater whole, whose conduct has been habitually directed to noble ends, is purifed and strengthened by the spiritual convulsion.[17]

Leslie Stephen's analysis of Wordsworth is helpful in locating how, in her career as a novelist, George Eliot is clearly a descendent of Wordsworth's philosophy. In *Adam Bede*, for example, 'the sorrow at work' in Adam, without his conscious knowledge of it, is the antithesis to that 'backstairs agent' at work in Arthur and the poison in Godfrey Cass. I shall turn for a moment to Adam himself before finally returning to Silas Marner.

Like Wordsworth, George Eliot in *Adam Bede* presents a transformation in which, as Stephen puts it, sorrow is converted 'into *medicine* instead of *poison*'.

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[16] George Eliot provides a different example of the unsought, dual, restorative process in 'Janet's Repentance'. In restoring Janet, Tryan's own reputation is, if partially, restored also: 'Janet was recovering the popularity which her beauty and sweetness of nature had won for her when she was a girl; and popularity, as everyone knows, is the most complex and self-multiplying of echoes. Even anti-Tryanite prejudice could not resist the fact that Janet Dempster was a changed woman - changed as the dusty, bruised and sun-withered plant is changed when the soft rains of heaven have fallen on it - and that change was due to Mr Tryan's influence' (p.401). The inner and outer lives, the needs in self and the duties of selflessness are intervolved.

[17] Leslie Stephen, 'Wordsworth's Ethics', *Hours in a Library*, 3 vols (London: Smith Elder, 1892), vol.II, 301: hereafter cited in the text.

Sorrow is not inevitably destructive as it is in Hardy's novels, for George Eliot's intention is to bear witness to the invisible but nonetheless 'systematic strengthening' of Adam. In the later part of *Adam Bede* George Eliot writes of Adam's growing consciousness of a wider life after all the trouble of his connection to Hetty:

> For it is at such periods that the sense of our lives having visible and invisible relations beyond any of which either our present or prospective self is the centre, grows like a muscle that we are obliged to lean on and exert. (*Adam Bede*, p.532)

In the midst of his suffering, the very sorrow which seems as if it will destroy Adam becomes, in another form, the 'medicine' of which Stephen writes. The memory of his suffering and Hetty's suffering builds 'muscle' in him as in *Middlemarch* Dorothea's personal sorrow and suffering about the supposed affair between Rosamond and Will returns to her in a later reconstructed form 'as a power' (*Middlemarch*, p.846).

George Eliot examines further the invisible activity of 'the sorrow at work within him':

> For Adam, though you see him quite master of himself, working hard and delighting in his work after his inborn inalienable nature, had not outlived his sorrow - had not felt it slip from him as a temporary burthen, and leave him the same man again. Do any of us? God forbid. It would be a poor result of all our anguish and our wrestling, if we won nothing but our old selves at the end of it - if we could return to the same blind loves, the same self-confident blame, the same light thoughts of human suffering, the same frivolous gossip over blighted human lives, the same feeble sense of Unknown towards which we have sent forth irrepressible cries in our loneliness. Let us be rather thankful that our sorrow lives in us as an indestructible force, only changing its form, as forces do, and passing from pain into sympathy - the one poor word which includes all our best insight and our best love. Not that this transformation of pain into sympathy had completely taken place in Adam yet: there was still a remnant of pain, which he felt would subsist as long as *her* pain was not a memory, but an existing thing, which he must think of as renewed with the light of every new morning.
> (*Adam Bede*, p.531)

Adam's life is testimony to George Eliot's belief that the force and substance of basic human energy in sorrow is not lost but 'lives in us as a force only changing its form as forces do'. R.H. Hutton himself wrote in similar terms of Wordsworth's capacity to transform the energy of sorrow into 'food for lonely rapture'.[18] Even while Adam

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[18] R.H. Hutton, 'Wordsworth and his Genius', *Essays Theological and Literary* 2 vols (London: Strahan & Co., 1871), vol. II, 103: hereafter cited in the text.

finds each day the images of Hetty's suffering thrust upon him, he has the continual presence *alongside* those memories of his stronger relations to his mother, Seth, Dinah and the Poysers. Adam is from a Wordsworthian stance 'invisibly repair'd' (*Prelude*, 1:215, p.213). It is a sensitive and subtle balance which George Eliot in her double consciousness maintains between the changes that Adam has undergone as a result of his sorrow and Hetty's still continuing suffering. Thus even at the end of *Adam Bede*, as Adam travels the road to Snowfield with hopes that there will be a happy future for himself and Dinah, familiar scenery recalls Hetty to his mind - 'What keen memories went along the road with him!':

> That is a base and selfish, even a blasphemous spirit, which rejoices and is thankful over the past evil that has blighted or crushed another, because it has been made a source of unforseen good to ourselves: Adam could never cease to mourn over that mystery of human sorrow which had been brought so close to him: he could never thank God for another's misery. And if I were capable of that narrow-sighted joy in Adam's behalf, I should still know he was not the man to feel it for himself: he would have shaken his head at such a sentiment, and said, 'Evil's evil, and sorrow's sorrow, and you can't alter its nature by wrapping it up in other words. Other folks were not created for my sake, that I should think all square when things turn out well for me.' (*Adam Bede*, p.573)

Those who believe that it is possible to 'wrap up' sorrow in other words or are predatory upon their good fortune are half-men locked inside their own egos as were Arthur Donnithorne and Godfrey Cass. But Adam, as a whole man, cannot rejoice in the prospect of finding new happiness after Hetty when that prospect originates in the very events which led to her downfall. For in Adam '*her* pain was not a memory but an existing thing': this is vital in terms of genuine doubleness. Hetty is the external, real other and Adam's improvement cannot simply compensate for her fate.

In contrast, early in her journey, when Hetty took from her pocket the thimble given her by Adam and engraved 'Remember me', she has no sense of the suffering that she has caused. Nor does she realize his pain even after her attempted suicide:

> When she awoke it was deep night, and she felt chill. She was frightened at this darkness - frightened at the long night before her. If she *could* but throw herself into the water! No, not yet. She began to walk about that she might get warm again, as if she would have more resolution then. O how long the time was in that darkness! The bright hearth and the warmth and voices of home, - the familiar people, the Sundays and holidays with their simple joys of dress and feasting, - all the sweets of her young life rushed before her now, and she seemed to be stretching her arms towards them across a great gulf.
>
> (*Adam Bede*, pp. 431-432)

This is the first time that Hetty has really used her memory in connection with the Poysers in recalling the ordinary pleasures of family life. But Hetty's mind operates on the basis of sensuous images alone. These images are designed to lift her from the lonely 'chill darkness' to the 'familiar' 'bright hearth', 'warmth and voices of home'. Hetty's memory does not operate as a dynamic force but functions to create an alternative space, a static image of a scene, a second place which is simply beyond her immediate situation as an escape route. She does not change but her situation now does, so that her vanity earlier before the mirror now becomes that feeling of her own arms which, in the larger context, is not vanity but a sort of a love of her own life that prevents her from committing suicide.

The balanced analysis of Hetty's plight set aside Adam's is closely related to George Eliot's treatment of Godfrey's moral decline set against Silas Marner's rejuvenation. George Eliot will not simplistically add up the losses and gains so as to make Godfrey's moral decline be atoned for by Silas's restored life: real life, she recognized, was much more complicated than that with left-overs and overlaps which could not be easily resolved - overlaps which mean that Nancy's sorrow rests in the same real world as Silas's joy. There is something other than a neat human plan.

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My objective in this section has been to illustrate George Eliot's use and understanding of Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* in relation to the point of view of a traditional Christian believer, R.H. Hutton. It is at this point that I have to clarify in what way George Eliot is distinct from Feuerbach. For although Feuerbach's idea of projection is fundamental to her thinking, George Eliot remains committed to her own sense of man's inward life as more than merely the site of subjective projection. The following scene describes Silas's first vision of Eppie asleep at the hearth:

> It was very much like his little sister. Silas sank into his chair powerless, under the double presence of an inexplicable surprise and a hurrying influx of memories. How and when had the child come in without his knowledge? He had never been beyond the door. But along with that question, and almost thrusting it away, there was a vision of the old home and the old streets leading to Lantern

> Yard - and within that vision another, of thoughts which had been present with him in those far-off scenes. The thoughts were strange to him now, like old friendships impossible for him to revive; and yet he had a dreamy feeling that this child was somehow a message come to him from that far-off life: it stirred fibres that had never been moved in Raveloe - old quiverings of tenderness - old impressions of awe at the presentiment of some Power presiding over his life; for his imagination had not yet extricated itself from the sense of mystery in the child's sudden presence, and had formed no conjectures of ordinary natural means by which the event could have been brought about.
>
> (*Silas Marner*, p.168)

The image of Silas Marner standing in the doorway of the cottage, gripped by paralyzing catalepsy, represents his conscious mind looking out in its hardened Raveloe state. The inside of the cottage, where the fire is warm is, as it were, his unconscious mind: the life before Raveloe. The unsought child has skirted around his guarded attitude and, behind his back, simply arrived, to his mind mysteriously, inside his home and inside his thoughts. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth describes something of what a similarly peculiar experience of memory feels like as he also recalls himself as a boy:

> A tranquilizing spirit presses now
> On my corporeal frame: so wide appears
> The vacancy between me and those days,
> Which yet have such self-presence in my mind
> That, sometimes, when I think of them, I seem
> Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
> And of some other Being.
>
> (*Prelude*, 1:27-33, pp.20-21)

Silas's 'double presence' corresponds to Wordsworth's 'two consciousnesses'. But whereas Wordsworth calmly marvels at the wide 'vacancy between me and those days', Silas Marner finds himself shocked and physically shaken by the 'chasm in his consciousness' between his half-forgotten childhood days and the empty, hard nature of his adulthood. It is without intent and simply by *being*, that the child brings with her emotions which awaken old dormant feelings in Silas. He thinks how his old feelings and ideas seem 'strange to him now', but it is as if he had in fact become a stranger to them. The breakthrough is like a miracle to Silas, and can only be understood by him as a God-given 'message' that reinstates, with a sudden force, his sense of awe: the consciousness of 'some *Power* presiding over his life' which in turn

leaves him 'powerless'. In Wordsworth the encounter is often with a very old man, as in 'Resolution and Independence', but old Silas's experience is with a very young child: it is as if these two extreme stages in human life in themselves have an impact on both men's impression of the incidents.[19] For where Eppie reminds Silas of his own childhood past, the resilience of the leech-gatherer seems to make Wordsworth look ahead, ashamed of his own youthful despair. What constitutes the force of Wordsworth's encounter, like Silas's with Eppie, is that the meeting is unexpectedly accidental and follows a moment of intense self-absorption. R.H. Hutton describes Wordsworth as:

> almost a miser in his reluctance to trench upon the spiritual capital at his disposal. He hoarded his joys, and lived upon the interest that they paid in the form of hope and expectation. This is one of the most original parts of his poetic character. It was only the windfalls, as one may say, of his imagination, the accidents on which he had never counted beforehand, the delight of which he dared thoroughly to exhaust. ('Wordsworth and his Genius', p.103)

But where Hutton writes metaphorically of Wordsworth 'hoarding his joys' and 'living on the interest of hope and expectation' Silas, in contrast, has literally hoarded his gold, receiving no return, forgetting the real store of joy from his early life. But the sudden arrival of Eppie gives him the means of tapping that deeper source of memory which has all the while been stored up unconsciously in his mind. Thus Silas finds himself struck by a 'double presence' as he remembers his early life and his affection for his little sister as well as the real little child before him. Wordsworth writes of 'those first affections':

> Those shadowy recollections,
> Which be what they may,
> Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
> Are yet a master light of all our seeing
> ('Intimations of Immortality', *Poems*, p.528)

- and Silas finds himself, for all his defective vision, returning to the point of 'seeing' which is sustained by memory.

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[19] George Eliot tells us of Marner: 'he was so withered and yellow, that, though he was not yet forty, the children always called him "Old Master Marner"' (*Silas Marner*, p.69).

But Silas's experience in his first encounter with Eppie holds much more significance than simply Silas's return to memory or his reconnection with his lost nature. George Eliot believes that Silas's restoration is a kind of modern-day spiritual rescue, just as Godfrey's decision to give up his child is a surrender to the Fall. Of Silas and Eppie, George Eliot says:

> In old days there were angels who came and took men by the hand and led them away from the city of destruction. We see no white-winged angels now. But yet men are led away from threatening destruction: a hand is put into theirs, which leads them forth gently towards a calm and bright land, so that they look no more backward; and the hand may be a little child's.
>
> (*Silas Marner*, pp.190-191)

Rosemary Ashton describes this passage as 'unusually optimistic':

> The fact that no agent is assigned to the action of leading men away from destruction suggests that the optimism is rather forced, being a necessary part of George Eliot's mild, Wordsworthian plan (in which benevolent external Nature may be the agent of human regeneration), rather than fully endorsed by her.
>
> (Ashton, *George Eliot*, p.48)

If Rosemary Ashton's interpretation is right, George Eliot has compromised her own sense of realism in order to fit in with a predetermined 'Wordsworthian plan'.[20]

But George Eliot said that Silas could only understand Eppie's presence with a sense of mystery. For, as George Eliot explained concerning Silas initially: 'his imagination had not yet extricated itself from the sense of mystery in the child's sudden presence, and had formed no ordinary means by which the event could have been brought about' - and it is as if neither the past, which Silas had before consciously 'thrust away', nor the literal truth in the rationalization of her presence is important. The factual explanation of the event is not significant when set against the *true* feelings which the event sets in motion. The similarity of shared language between George Eliot and Wordsworth belies the contrast. Wordsworth's poetic medium accords him a form for his language which enables him to expand and extend the metaphysical world. But for George Eliot, concerned with the realist novel, her aim is to make the metaphysical and transcendental aspects of human life 'incarnate'.

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[20] Yet in a letter to Blackwood George Eliot emphasized the point that she had abandonned the project of *Silas Marner* as a 'legendary tale' in her pursuit of 'a more realistic treatment' (Cross, p.334).

The 'ordinary means' by which the felt miracle is brought about do not, as Rosemary Ashton suggests, devalue the mystery: on the contrary the miracle transforms the ordinary means. In a now famous letter to Frederic Harrison, George Eliot describes her aims as: 'the severe effort of trying to make certain ideas thoroughly incarnate, as if they had revealed themselves to me first in the flesh and not in the spirit' (Cross, pp.401-402). In the light of this letter, the imagery which George Eliot used to describe Silas being led away from destruction does not suggest an 'unusual optimism' but ties in with her consistent convictions expressed in real physical movements. George Eliot states that the hand that leads 'may be a little child's' but, in a different version, in 'Janet's Repentence' the hand leading Janet is Mr Tryan's. Janet has been thrown out by her husband and from Mrs Pettifer's house sends for Mr Tryan to come and help her. Here George Eliot describes the parting between Mr Tryan and Janet Dempster:

> Mr Tryan rose and held out his hand. Janet took it and said, 'God has been very good to me in sending you to me. I will trust in him. I will try to do everything you tell me.'
> Blessed influence of one true loving human soul on another! Not calculable by algebra, not deducible by logic, but mysterious, effectual, mighty as the hidden process by which the tiny seed is quickened and bursts forth into tall stem and broad leaf, and glowing tasselled flower. Ideas are often poor ghosts; our sun-filled eyes cannot discern them; they pass athwart us in thin vapour, and cannot make themselves felt. But sometimes they are made flesh; they breath upon us with warm breath, they touch us with soft responsive hands, they look at us with sad sincere eyes and speak to us in appealing tones; they are clothed in a living human soul, with all its conflicts, its faith, and its love. Then their presence is a power, then they shake us like a passion, and we are drawn after them with gentle compulsion, as flame is drawn to flame. ('Janet's Repentance', p.364)

If close attention is, once more, paid to George Eliot's use of language it is clear how this scene mirrors her concerns in her letter to Frederic Harrison. In that letter she wrote of 'making ideas thoroughly incarnate, as if they had revealed themselves to me first in the flesh and not in the spirit', and here she writes of Mr Tryan: 'ideas are often poor ghosts [...] but sometimes they are made flesh'. George Eliot's realism is the double life of the apparently ordinary filled with the incarnately spiritual.

Both Eppie and Mr Tryan bring out the best aspects of Silas and Janet. But their respective relations are beyond subjective Feuerbachian projection. For objectively, without knowing it, Eppie and Tryan are both good beings in their own right. In the

complex world within which George Eliot operates, both Janet's and Mr Tryan's personal and larger needs intermingle and become difficult to unravel. For whilst Mr Tryan is glad to be of help to Janet, equally, his own rejuvenation rests in Janet's grateful friendship towards him so that causes and effects are beyond simple tracings and calculations.[21]

What Eppie's relation to Silas Marner illustrates - even more than Mr Tryan who, unlike the child, has his own conscious reasons and motives in wanting to save Janet from falling - is George Eliot's own belief that there is some *other* reality which creatures themselves do not merely create. In the innocent, unwitting child who is given to Silas - he believes as a gift of God - George Eliot presents the final transcendence of goodness, transcending knowledge even by the possessor of it. Eppie is like a living embodiment of the mercy with which Dorothea consciously approached Casaubon. But where Dorothea had to use her knowledge to implement the idea of mercy, in Eppie the abstract concept is naturally incarnate.

Furthermore it is essential that at the close of the novel George Eliot thoroughly *tests* the power of that other reality (called Love or Goodness) which Eppie represents and which underpins Silas's whole relation to her. The claims of Eppie's wealthy biological father are set against the claims of her poor adoptive father. Godfrey tries to persuade Silas that he would be unfair to Eppie to deny her her rightful parentage and inheritance:

> 'You're putting yourself in the way of her welfare; and though I'm sorry to hurt you after what you've done, and what I've left undone, I feel now it's my duty to insist on taking care of my own daughter. I want to do my duty.'
>
> It would be difficult to say whether it were Silas or Eppie that was more deeply stirred by this last speech of Godfrey's. Thought had been very busy in Eppie as she listened to the contest between her old long-loved father and this new unfamiliar father who had suddenly come to fill the place of that black

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[21] This is the point which Mirah asserts in *Daniel Deronda* after Daniel has saved her from suicide and placed her in Mrs Meyrick's safe care: 'The dainty neatness of her hair and her dress, the glow of tranquil happiness in a face where a painter need have changed nothing if he had wanted to put in front if it the host singing 'peace on earth and goodwill to all men,' made a contrast to his first vision of her that was delightful to Deronda's eyes. "See how different I am from that miserable creature by the river - all because you found me and brought me to the very best." "It was my good chance to find you," said Deronda. "Any other man would have been glad to do what I did." "That is not the right way of thinking about it," said Mirah, shaking her head with decisive gravity. "I think of what really was. It was you, and not another, who found me and were good to me." "I agree with Mirah," said Mrs Meryick. "Saint Anybody is a bad saint to pray to"' (*Deronda*, p.419).

> featureless shadow which had held the ring and placed it on her mother's finger. Her imagination had darted backward in conjectures, and forward in previsions, of what this revealed fatherhood implied; and there were words in Godfrey's last speech which helped to make the previsions especially definite. Not that these thoughts, either of past or future, determined her resolution - *that* was determined by the feelings which vibrated to every word Silas had uttered; but they raised, even apart from these feelings a repulsion towards the offered lot and the newly-revealed father. (*Silas Marner*, p.232)

This is the point at which in a Hardy novel such as *The Mayor of Casterbridge,* the whole repetitive cycle of loss might start up again. In this case that outcome is resisted for Silas if not for Godfrey. For in the same moment that Eppie mentally evaluates the two fathers before her, considering the past that could have been and the memories of her early life with Marner, and pondering the two possible futures available to her, her resolution to stay with Marner is *already* 'determined'. Godfrey expects a return of feeling from Eppie in the immediate present, judging his past denial of his child as if it were a bare, static fact. He refuses to recognize the importance of emotional father-and-daughter bonds which Silas and Eppie have together developed over a long period of sheer time. Typically of Godfrey's nature, his own needs and desires are confused with the sense of what would be best for Eppie's welfare. Silas, in contrast, genuinely loving Eppie, recognizes that she has distinct needs apart from his own. Whilst Eppie came to him as his salvation (seemingly in place of the gold), Silas must trust in the faith which she herself restored, by being prepared to let her go freely if she wishes to. Eppie's fixed resolve to stay is an independent affirmation of Silas's restored faith. She stays loyal to her true time, despite her imagination of a past and future in another possible future, Godfrey's.

I have argued that what George Eliot is offering is a more than secular version of Hutton's 'double life'. For in *Silas Marner* the double life, unlike the Feuerbachian idea of double consciousness, is not created by a person from within: it is given. In contrast in *Romola*, George Eliot's next novel after *Silas Marner*, she is concerned precisely with the inherent weaknesses and extreme difficulties of creating an inward tradition - difficulties that only a Romola or a Dorothea can (barely) overcome.

It would be wrong to suggest that the concept of a double life meant essentially the same thing to George Eliot as it did to R.H. Hutton, a traditional Christian

believer who understood the double life in terms of his connection to God. But in *Silas Marner* the double life is clearly concerned with both an individual's life and his sense of Life as something truly external and other, given, and given from a source which is not entirely reliant on the consciousness of the giver, such as Eppie. Silas understands the double life as the restored sense of 'some Power presiding over his life'. What is for Hutton God, is for George Eliot a mysterious force - a power which, whatever its origin, is other, and more than the external projection of human qualities.

This chapter thus raises issues concerning George Eliot's most strongly held convictions on her journey to *Daniel Deronda*. My next chapter will be concerned with addressing the respective challenges offered to George Eliot's complicatedly religious-humanist position from both Arthur Hugh Clough and Thomas Hardy.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHALLENGE OF UNBELIEF

I. Dipsychus and Overspecialization

I propose offering in this chapter two major Victorian writers whose work acts as a challenge to the beliefs that George Eliot strugglingly represented. Arthur Hugh Clough's *Dipsychus*, written in 1850 but unknown until published in America in 1862, nonetheless exists as a haunting, sceptical and secretly undermining presence beneath the foundations of Victorian Literature.[1] Later in the period Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1896) presents a harsher, more aggressively pessimistic challenge to the beliefs of liberal humanism, out of which George Eliot was fighting, as we have seen, for increasingly stronger forms of faith. Both Dipsychus and Jude will be considered as individuals, representing thought-experiments, in relation to that other struggling young man, George Eliot's Daniel Deronda. I turn first to Clough.

In 'Progress: Its Law and Cause' Herbert Spencer evaluated the evolutionary development of societies on the basis of increasing differentiation and specialization. Progress can be assessed, Spencer argued, by studying the movement from homogeneity to heterogeneity in all aspects of life: art, language, dance, poetry, and music.

> Without pointing out in detail the increasing complexity that resulted from introducing notes of various lengths, from the multiplication of keys, from the use of accidentals, from varieties of time, and so forth, it needs but to contrast music as it is, with music as it was, to see how immense the increase of heterogeneity. We see this if, looking at music in its *ensemble*, we enumerate its many different genera and species - if we consider the divisions into vocal, instrumental and mixed; and their subdivisions into music for different voices and different instruments - if we observe the many forms of sacred music, from the simple hymn, the chant, the canon, motet, anthem, etc., up to the oratorio; and

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[1] Having read Clough's obituary notices, George Eliot recorded (in a letter to Mrs Congreve, February 27 1862): 'I was much pleased with the affectionate respect that was expressed in all the notices of Mr Clough that I happened to see in the newspapers. They were an indication that there must be a great deal of private sympathy to soothe Mrs Clough, if any soothing is possible in such cases. That little poem of his which was quoted in *The Spectator* about parted friendships touched me deeply' (*Letters*, IV (1956), p.17. Haight's footnote to this letter records that both 'Qua Cursum Ventus' and 'Say Not the Struggle Naught Availeth' were printed in *The Spectator*, November 1861. George Eliot is referring to the latter, published posthumously in 1862.

> the still more numerous forms of secular music, from the ballad up to the serenata, from the instrumental solo up to the symphony.[2]

As it was in music, in the shift from simple melody to counterpoint, so too, as I shall show later, it was in the evolution of a complex syntax - the mind developing a conscious complexity beyond simple propositional or narrative sequence.[3] Whilst Spencer writes enthusiastically about the gains of specialization, in terms of that complexity of multiplication, division and subdivision which have resulted from the progress of evolution, Arthur Hugh Clough was more sceptical concerning the relative losses incurred even thus by mankind. To Clough, men have become detached from their old instinctive single selves and, instead, have been merely absorbed into the evolving complexities of sweeping social change. In *Dipsychus*, Clough has Dipsychus say:

> Ah, if I had a course like a full stream,
> If life were as the field of chase! No, no;
> The age of instinct has, it seems, gone by,
> And will not be forced back. And to live now
> I must sluice myself out into canals,
> And lose all force in ducts. The modern Hotspur
> Shrills not his trumpet of 'To Horse, To Horse!'
> But consults columns in a railway guide;
> A demigod of figures; an Achilles
> Of computation;
> A verier Mercury, express come down
> To *do* the world with swift arithmetic.[4]

'And to live now', laments Dipsychus, as if the very word *live* were a bitter irony in an age dominated by columns of figures.[5] The force of society's development is

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2 Herbert Spencer, 'Progress: Its Law and Cause', first published 1857 in *The Westminster Review, Essays on Education* (London: Dent, 1910), p.173: hereafter cited as 'Spencer'.

3 Spencer met Clough whilst on holiday at Achranich: 'His face had a weary expression which seemed to imply either chronic physical discomfort or chronic mental depression - an apparent depression which suggested the thought that he was oppressed by consciousness of the mystery of things' (*An Autobiography* 2 vols (London: Williams & Norgate, 1904), II, 62).

4 *Dipsychus*, in *The Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough*, ed. by H.F. Lowry, A.L.P. Norrington & F.L. Mulhauser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), pp.218-299, (p.271), 10.103. This edition is also used for Clough's *Amours de Voyage* (pp.94-133): hereafter *Dipsychus* and *Amours* are cited in the text.

5 Of Clough's scientific knowledge, Robindra Kumar Biswas states: 'Mechanism was a spectre which he was horrified by, but always attempted to disprove. He was much more sympathetic towards, and at home with, pre-Darwinian concepts of evolution, geological and biological, which supported, as they were supported by, the evolutionary ideas of the philosophers and historians' (*Arthur Hugh Clough: Towards a Reconsideration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p.137).

matched only by an ironically crude narrowing of scope for the individual self so that the 'full stream' of life is reductively divided into 'canals' and 'ducts'. Men have become an extension of the machinery of industrialism, yet, cruelly, they still have to think, bearing a separated and developed consciousness which prevents them from being painlessly oblivious of their situation.

Dipsychus is ever looking back to historical examples for guidance. He praises Napoleon's ability to wait for the particular moment in time at which action might be put to most effect, hoping to justify his own patience:

> I see Napoleon on the heights, intent
> To arrest that one brief unit of loose time
> Which hands high Victory's thread; his Marshals fret,
> His soldiers clamour low: the very guns
> Seem going off of themselves; the cannon strain
> Like hell-dogs in the leash. But he, he waits;
> And lesser chances and inferior hopes
> Meantime go pouring past.
>
> (*Dipsychus*, 10.45)

It is finally instinct which prompts Napoleon's action:

> And though the hunter looks before he leap,
> 'Tis instinct rather than a shaped-out thought
> That lifts him his bold way. Then, instinct, hail,
> And farewell hesitation!
>
> (*Dipsychus*, 10.97)

Napoleon was capable of exercising a balance between evolved hesitation and instinct. But such modification of instinct, as Herbert Spencer might endorse, creates problems in men such as Dipsychus. Thomas Carlyle wrote of Napoleon in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*:

> He, as every man that can be great or have victory in this world, sees, through all the entanglements, the practical heart of the matter; drives straight towards that.[6]

Where Napoleon could act instinctively and boldly upon his own judgement and go straight to the heart or goal of affairs, Dipsychus is dominated by hesitation, always acutely aware of the multiple concerns of shaped-out thought in a syntax which is far

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[6] Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (London: Ward Lock, 1841), p.314.

from straight-forward either logically or in terms of narrative. He finds himself mentally entangled, and his entanglement is reflected in the complex, over-evolved style of Clough's clauses:

> Action is what one must get, it is clear,
> And one could dream it better than one finds,
> In its kind personal, in its motive not;
> Not selfish as it now is, nor as now
> Maiming the individual. If we had that,
> It would cure all indeed. Oh, how would then
> These pitiful rebellions of the flesh,
> These caterwaulings of the effeminate heart,
> These hurts of self-imagined dignity,
> Pass like seaweed from about the bows
> Of a great vessel speeding straight to sea!
> Yes, if we could have that; but I suppose
> We shall not have it, and therefore I submit.
> (*Dipsychus* 10.147)

The ideal of vocation and service, sketched out in the first of Clough's five lines, is (so to speak) progressively undermined by his use of conditional clauses. The necessity for action ('*must*') turns into the problem of how to choose a vocation without the foundation of belief: '*if* we had that, | It *would* cure all indeed', '*if* we *could* have that; *but I suppose* | We *shall not* have it'. Clough's syntax is always concerned with revealing the snags, the 'ifs' and 'buts' of second thoughts which serve only to launch purely hypothetical conditionals or prohibit direct action.

In *Daniel Deronda*, Daniel himself is a highly evolved representative of development who is becoming all too like Clough's Dipsychus. Daniel likewise craves a form of action which goes beyond the personal life: 'the blending of a complete personal love in one current with a larger duty' (*Deronda*, p.685). But his difficulty is how to attain his ideal without a given means of purpose having been revealed to him:

> To make a little difference for the better was what he was not contented to live without; but how make it? It is one thing to see your road, another to cut it. He had found some of the fault in his birth and the way he had been brought up, which had laid no special demands on him and given him no fixed relations except of a doubtful kind; but he did not attempt to hide from himself that he had fallen into a meditative numbness, and was gliding farther and farther from that life of practically energetic sentiment which he would have proclaimed (if he had been inclined to proclaim anything) to be the best of all life, and for himself the only life worth living. (*Deronda*, pp.413-414)

Deronda is in danger of sliding into a listlessness where he becomes too mentally entangled, like Clough's *Dipsychus*, turning round upon himself repeatedly. George Eliot shows this syntactically: 'to make a little difference for the better was what he was not contented to live without; but how make it?' Using clauses in a prose syntax very like Clough's own poetic style, George Eliot illustrates how Deronda's first determined self-asserting statement is undone by a second clause behind it - '*but* how make it?' Similarly, a bracket undermines the conditional possibility: 'that life of practically energetic sentiment which he *would* have proclaimed (*if* he had been inclined to proclaim anything)'.[7] The inward need for action is not met by the required outer realization of a given path.

Whilst waiting to meet his mother for the first time, Daniel finds himself overcome by mood swings:

> struggling under the oppressive scepticism which represented his particular lot, with all the importance he was allowing Mordecai to give it, as of no more lasting effect than a dream - a set of changes - a set of changes which made passion to him, but beyond his consciousness were no more than an imperceptible difference of mass or shadow. (*Deronda*, p.685)

Daniel's problem lies in his would-be objective concern that he might be allowing himself, too subjectively, to be swept along by his emotions and by his inner desire for a worthwhile place in the outside world. But in *Middlemarch* George Eliot states:

> Scepticism, as we know, can never be thoroughly applied, else life would come to a standstill: something we must believe in and do, and whatever that something may be called, it is virtually our own judgement, even when it seems like the most slavish reliance on another. (*Middlemarch*, p.272)

Daniel needs to escape from the Cloughian position of a sceptical standstill but, equally, he cannot afford to be too reactively hasty and blindly or desperately fool-hardy. George Eliot was not sympathetic to Clough's general sentiments as a poet. In her notes on *The Spanish Gypsy* she writes:

> That favourite view, expressed so often in Clough's poems, of doing duty in blindness as to the result, is likely to deepen the substitution of egoistic yearnings

[7] A further close examination of George Eliot's syntax in relation to the richness of her writing will be rendered in Chapter Five.

> for really moral impulses. We cannot be utterly blind to the results of duty, since that cannot be duty which is not already judged to be for human good. To say the contrary, is to say that mankind have reached no inductions as to what is for their good or evil. (Cross, p.427)

Clough's blindness is a result of his despairing scepticism as to the possibility of seeing anything clearly.

Even when Daniel has been recognized by Mordecai and finds himself tempted and attracted by the claims which Mordecai offers, Daniel remains deeply sceptical. It takes a long while for Daniel to overcome his doubts, whilst he waits for further substantiation of Mordecai's claims, all the time still questioning his own emotional needs and motives for half-wanting to be a Jew. After all, Mordecai might simply be a religious fanatic:

> He knew quite accurately the answer Sir Hugo would have given: 'A consumptive Jew, possessed by a fanaticism which obstacles and hastening death intensified, had fixed on Deronda as the anti-type of some visionary image, the offspring of wedded hope and despair: despair in his own life, irrepressible hope in the propogation of his fanatical beliefs.' [...] Deronda's ear caught all these negative whisperings; nay, he repeated them distinctly to himself.
> (*Deronda*, p.568)

If Daniel is to be judicious, instead of being swept along by the tempting desire to accept Mordecai's claims, he must not merely silence the other doubting voices. When Daniel imagines Sir Hugo's response to Mordecai this is not 'slavish reliance' but an attempt to introduce other thoughts in opposition to his own feelings and thus gain a measure of distance and objectivity in relation to his situation.

In Arthur Hugh Clough's work this effort to escape from the trap of one's own subjective need manifests itself in his protagonists as a frustrating double-mindedness which is both destabilizing and disruptive. In *Amours de Voyage*, for example, Claude suddenly and unexpectedly hears a psalm-tune. It comforts him and moves him to tears, but he writes:

> Almost I could believe I had gained religious assurance,
> Formed in my own poor soul a great moral basis to rest on.
> Ah, but indeed I see, I feel it factitious entirely;
> I refuse, reject, and put it utterly from me;
> I will look straight out, see things, not try to
> evade them;
> Fact shall be fact for me; and the Truth the Truth as
> ever,

Flexible, changeable, vague, and multiform and doubtful.-
Off, and depart to the void, thou subtle fanatical tempter!
(*Amours*, 5.5.96)

Where Daniel runs the risk that Mordecai could be a religious fanatic, Claude's own feelings may themselves be a devilishly fanatical temptation inside him. Claude cannot trust that the effect which the music has upon his unconscious mind is true; he can only mentally analyse his feelings and counter them with an intense intellectual distrust. If ever there was any basic religious truth underlining the psalm-tune, Claude thinks that it is too late for him now, in the story of history and evolution, to recover it. For in Clough's view, Truth can only be understood as temporary, shifting and constantly revised in time: 'flexible, changeable, vague and multiform and doubtful'.

Deronda differs from Clough's models because he is finally prepared to take a desperate personal risk with regard to another person:

> His nature was too large, too ready to conceive regions beyond his own experience, to rest at once in the easy explanation, 'madness,' whenever a consciousness showed some fulness and conviction where his own was blank. It accorded with his habitual disposition that he should meet rather than resist any claim on him in the shape of another's need; and this claim brought with it a sense of solemnity which seemed a radiation from Mordecai, as utterly nullifying his outward poverty and lifting him into authority as if he had been that preternatural guide seen in the universal legend, who suddenly drops his disguise and stands a manifest Power. (*Deronda*, p.551)

The first half of this paragraph is concerned with Deronda's best efforts towards Mordecai as an aspect of his 'habitual disposition': it is a characteristic of the generosity in his self-scepticism that he should always answer 'another's need'. However, after the semi-colon, in the second half of the passage there is a change of direction. It is not so much the power of sympathetic imagination inside Deronda which transforms Mordecai into a guide, but the real force of powerful emanations from Mordecai, outside, that seem to reach towards Deronda's own inner needs - the 'blank' in his consciousness.

Daniel recognizes that he faces a dangerous gamble either way with regard to Mordecai. For whilst Daniel is aware that Sir Hugo's fears do have a basis - ninety-nine times out of a hundred a man such as Mordecai will be a madman or charlatan - there is always that one chance of meeting or missing a genius. If Daniel chooses to ignore Mordecai he might be rejecting another Galileo, Copernicus or Columbus:

> That young energy and spirit of adventure which have helped to create the world-wide legends of youthful heroes going to seek the hidden tokens of their birth and its inheritance tasks, gave him a certain quivering interest in the bare possibility that he was entering on a like track - all the more because the track was one of thought as well as action. (*Deronda*, pp.573-574)

Daniel finds himself moved inwardly, physically 'quivering' with the idea that Mordecai might have a real bearing on his life in terms of what his vocation will be. For physically, unbeknownst to him as yet, Deronda is a Jew. To Dipsychus such a chance of vocation would still only be a doubtful rather than a bare possibility:

> 'Tis gone, the fierce inordinate desire,
> The burning thirst for Action - utterly;
> Gone, like a ship that passes in the night
> On the high seas; gone, yet will return again.
> Gone, yet expresses something that exists.
> Is it a thing ordained, then? is it a clue
> For my life's conduct? is it a law for me
> That opportunity shall breed distrust,
> Not passing until that pass? Chance and resolve,
> Like two loose comets wandering wide in space,
> Crossing each other's orbits time on time,
> Meet never. Void indifference and doubt
> Let through the present boon, which ne'er turns back
> To await the after sure-arriving wish. (*Dipsychus*, 12.1)

Dipsychus's great problem is synchronization: he can only sense a real opportunity for action *after* it is too late to grasp it; he is unable to break-out of an habitually circular motion of opportunity, doubt and then regret. Clough himself, of course, shared the personal intellect-based difficulties which he expresses through Dipsychus. In 'Notes on the Religious Tradition' he wrote:

> Where then, since neither in Rationalism nor in Rome is our refuge, where then shall we seek for the Religious Tradition?
>
> Everywhere: but above all in our own work: in life, in action, in submission, so far as action goes, in service, in experience, in patience and in confidence. I would scarcely have any man dare to say that he has found it, till that moment when death removes the power of telling it.[8]

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[8] 'Notes on the Religious Tradition', in *Religious Controversies of the Nineteenth-Century: Selected Documents*, ed. by A.O.J. Cockshut (London: Methuen, 1966), pp.116-119, (p.118): hereafter cited as 'Notes on Tradition'.

Daniel has to 'dare to say' of religious tradition that he may have 'found it'. He cannot bear silence until death makes everything too late even if known. But Clough, in contrast, cannot bring himself arbitrarily to make a choice between one system of beliefs and another. Like his Dipsychus, Clough can only defer action, all the while remaining conscious that to wait in time is not a position he can entirely sustain yet for which there seems no alternative. What he needed in order to act was the old God-given certainty, the true knowledge of human actions beforehand. But in Clough's view of modern man objective knowledge is only available, if at all, back-to-front, only after it is probably too late to act upon it.

*

The doubts which preoccupied Arthur Hugh Clough with regard to Truth, objective Knowledge and reality, have become manifest, almost as descendents of Clough's sceptical concerns, in modern criticism of George Eliot's work. Colin MacCabe for example disputes 'the conviction that the real can be displayed and examined through a perfectly transparent language' in George Eliot's novels. He argues that she uses the deceptive authority of apparently mimetic prose to represent reality, claiming that this is 'a very common strategy in realist novels of the nineteenth-century'. For critics like Colin MacCabe, George Eliot's conviction in presenting and testing her ideas within the framework of what she herself proclaimed to be realistic writing, is inextricably linked to her use of a dubiously persuasive strategy. Stephen Heath states:

> Realism then, as it has come to be understood in connection with the novel, is always grasped finally in terms of some notion of the representation of 'Reality', which is reflected in the literary work as a mirror. [...] No problem is posed by saying that the account is to be a *realistic* account and indeed it is precisely this that prevents the recognition of any problem.[9]

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[9] 'The End of a Metalanguage: From George Eliot to *Dubliners* (*Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*)', *George Eliot*, ed. by K.M. Newton (New York: Longmans, 1991), pp.160, 162, 6. Essays from this collection hereafter cited as 'Newton'.

In Heath's opinion, merely saying that a novel is realistic is an untrustworthy, naive stance which distracts the reader from the fact that novels are above all works of fiction and ideology. I am arguing that *Daniel Deronda* is a book whose dominant concern is the great personal risk which Deronda must undertake in an endeavour towards finding true belief in the midst of a real reality. What George Eliot does equivalently is to use her novelistic vision to test the reality of belief in an attempted representation of the real world.

Daniel's idea of himself as an English gentleman is, although he cannot know it immediately, fictitious. In the following scene Daniel tries to alter his perspective in an endeavour to consider less subjectively who he is:

> He lay with his hands behind his head propped on a level with the boat's edge, so that he could see all around him, but could not be seen by any one at a few yards' distance; and for a long while he never turned his eyes from the view right in front of him. He was forgetting everything else in a half-speculative, half-involuntary identification of himself with the objects he was looking at, thinking how far it might be possible habitually to shift his centre till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape. (*Deronda*, p.229)

Daniel muses *half*-speculatively and *half*-involuntarily for his personality and his being are not yet internalized as one whole person. The possibility that Daniel might discover the secret of his personality by projecting himself outside is considered, but George Eliot had already shown in *Silas Marner* that such lonely projection is inadequate. Silas Marner's rejuvenation was concerned with his real relation to Eppie and, likewise, in *Daniel Deronda*, Daniel needs to find relation with a real, external figure outside.

Deronda is jolted from his meditations to save Mirah from suicide. Daniel rescues Mirah ahead of his experience with Mordecai, before knowing that he is himself Jewish. Whilst he thinks immediately of Mirah's situation in relation to his own mother ('Great God!' [...] 'perhaps my mother was like this one') he does not for a moment consider the possibility that his mother might have been a Jewess (*Deronda*, p.231). Characteristically of George Eliot, it is only afterwards, in the context of time and experience, that Deronda will understand his first encounter with Mirah as a part of a predestined future. But it is precisely because Mirah has moved

him on a personal level that Deronda begins now to consider Judaism as something *real* in the lives of others:

> Deronda, like his neighbours, had regarded Judaism as a sort of eccentric fossilised form, which an accomplished man might dispense with studying, and leave to specialists. But Mirah, with her terrified flight from one parent, and her yearning after the other, had flashed on him the hitherto neglected reality that Judaism was something still throbbing in human lives. (*Deronda*, p.411)

Deronda's vision is beginning to change, broadening out against the confiningly false reality of his present shape, as if in preparation for his life to come. But Deronda still needs a person outside who, crucially, acts at a different level from the personal as an identifier. He needs to be *recognized* by Mordecai:

> The strange Jew rose from his sitting posture, and Deronda felt a thin hand pressing his arm tightly, while a hoarse, excited voice, not much above a loud whisper, said -
> 'You are perhaps of our race?' (*Deronda*, p.437)

Daniel's characteristics are recognized by Mordecai as those of the ideal Jewish type, beginning to confirm that Deronda's Jewishness is real, fixed in him both biologically and racially. [10]

However, even a traditionalist critic such as A.O.J. Cockshut argues that events like Daniel's rescue of Mirah and Mordecai's recognition of Daniel undermine George Eliot's claims to realism. He argues that in *Daniel Deronda* there is 'an extra-ordinary reliance on coincidence [which is] unparalleled in George Eliot's work'. Mordecai, for example, 'meets Deronda by pure chance, because Deronda has been able to save a girl from drowning in the Thames'.[11] George Eliot's realism is vitiated, Cockshut

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[10] By the time George Eliot came to write *Daniel Deronda* she was openly dubious of the usefulness of Spinoza as a comprehensive approach to human life. She writes: '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. [...] We must be patient with the inevitable make-shift of our human thinking, whether in its sum total or in the separate minds that have made the sum' (*Daniel Deronda*, p.572). In *George Eliot and Judaism* (Salsburg: Salsburg University, 1975), William Baker argues that the work which George Eliot carries out concerning Mordecai within the framework of *Daniel Deronda* stems from her awareness of Spinoza's limitations set against Mordecai's belief (p.205).

[11] A.O.J.Cockshut, *The Unbelievers: English Agnostic Thought 1840-1890* (London: Collins, 1964), pp.54, 56.

asserts, by her desperate recourse to a divine providence in which she did not truly believe. But I am asserting that *Daniel Deronda* is not a novel concerned with chance coincidence but is a novel that risks believing it rather to be predetermination. This proposition is established even in the opening pages of the novel with the first recognition between Deronda and Gwendolen at the gaming table:

> Her eyes met Deronda's, and instead of averting them as she would have desired to do, she was unpleasantly conscious that they were arrested - how long? The darting sense that he was measuring her and looking down on her as an inferior, that he was of different quality from the human dross around her, that he felt himself in a region outside and above her, and was examining her as a specimen of a lower order, roused a tingling resentment which stretched the moment with conflict. (*Deronda*, p.38)

Gwendolen finds herself transfixed involuntarily by Deronda. Her desire to look away from Deronda's gaze is 'unpleasantly arrested' in anticipation of the influence that Deronda will exert on her as the plot unfolds, calling Gwendolen to obedience in the face of her need and inadequacy. There is a force in their attraction which is other than sexual and ahead of life's apparently real narrative in this book. Daniel and Gwendolen *recognize* each other, just as later Mordecai recognizes Deronda. Gwendolen interprets the meaning of Daniel's expression in terms of a judgement on her, and believes that he is 'of different quality from the human dross around her', even *before* they know each other and without anything happening. The relation between Gwendolen and Daniel which is established early on in the novel dictates that, later, Daniel's fate cannot be freely given or decided by easy coincidence as Cockshut suggests. For as the novel develops Daniel has to reorder his life on the basis of new priorities. He must test the reality of Mordecai's claims set against the imploring dependence of Gwendolen, and finally still make the agonizing *choice* between two lives - the personal, represented on the one side by Gwendolen, and the impersonal religious life represented by Mordecai on the other.

Daniel Deronda and Fedalma in *The Spanish Gypsy* are clearly connected in the development of George Eliot's thinking as a novelist. Fedalma, the stolen offspring of a gypsy tribe, feels the pull of her own ancestral life as she examines a strangely powerful gold gypsy-necklace. She, like Daniel, struggles with a sense of deep interior promptings without any external proof yet in need of such confirmation:

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Perhaps I lived before
In some strange world where my first soul was shaped,
And that this passionate love, and joy, and pain,
That come, I know not whence, and sway my deeds,
Are old imperious memories, blind yet strong,
That this world stirs within me; as this chain
Stirs some strange certainty of visions gone,
And all my mind is an eye that stares
Into the darkness painfully.
(*The Spanish Gyspy*, *Collected Poems*, p.281)

Fedalma becomes suddenly conscious that, inwardly, she is different from the external social shape in which her life has been remoulded. Her chain represents a real physical link with her own past history which previously she had recalled only in dreams. But Fedalma still needs the external force of Zarca, her father, to give clarity and explanation to her vaguely formed visions - otherwise she will be no more than Romola or Dorothea, struggling for definition:

Why does he look at her? Why she at him?
As if the meeting light between their eyes
Made a permanent union? His deep-knit brow,
Inflated nostril, scornful lip compressed,
Seem a dark hieroglyph of coming fate
Written before her.
(*The Spanish Gypsy*, *Collected Poems*, p.250)

Fedalma is properly reunited with her 'first soul' only by being recognized by her father, as Deronda is recognized by Mordecai. Her reconnection to her true origin is a sort of home-coming, for the 'permanent union' between Zarca and Fedalma is made so by both biological and racial bonds. She sees herself externalized in Zarca's features as he sees himself in her. Daniel's being reunited with his inheritance is presented, in similar terms to those used in relation to Fedalma, as a spiritual home-coming: 'It was as if he had found an added soul in finding his ancestry' (*Deronda*, p.814). But Daniel's inheritance is thus an addition not only in terms of a deeper inner dimension within Daniel but also as a newly discovered extension of the self through his union with Mordecai. In accordance with the mystic doctrine of the Cabbala, Mordecai's death will not be a bitter and ignoble end but the beginning of a second life which continues the first. Daniel tells Mordecai that it is their bond which restores him to his true self:

> 'It is through your inspiration that I have discerned what may be my life's task. It is you who have given shape to what, I believe, was an inherited yearning - the effect of brooding, passionate thoughts in many ancestors - thoughts that seem to have been intensely present in my grandfather.' (*Deronda*, p.819)

Deronda is a believer, finally reclaimed by deeper sources already inside him. He is given shape after he learns that he is a Jew. Daniel's sense of being a misfit is then understood in terms of his unconsciously having lost his original place. Deronda's feelings themselves gain reality from a recognition of their being inherited forms of life. Thus Deronda and Fedalma share in common the force of a mission which historically precedes them yet which, biological within them, is tacitly waiting to be fulfilled by them: a life which is predetermined and not arbitrarily chosen but given. There is no such equivalent sense of the 'given' in Clough's work.

Deronda discovers that his life has been predetermined only after he takes the personal risk of believing in Mordecai. But Daniel could not have known the outcome of his actions beforehand as Clough might require. In *Amours de Voyage* Claude writes to Eustace:

> Action *will furnish belief*, - but will that belief be the
> true one?
> This is the point, you know. However, it doesn't much
> matter.
> What one wants, I suppose, is to predetermine the action,
> So as to make it entail not a chance-belief, but the true
> one.
> (*Amours*, 5.2.20)

Claude's first proposition ('action *will furnish belief*') is connected to Aristotle's ethical philosophy as well as Christian ideas. Aristotle argued that goodness has a rebounding influence on men who undertake good works, and the effect on them, in turn, reinforces their belief in and capacity for goodness. But, to Claude, such concepts are highly problematic, back-to-front methods of creating factitious belief. Claude fears that should he force himself to act merely for pragmatic purposes, any belief resulting from his actions would not be based on predetermined truth but, instead, would be the result of fictionalizing ('chance-belief').

At the end of George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, Daniel transcends Clough's protagonist. When Daniel goes to retrieve his grandfather's chest he is questioned by

Kalonymos concerning his vocation. Daniel struggles at first to define an answer, but finally replies that his vocation will be his service to the Jewish people:

> 'If there is anything to be done towards restoring or perfecting their common life, I shall make that my vocation.'

After Daniel's declaration, it is George Eliot who explains the underlying processes which result in Deronda's final stance:

> It happened to Deronda at that moment, as it has often happened to others, that the need for speech made an epoch in resolve. His respect for the questioner would not let him decline to answer, and by the necessity to answer he found out the truth for himself. (*Deronda*, p.792)

In this compact paragraph George Eliot offers a moving affirmation that despite the distortion of the self caused by the social shape in which Deronda was raised, the *real* Daniel Deronda always existed. There are objective truths about people that abide, even if circumstances prevent them from being tapped. In Deronda's case it is only under the pressure of external force ('necessity') in relation to Mordecai and here to Kalonymos, that Daniel's re-self-discovery results. Daniel's biological and racial memory is properly found out to exist inside him as deep, residual and involuntary knowledge. Kalonymos's question is a call which demands an answer. In Clough's work such a call would be met by silence. But Daniel is not silent, nor does he defer his answer to a later date; instead, he forces himself to respond and discovers his answer to be strongly motivated by inner promptings (laws that run even deeper than his respectful concern for Kalonymos) which '*would not let him* decline to answer'. Daniel is restored to the truth of his identity and his ancient heritage, firmly-rooted at a practical and a theoretical level.

The key word in relation to Daniel's life is 'epoch', for it denotes that Deronda has been liberated from the modern temporal limbo in which Clough's Dipsychus and Claude remain entrapped. George Eliot had to risk going beyond *Middlemarch* in writing *Daniel Deronda*.

II. *Jude the Obscure*: The Human Cost of Evolution

Thomas Hardy's novels share with Arthur Hugh Clough's poetry features of what would now be called deconstruction: the structure of Hardy's final novel *Jude the Obscure* is constantly turning back on itself through the repetitive outcomes of Jude's life in its constant self-undoing.

In *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, Hardy summarized his intentions in writing *Jude the Obscure* thus:

> The 'grimy' features of the story go to show the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, and the squalid real life he was fated to lead. [...] It is, in fact, to be discovered in everybody's life, though it lies less on the surface than it does in my poor little puppet.[12]

At what became the end of his novelistic career Hardy illustrates, through Jude, that ideals and possibilities are merely illusions. The bitterly grimy structure of his novel, reflected in that embittered self-accusation of puppetry, insists that aspiration and desire, when seen in the light of all that inside a man seeks outer realization and all outside that denies it, are no more than a feeble and deluded hope. In *Jude the Obscure* movement only gives the illusion of a journey when all the while Jude is repetitively turning back upon himself full circle to Christminster. J. Hillis Miller argues that: 'the unconscious human state of illusion is the cause of repetition. It is the cause which drives characters to act as they do and to understand their lives as they do'.[13] We go round and round, as if unable to bear a truth or lack of truth that would end all effort, if we could endure giving up the effort.

Hardy's position, I believe, begins from his implicit dissatisfaction with such ideas as those George Eliot put forward. In *Middlemarch* she famously wrote:

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[12] F.E. Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, first published 1928-30 (London: Macmillan, 1962), p.272: hereafter cited as *Hardy's Life*. In *An Agnostic's Apology*, first published 1876 in *The Fortnightly Review*, Leslie Stephen writes of the religious man's need to remove some of the responsibility from God: 'man must be partly independent of God, or God would be at once pulling the wires and punishing the puppets' (*An Agnostic's Apology and Other Essays*, first published 1893 (Farnborough: Gregg International, 1969), p.21: hereafter cited as 'Stephen'). In *Jude the Obscure* Hardy is himself unsure whether he is the puppet or the puppet-master in imitation of some version of God.

[13] J.Hillis Miller, *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), p.13: hereafter cited as Hillis Miller.

> 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 heartbeat, 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. (*Middlemarch*, p.226)

Where George Eliot holds dear a belief in the moral necessity to extend further our sympathies beyond the natural resistence of our make, already, from Hardy's viewpoint, men are frequently too advanced in sympathies for the unpropitious cosmos they inhabit. To Hardy the emotional and sympathetic qualities of mankind are dangerously out of synchronization with their external conditions:

> A woeful fact - that the human race is too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions, the nerves being evolved to an activity abnormal in such an environment. Even the higher animals are in excess in this respect. It may be questioned if Nature, so far back as when she crossed the line from invertebrates to vertebrates, did not exceed her mission. This planet does not supply the materials for happiness to higher existences. Other planets may, though we can hardly see how. (*Hardy's Life*, p.218)

Evolution itself has developed beings whose nerves are no longer useful in relation to external survival but create mental and emotional problems inside men instead. Evolution betrays the humanist purpose. Thus Jude is a representative of the condition of the human race as a creature 'too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions':

> Growing up brought responsibilities, he found. Events did not rhyme quite as he had thought. Nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for. That mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another sickened his sense of harmony. As you got older, and felt yourself to be at the centre of your time, and not at a point in its circumference, as you had felt when you were little, you were seized with a sort of shuddering, he perceived. All around you there seemed to be something glaring, garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the little cell called your life, and shook it, and warped it.[14]

Hardy's presentation of Jude's life as a bombarded 'cell', both biologically and confiningly, is in stark contrast to George Eliot's description of individuals as 'well-wadded with stupidity'. In George Eliot's view the shift from being the centre of

[14] Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, first published 1896, ed. by C.H. Sisson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.57: further references cited in the text as *Jude*.

one's own personal world to a realization that one is simultaneously on the circumference of another's is a form of moral growth; in Hardy the shift occurs in reverse, from the distanced circumference to the affective centre of pained self-consciousness. Where George Eliot's written narrative is an expansion, the whole form of Hardy's novel is designed to constrict, moving all the time towards overwhelming and entrapping consciousness until death. In Hardy's version of human development, Jude Fawley has come out 'on the other side of silence', hearing all the terrible noises of the world in his head, but lacking in the emotional stamina required to enable him to tolerate his unideal external conditions. He can scarcely bear the intense pressure of his environment, for it is like 'hearing the grass grow'; and hence he suffers, as a result of an over-developed consciousness, the 'noises', 'glares' and 'rattling' of a meaningless external pressure. As an individual Jude is a biological part of the universe but feels consciously out of relation to the organization of the universe as a whole. Jude is at the centre of his own years - growing into consciousness - but in relation to his own age, in terms of the social times around him, Jude is an individual whom John Stuart Mill in *On Liberty* would have considered eccentric. Jude revolts against those laws of nature of which he is a super-evolved product, in a way that though morally superior to nature still means that he is all the more consciously imprisoned within the natural order.

Deronda needed to find the right shape for himself. In lieu of that, what Hardy at least needed was a free space where individuality such as Jude's could exist without being warped by a system, biological as well as social, into which he could not fit. In *On Liberty*, a favourite work of Hardy's, John Stuart Mill deals with this very problem. He suggests a second-order liberal compromise whereby an individual can live his life as he wishes, provided that the welfare of the whole social system is not destroyed for his sole sake.[15] The following excerpt, taken from Mill's chapter entitled

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[15] In contrast to Mill, Sigmund Freud would argue that the restriction of individual liberty and the redrawing of the lines of justice is a necessarily harsh characteristic of civilized societies. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* he writes: 'The liberty of the individual is no gift of civilization. It was greatest before there was any civilization, though then, it is true, it had for the most part no value, since the individual was scarcely in a position to defend it. The development of civilization imposes restrictions on it, and justice demands that no one shall escape those restrictions' (*Civilization, Society and Religion: Group Psychology, Civilization and Its Discontents and Other Works*, The Penguin Freud Library, ed. by Albert Dickson, trans by Angela Richards, 15 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), vol. XII, 284): hereafter cited in the text as 'Freud'.

'The Authority of Society and the Individual', sets out the boundary-considerations which for Jude, throughout the whole course of the novel, are still an area of conflict, but which for Mill are open to rational compromise and accommodation:

> We have a right, also, in various ways, to act upon our unfavourable opinion of anyone, not to the oppression of his individuality, but in the exercise of ours. We are not bound, for example, to seek his society; we have a right to avoid it (though not to parade the avoidance), for we have a right to choose the society most acceptable to us. We have a right, and it may be our duty, to caution others against him if we think his example or conversation likely to have a pernicious effect on those with whom he associates. We may give others a preference over him in optional good offices, except those which tend towards his improvement. In these various modes a person may suffer very severe penalties at the hands of those others for faults which directly concern only himself; but he suffers these penalties only in so far as they are natural and, as it were, the spontaneous consequences of the faults themselves, not because they are purposely inflicted on him for the sake of punishment.[16]

Mill emphasizes that social pressure on an individual is legitimate *not* when it acts as senseless cruelty designed to hurt men but only when it is a necessary and practical measure to sustain a useful social order. Although generally sympathetic with Mill's attempt at a balancing synthesis, in *Jude the Obscure* Hardy illustrates how Mill's vision of a space where individuals can exist without being seen as destructive to the common social order is still practically distorted and narrowed 'for the sake of punishment'. Hardy shows over and over again in *Jude the Obscure* the lack of space available for the expression of one's individuality. Jude and Sue, for example, are ostracized and finally driven out of Aldbrickham by the civilized community. Hardy shows that when commonly-held, deep-seated values are threatened by unconventional individuals, society reacts harshly. Even the forward-looking members of the community (represented by the 'well-meaning and upright man' on Jude's Artisan's Mutual Improvement Society) see a necessity for stability via a 'common standard of *conduct'* (*Jude*, p.374).

Jude naively expected that events in the universe should act in harmony with one another and 'rhyme', but this idea originates from the belief that co-operation and not conflict is the universal law. However, Jude learns that the human need for moral

[16] John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, first published 1859, ed. by Gertrude Himmelfarb (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.144.

codes of behaviour does not coincide with universal laws: 'Nature's logic' is not interchangeable with human logic and principles and is no more congenial than society's.

In his work *Evolution and Ethics* (1893) Thomas Henry Huxley deals precisely with this danger for men too advanced in consciousness and feeling for the world in which they live:

> The constant widening of the intellectual field indefinitely extended the range of that especially human faculty of looking before and after, which adds to the fleeting present those old and those new worlds of the past and the future, wherein men dwell the more higher their culture. But that very sharpening of the sense and that subtle refinement of emotion, which brought such a wealth of pleasures, were fatally attended by a proportional enlargement of the capacity for suffering; and the divine faculty of imagination, while it created new heavens and new earths, provided them with the corresponding hells of futile regret for the past and morbid anxiety for the future.[17]

Huxley's emphasis on 'refinement' eroding the robust and primitive egoistic life-force of mankind by increasing the inner capacity for suffering, is directly related to Hardy's Jude. When Jude is beaten by Farmer Troutman for not scaring away the birds, Hardy writes:

> Though Farmer Troutman had just hurt him, he was a boy who could not himself bear to hurt anything. He had never brought home a nest of young birds without lying awake in misery half the night after, and often reinstating them and the nest in their original place the next morning. He could scarcely bear to see trees cut down or lopped, from a fancy that it hurt them; and late pruning, when the sap was up and the tree bled profusely, had been a positive grief to him in his infancy. This weakness of character, as it may be called, suggested that he was the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life should signify that all was well with him again. (*Jude*, pp.55-56)

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[17] T.H. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1911), pp.51-52: hereafter cited in the text as 'Huxley'. Hardy was familiar with Huxley's work; he also knew Huxley personally: 'For Huxley, Hardy had a liking which grew with the knowledge of him - though that was never great - speaking of him as a man who united a fearless mind with the warmest of hearts and most modest of manners' (*Hardy's Life*, p.122). Further evidence to suggest Hardy had read Huxley's essays exists in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, first published 1891, ed. by David Skilton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985): hereafter cited in the text as *Tess*. Hardy makes reference to Tess's imitation of book-learned Angel Clare. Her speech, says Hardy, was 'paralleled in many a work of the pedigree ranging from the Dictionnaire Philosophique to Huxley's essays' (*Tess*, p.401).

Hardy believes it is an injustice that Jude's strength of sympathy towards others is also his so-called weakness, but there is nothing to appeal to: the future is already inherent in Hardy's narrative which will only repeat an anticipatable pattern. Jude's weakness is almost genetically encoded. In his unnecessary life even the term weakness ('as it may be called') is an anthropomorphism, for there is no essential reason in the universe itself to give names to objects or to deploy human language. In Hardy's view naming and defining everything in human terms is indicative of the force of unnecessary over-evolution. There is no validating language for him, merely names, and there is no secure order of explanation that he can make out.[18]

T.H. Huxley argues against what he saw as Herbert Spencer's over-emphasis on co-operation in evolution. Huxley pointed out that co-operation occurs only after the fiercer side of man's nature has outworn its usefulness as a means of primitive survival:

> For his successive progress throughout the savage state man has been largely indebted to those qualities which he shares with the ape and the tiger; his exceptional physical organization; his cunning, his sociability, his curiousness, and his imitativeness; his ruthless and ferocious destructiveness when his anger is roused by opposition.
>
> But, in proportion as men have passed from anarchy to social organization, and in proportion as civilization has grown in worth, these deeply ingrained serviceable qualities have become defects. After the manner of successful persons, civilized man would gladly kick down the ladder by which he has climbed. He would be only too pleased to see 'the ape and the tiger die' but they decline to suit his convenience; and the unwelcome intrusion of these boon companions of his hot youth into the ranged existence of civil life adds pains and griefs, innumerable and immeasurably great, to those which the cosmic process necessarily brings on the mere animal. (Huxley, p.55)

Huxley's proposition, that men still feel at odds with civil society, implies that they are also in conflict with aspects of their own more primitive nature in the effort to conform to new social norms of behaviour. In *Jude the Obscure* the conflict which

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[18] Gillian Beer discusses Charles Darwin's own difficulties in *The Origin* with regard to using human metaphors to describe the processes of nature: 'One strain in Darwin's temperament - and indeed one major premise of his theory - emphasised the tendency towards happiness in living creatures. But in his recognition of the 'appetite for joy', to use Hardy's phrase, Darwin also saw the extent of suffering which any individual at any time might have to undergo. This was one of the reasons for his rejecting the idea of a benign orderer and it brings about a disturbing oscillation between anthropomorphic and abstract senses within a word' (Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, p.68). From Hardy's viewpoint, Darwin himself might be seen as a product of over-evolution by attempting to attribute human qualities to a natural order that is unregarding of human suffering.

Huxley describes between the civil life of humans and the animal in man is one of which Hardy is acutely conscious. Hardy is affected by the irony which Huxley exposes: that 'serviceable qualities' of evolutionary ape and tiger ancestors, which men seek to destroy in themselves, are the very aspects of human nature which secured a 'successive progress' of the human race throughout the ages.

The strongest remaining primitive instinct in Jude is the sexual instinct, yet this is not strong or ruthless enough to free him from the more civilized constraints of love and human consideration. However, nor is the primitive sex instinct sufficiently weak, Hardy shows, to allow Jude to stay free of sexual entanglements. Jude finds that the only way to make his ancient biological self compatible with ethical civil life is by a form of repressive misshaping of the self. In Jude's awkward and complicated relationship with Sue Bridehead, his sexual desire for her is partly superseded, but not wholly conquered, by his civilized liberal respect. Sue refuses to marry Jude or become Jude's lover (despite their living together), but he remains patient and considerate towards her wishes:

> 'Sue, my own comrade and sweetheart, I don't want to force you either to marry or to do the other thing - of course I don't! It is too wicked of you to be so pettish! Now we won't say anymore about it, and go on just the same as we have done; and during the rest of our walk we'll talk of the meadows only, and the floods, and the prospect of the farmers this coming year.' (*Jude*, p.325)

Hardy is uncertain which is the major split in the novel - whether it is a conflict of civilized society against the individual or man's ancient sexual drives in opposition to his modern civilized mind in any one individual. The political and the biological remain alike unsolved. Once Jude is faced with Sue's offended sensibilities, he concedes and defers the darker sexual topic of primitive 'force', turning the conversation to civilized general 'talk' rather than the euphemistic 'other thing'. Evolution has failed to integrate sex's temporariness within the civilized desire for loving permanence. Moreover, in spite of his sexual drives Jude himself is inescapably a product of the social system of which he, like Hardy, is often critical. Indeed, it was Jude himself who had insisted on marrying Arabella to remain in keeping with 'the custom of rural districts among honourable young men who had drifted so far into intimacy with a woman' (*Jude*, p.102). Sue herself acts as an extreme, problematic embodiment of Hardy's concerns: her bold mental liberation is tied confusedly to a sexual timidity

such that even during her marriage to Phillotson she at one point avoids sexual contact by sleeping in a cupboard. Sue finally agrees to 'give in' to Jude sexually only when Arabella returns and Sue finds herself defeated by older, deeper sexual jealousies inside herself (*Jude*, p.332).

When Jude wants to be fierce he cannot be. He cannot even bring himself to hurt Phillotson, despite his own desperate desire to deny Phillotson's needs and have Sue for himself:

> Jude for a moment felt an unprincipled and fiendish wish to annihilate his rival at all cost. By the exercise of that treachery which love for the same woman renders possible to men the most honourable in every other relation of life, he could send Phillotson off in agony and defeat by saying that the scandal was true, and that Sue had irretrievably committed herself with him. But his action did not respond for a moment to his animal instinct; and what he said was, 'I am glad of your kindness in coming to talk plainly to me about it. You know what they say? - that I ought to marry her.' (*Jude*, p.219)

What in George Eliot would be morally a powerful second-order redirection of energy in order not to hurt another, marking the beginning of a whole way of life at a higher level of being, in Hardy is the flawed establishment of a life based on self-defeating weakness. For whilst the passage is loaded with primitive potential (Jude *could* have sent Phillotson off in agony), simultaneously the momentary impulse is surpassed by Jude's civilized second nature. Jude is in a secondary mode of existence - in Hardy's archaeology of man, it is a second nature, a second layer or level out of synchronization with his deep ancient urges. Jude's animal instinct is merely an impulsive lingering and residual feeling with no form of sanctioned expression in action. Sigmund Freud would explain Jude's actual response as an example of the 'sublimation' and 'repression', the 'renunciation of instinct' on which, he believed, civilization is built (Freud, p. 286).

Jude cannot painlessly or simply remake himself so as to fit the external world, and Hardy presents him, as if in contrast to George Eliot's Deronda, as a fallen dreamer, an idealist, repetitively failing in his pursuits and ill-adapted to live a secondary fallen existence in an oblivious real world. In *Essays in Philosophical Criticism,* the Idealist philosopher T.B. Kilpatrick argued that the concentration on repetition is characteristically one of the 'gloomiest statements of pessimism':

> If the whole movement of the world be towards the endless repetition of such isolated points of humanity, no conclusion is possible but misery, the agony of a thinly-disguised anarchic war, the anguish of infinite disappointment.[19]

The 'anguish of infinite disappointment' until death is the fate of Hardy's protagonist. After failing in his academic pursuits, and in his life together with Sue, Jude finds himself returning full circle to Christminster and the sneering derision of the fellowmen there. Jude delivers a powerful and moving speech to the unmoved listeners, summarizing his inability to reconcile the principles of moral belief and more primitively formed human instinct:

> 'And what I appear, a sick and poor man, is not the worst of me. I am in a chaos of principles - groping in the dark - acting by instinct and not after example. Eight or nine years ago when I came here first, I had a neat stock of fixed opinions, but they dropped away one by one; and the further I get the less sure I am. I doubt if I have anything more for my present rule of life than following inclinations which do me and nobody else any harm, and actually give pleasure to those I love best. There, gentlemen, since you wanted to know how I was getting on, I have told you. Much good may it do you! I cannot explain further here. I perceive there is something wrong somewhere in our social formulas: what it is can only be discovered by men or women with greater insight than mine, - if, indeed, they discover it - at least in our time. "For who knoweth what is good for man in this life? - and who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?"' (*Jude*, p.399)

Jude's own experience - nature's laws, his own personal past, social traditions and the evolutionary inheritance - are all mixed-up and overlapping in one awful mystery of ill-sorted archaeological layers of being. Exhausted with the effort of trying to reconcile them all, he can only sum it up vaguely as 'something wrong somewhere'. His 'neat stock of fixed opinions' had only applied an artificial and now self-mocking structure to his life when, in reality, there was none. Early on in the novel Jude had viewed the alternative structure of an academic institution as a place of sanctuary from confusing social and natural laws. However, his notion of education as a substitute for jungle-laws of survival within the realm of the natural world is an inadequate one to follow. Jude's use of the highly civilized academic institution, had he been accepted, would have been merely a form of retreat.

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[19] T.B. Kilpatrick, 'Pessimism and the Religious Consciousness', *Essays in Philosophical Criticism*, ed. by A. Seth and R.B. Haldane (London: Longmans, 1883), p.250.

In contrast, in *Middlemarch* George Eliot presents Dorothea as an idealist having to work upon herself within secondary states of being. But the condition of human existence, which leaves Hardy hopelessly despairing, is vital to George Eliot's own sense of realism. For much of George Eliot's writing is concerned with re-learning lessons and remaking oneself after failure and disappointment, discovering, over a period of time how to operate at higher levels of being within the fallen realm of the world.

When Dorothea is crying because the first illusory vision of her marriage to Casaubon has not come to fruition, George Eliot states that this is the very beginning of the second-order stage of being:

> That new real future which was replacing the imaginary drew its material from the endless minutiae by which her view of Casaubon and her wifely relation, now she was married to him, was gradually changing with the secret motion of a watch-hand from what it had been in her maiden dream. (*Middlemarch*, p.226)

To George Eliot, disillusionment and error are an inevitable second stage in one's early inexperienced and untrained life, resulting from the disappointed construction of imaginary futures. Dorothea takes a long time to learn that moving out of the realm of the 'imaginary' towards the 'real future' is not merely a process of leaping from one formal level of consciousness ('maiden dream') to another ('wifely relation'). What Dorothea must undergo through the process of experience is a most subtle readjustment of vision to enable her both to modify her ideals and yet still put them into effect. Events painfully deconstruct her imagined future, and the real future is delicately reconstructed, until a transition is made which reaches beyond the reaction of disappointment upon initial naiveté.

Jude would have rather committed suicide and ended his first life than taken part in the evolutionary struggle at the lonely individual level:

> Jude put out one foot on the edge of the ice, and then the other: it cracked under his weight; but this did not deter him. He ploughed his way inward to the centre, the ice making sharp noises as he went. When just about the middle he looked around him and gave a jump. The cracking repeated itself; but he did not go down. He jumped again, but the cracking had ceased. Jude went back to the edge, and stepped upon the ground.
>
> It was curious, he thought. What was he reserved for? He supposed he was not a sufficiently dignified person for suicide. Peaceful death abhorred him as a subject and would not take him.

> What could he do of a lower kind than self-extermination; what was there less noble, more in keeping with his present degraded position? He could get drunk. Of course that was it; he had forgotten. Drinking was the regular, stereotyped resource of the despairing worthless. (*Jude*, pp.116-117)

Jude believes that where in life he was unheroic, in death he can claim heroism - hence he is undeterred, ploughing forwards. He will, he thinks, finally exercise some measure of power by *choosing* to submit to external pressure. At the centre of the pool, however, the tone changes. For in Jude's second-order existence the nobility of 'peaceful death' is replaced by an awkwardly embarrassing second attempt at suicide and finally a humiliating walk back off from the ice. Jude's earlier determination in the light of what passes on the ice is made blackly comical and absurd.

In *Mortal Questions* the modern philosopher Thomas Nagel defines the absurd as a situation where there is a 'conspicuous discrepancy between pretension or aspiration and reality'. It is always discrepancy and not rhyme which is the rule in Hardy:

> When a person finds himself in an absurd situation, he will usually attempt to change it, by modifying his aspirations, or by trying to bring reality into better accord with them, or by removing himself from the situation entirely. We are not always willing or able to extricate ourselves from a position whose absurdity has become clear to us. Nevertheless, it is usually possible to imagine some change that would remove the absurdity - whether or not we can or will implement it. The sense that life itself as a whole is absurd arises when we perceive, perhaps dimly, an inflated pretention or an aspiration which is inseparable from the continuation of human life and which makes its absurdity inescapable, short of escape from life itself.[20]

In Hardy's version of what Nagel describes as 'modifying the aspirations', Jude can only drastically reduce the scope of his initial plan to kill himself. After his failed attempt at suicide, Jude turns to alcohol as a substitutive escape from his absurd situation and yet also as a form of despairing, self-abuse: he drowns his sorrows, not himself ('a lower kind than self-extermination'). That is all that evolution means to Jude: the finding of substitutes which remain inadequate. Jude cannot possess the force of old, dignified tragedy; instead, ironically Jude can only exert his power by resorting to a bitterly destructive but merely gradual downgrading of the absurd self.

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[20] Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.13.

Think of Sue's own attempted suicide and later her self-sacrifice in returning to Phillotson; Jude buying back the photograph of himself which he had given Arabella on her wedding day; Jude reciting Latin in the pub; or 'the too suggestive incident' of Sue and Jude's rehearsal for her marriage to Phillotson (*Jude*, p.229).

To Hardy there is only second-order artificial tragedy in his novel denied any ancient dignity. For during the course of their relationship Sue tells Jude:

> 'It is none of the natural tragedies of love that's love's usual tragedy in civilized life, but a tragedy artificially manufactured for people who in a natural state would find relief in parting!' (*Jude*, p.276)

Sue makes an important contrast between the old 'natural' tragedy of love and the modern man-made 'artificial' tragedy. From Sue's point of view the pure tragedy of pre-civilized lovers would simply strike them unexpectedly - as events beyond their control. In civilized society the second-order tragedy is created by social shapings aggravated within the lovers themselves. This is the story that Kierkegaard alike tells in his essay 'Ancient and Modern Tragedy Motif'. Civilized convention now forces couples to remain together for purposes other than their own original pleasure. Sexual freedom is restricted as the secondary concern of material inheritance increasingly dominates.[21]

In his earlier novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy was tempted, like Jude, to view the artificially imposed social order as the main fault. After Tess has been raped, Hardy insists that it is not she who is out of harmony with the actual world but social morality itself:

> Walking among the sleeping birds in the hedges, watching the skipping rabbits on a moonlit warren, or standing under a pheasant-laden bough, she looked upon herself as a figure of Guilt intruding into the haunts of Innocence. But all the while she was making a distinction where there was no difference. Feeling herself

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[21] Friedrich Engels would ascribe the changes which Sue describes to the reorganization of relationships as societies evolved and came to be civilized. In the industrial capitalist stage, marriage is based on ownership and securing the inheritance of property. Male and female relations are: 'based on the supremacy of the man, the express purpose being to produce children of undisputed paternity; such paternity is demanded because these children are later to come into their father's property as his natural heirs. It is distinguished from the pairing marriage by the much greater strength of the marriage tie, which can no longer be dissolved at either partner's wish. As a rule, it is now only the man who can dissolve it and put away his wife' (Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, first published 1884, ed. by Eleanor Burke Leacock, trans by Alick West (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1972), p.125).

> in antagonism, she was quite in accord. She had been made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly. (*Tess*, p.135)

At this point, Hardy could almost believe that Tess's guilt is merely the falsely imposed social sense of moral ethics (non-existent in the actual world). If only Tess still belonged to the less highly evolved animal kingdom, she would be naturally free from the sense of guilt which has been foisted on her.

However, in *Man's Place in the Cosmos* Andrew Pringle-Patterson, the Scots Idealist philosopher, takes issue with Hardy's suggestion that ethics is in fact mere convention when it is not simply natural:

> Mr Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is unquestionably a powerful work but it suffers, in my opinion, both artistically and ethically, from this tendency to assimilate the moral and the natural.[22]

For Pringle-Patterson there is no reason to see Nature's laws as any better than those imposed by the social system; nor does he believe that the two realms necessarily can or need to be reconciled. Indeed, man cannot simply go back to being like 'the irresponsible creatures of the field', for man's nature has developed beyond that lower consciousness and evolved with a necessarily separate sense of independent human responsibility. In Pringle-Patterson's view, ethical rules cannot again be brought back into line with the natural realm from which man's social conscience and system of values has already lifted him. Man's role is precisely to make the correction and sustain that difference between the natural impulses and ethical requirements. But there are tempting moments in both *Tess* and *Jude* when, according to Pringle-Patterson, Hardy seems to forget the truth that there is no going back to nature and instead seeks desperate recourse to the willed simplification of natural law.

It is a model of the simply natural which Hardy has in mind when Jude, Sue and Little Father Time go to the Wessex Agricultural Exhibition:

> Sue, in her new summer clothes, flexible and light as a bird, her little thumb stuck up by the stem of her white cotton sunshade, went along as if she hardly touched the ground, and as if a moderately strong puff of wind would float her

[22] Andrew Pringle-Patterson, *Man's Place in the Cosmos*, first published 1893 in *Blackwood's Magazine* 2nd edn (Edinburgh & London: Blackwood, 1902), pp.6, 9.

> over the hedge and into the next field. Jude, in his light grey holiday-suit was really proud of her companionship, not more for her external attractiveness than for her sympathetic words and ways. That complete mutual understanding, in which every glance and movement was as effectual as speech for conveying intelligence between them, made them almost the two parts of a single whole. (*Jude*, pp.360-361)

In this scene Hardy captures one near-perfect pocket of happiness wherein the relations between Jude and Sue are not consciously strained and distorted but balanced and ordered: on both their sides, mental and physical attraction intermingle and feed from one another in 'that complete mutual understanding'. But there is a bitter irony which undermines the scene: they are in an artificially constructed little Eden, a temporarily created place which has no permanent existence in the real world. Moreover, Jude and Sue are unable unthinkingly to enjoy their surroundings or hold onto the moment of happiness together. For shortly after Hardy discloses the scene between the two lovers, he reveals the temporariness of it when the institutions of permanence - such as marriage - are no longer a source of confidence. The idyllic vision begins to disperse as Jude and Sue start consciously to analyse their feelings in civilized talk:

> 'Happy?' he murmured
> She nodded.
> 'Why? because you have come to the great Wessex Agricultural Show - or because *we* have come?'
> 'You are always trying to make me confess all sorts of absurdities. Because I am improving my mind, of course, by seeing all these steam-ploughs, and threshing-machines, and chaff-cutters, and cows and pigs and sheep. [...] I feel that we have returned to Greek joyousness, and have blinded ourselves to sickness and sorrow.' (*Jude*, p.366)

Sue's reference to the return to 'Greek joyousness' acts as a signal that the idea of a return to old nature's order as less cruel than the current socially imposed order is itself artificially created by the human desire for a better place. Although Hardy is tempted by the possibility that Sue and Jude could somehow return to a natural life, he has to believe finally that this is merely a fantasy. Like Clough, the ideas of progress or return are alike deconstructed. It is George Eliot who has to rise to Pringle-Patterson's challenge.

III. *Daniel Deronda*: The Return to an Older Order

Hardy's acute concerns in his presentation of Jude derive from the same general area of nineteenth-century scientific study from which George Eliot drew more optimistic sustenance. Hardy's novel examines the consequences of attempting to eradicate the more violent aspects of human nature through Jude's very attempt to refuse the murder of anything, even for practical purposes. After Jude has been forced by Arabella to kill the pig for market, Hardy says of Jude:

> Jude felt dissatisfied with himself as a man at what he had done, though aware of his lack of common-sense, and that the deed would have amounted to the same thing if carried out by the deputy. The white snow, stained with the blood of his fellow-mortal, wore an illogical look to him as a lover of justice, not to say as a Christian: but he could not see how the matter was to be mended. No doubt he was, as his wife had called him, a tender-hearted fool. (*Jude*, pp.111-112)

Jude's sympathy is dangerously egalitarian and effusive: the pig is not merely an animal to him but a 'fellow-mortal'. Jude's inability or unwillingness to differentiate manifests itself as a serious undermining weakness in him. Hardy's description of Jude is characteristic of the fix in which, as a modern man, he repeatedly finds himself: Arabella's common sense concerning the slaughter is in conflict with Jude's developed sense of justice - and whilst Jude is painfully *conscious* of the discrepancy, 'he could not see how the matter was to be mended'.[23]

Super-evolved qualities presenting themselves as weaknesses are, as we have seen, Arthur Hugh Clough's concern. For whilst both Dipsychus and Jude see the usefulness of instinct, they cannot put ancient instinct to good use in themselves. Dipsychus, like Jude, is one of a breed of over-scrupulous individuals in whom the 'fiendish wish' of Huxley's ape and tiger has become a naggingly redundant one. When the Spirit chides Dipsychus for not accepting the challenge of a duel, Dipsychus responds:

> He's violent: what can I do against him?

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[23] Leslie Stephen argues that 'justice is not to be found in the visible arrangements of the universe' (Stephen, p.25). Jude is still trying naively to see how matters might possibly be made right. In *Jude the Obscure* Phillotson exclaims: '"Cruelty is the law pervading all nature and society; and we can't get out of it if we would!"' (*Jude*, p.389). It will be Jude's bitter lesson throughout the course of *Jude the Obscure*, that there is not any permanent means of evading cruelty.

> I neither wish to be killed or to kill:
> What's more, I never yet have touched a sword,
> Nor fired, but twice, a pistol in my life.
>
> (*Dipsychus*, 7.10)

Huxley's ape and tiger are being replaced by appeasement but this substitution may be dangerous to the welfare of the forward-looking individual in a retarded society where position is settled by means of violence.

The conflicts which Huxley pin-pointed - between man's primitive past and his modern civilized present; between the natural and the human - was one which clearly appalled and horrified Hardy. However, I am arguing that George Eliot herself was *already* half-aware of the sort of concerns from which Hardy later suffered when she was writing *Daniel Deronda*.[24] In *Evolution and Ethics*, continuing his attack on Spencer's view of continuity in evolution, Huxley argued:[25]

> The science of ethics professes to furnish us with a reasoned rule of life; to tell us what is right action and why it is so. Whatever differences of opinion may exist among experts, there is a general consensus that the ape and the tiger methods of struggle for survival are not reconcilable with solid ethical principles.
>
> (Huxley, p. 55)

George Eliot is concerned with just those second-order changes in men by which they try to operate at higher levels of organization (partly freed from lower instincts but also partly fuelled by a reconstituted form of primitive energy). For Huxley social organization is not another form of war: on the contrary it begins to move peacefully against the original drives. As in Hardy, ethical rules jar against the natural rule of life.

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[24] George Eliot could not have read Huxley's essays. They were not published until after her death. But Gillian Beer suggests that George Eliot was familiar with 'The Physical Basis of Life' which was published in the *The Fortnightly Review* in 1869. It is from this source, Gillian Beer argues, that George Eliot most probably derived the gist of her idea in *Middlemarch* of 'the roar which lies on the other side of silence' (Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, p.152). Like Hardy, George Eliot also knew Huxley personally. Her letters and journals record that Huxley visited the Leweses' home along with other prominent thinkers of the age.

[25] Herbert Spencer wrote of modern industrial competition as a benign development of ancient warfaring: 'Such advantages, bodily, and mental, as the race derives from the discipline of war, are exceeded by the disadvantages, bodily and mental, but especially mental, which result after a certain stage of progress has been reached. Severe and bloody as the process is, the killing-off of inferior races and inferior individuals, leaves a balance of benefit to mankind during phases of progress in which the moral development is low and there are no quick sympathies to be continually seared by the infliction of pain and death. But as there arise higher societies, implying individual characters fitted for closer co-operation the destructive activities exercised by such higher societies have injurious reactive effects on the moral natures of their members - injurious effects which outweigh the benefits resulting from the expiration of inferior races' (*Herbert Spencer On Social Evolution: Selected Writings*, ed. by J.D.Y. Peel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p.173).

For a system of ethics is concerned with the replacement of warring aspects of human nature and their substitution by thought, temporal hesitation and verbal negotiation.

In the person of Daniel Deronda, George Eliot presents a finely balanced representative of the ancient past, and also of the civilized future. Deronda's physical characteristics denote a subtle evolutionary blending of the forceful and refined aspects of humanity:

> Look at his hands: they are not small and dimpled, with tapering fingers that seem to have only a deprecating touch: they are long, flexible, firmly-grasping hands, such as Titian has painted in a picture where he wanted to show the combination of refinement with force. (*Deronda*, p.226)

In the following long passage George Eliot takes into consideration both Huxley's and Spencer's view of evolution:

> Daniel had the stamp of rarity in a subdued fervour of sympathy, an activity of imagination on behalf of others, which did not show itself effusively, but was continually seen in acts of considerateness that struck his companions as moral eccentricity. 'Deronda would have been first-rate if he had had more ambition' - was a frequent remark about him. But how could a fellow push his way properly when he objected to swop for his own advantage, knocked under by choice when he was within an inch of victory, and, unlike the great Clive, would rather be the calf than the butcher? It was a mistake, however, to suppose that Deronda had not his share of ambition: we know he had suffered keenly from the belief that there was a tinge of dishonour in his lot; but there are some cases, and his was one of them, in which the sense of injury breeds - not the will to inflict injuries and climb over them as a ladder, but - a hatred of all injury. He had his flashes of fierceness, and could hit out upon occasion, but the occasions were not always what might have been expected. For in what related to himself his resentful impulses had been early checked by a mastering affectionateness. Love has a habit of saying 'Never mind' to angry self, who, sitting down for the nonce in the lower place by-and-by gets used to it. (*Deronda*, p.218)

George Eliot is concerned with a model of evolutionary development as Herbert Spencer would have upheld it: that man progresses away from impulsiveness towards co-operation, in place of violent struggle. But George Eliot differs from Spencer in so far as she is not concerned, like a scientific inquirer, with examining the general process from primitive to capitalist man. The scientist sees that blind evolution is more concerned with the species than the individual - with the large number of what survives and multiplies. But as a novelist, George Eliot is interested in individual human characters - their 'particular lot' - and how they have been residually

influenced by the changes which have taken place within the general development of man. Unlike Spencer therefore, Daniel rejects in himself the crude primitive struggle to advance himself at the cost of others: 'he would rather be the calf than the butcher [...] the sense of injury breeds - not the will to inflict injuries and climb over them as a ladder, but - a hatred of all injury'.

What in Jude and Dipsychus manifested itself as severe, undermining weakness, in Deronda comes forward as nascent strength. Crucially, his sympathy is tempered with an aggressive defence of others who are weaker. George Eliot shows that a modified use of the survival sense is reconcilable with ethical principles. The energy which fuelled Daniel's pre-moral primitive 'flashes of fierceness' is shown not to be antagonistic to moral force. Ethical ideas are artificial devices until they are thoroughly reincorporated in man as a kind of second nature thus considerations such as justice, love, and sympathy which are facets of Daniel's second nature enable him to use his once crudely primitive *offensive* fierceness by powerfully re-channelling its energy force into a moral *defensiveness* on behalf of those less capable.

Nonetheless, as we have seen, George Eliot herself was conscious of the possible danger of Deronda's second nature, highly evolved in its sympathies, spilling over into weakness. He might allow his sympathy to diffuse itself in too many different channels all at once:

> His early-wakened sensibility and reflectiveness had developed into a many-sided sympathy, which threatened to hinder any persistent course of action: as soon as he took up any antagonism, though only in thought, he seemed to himself like the Sabine warriors in the memorable story - with nothing to meet his spear but flesh of his flesh, and objects that he loved. (*Deronda*, p.412)

If Deronda is to achieve his potential as an individual who will truly make a difference for the better, he must struggle against the falsely objective notion of himself as an indistinct 'St Anybody' like Dipsychus and Jude. Both Mirah and Mrs Meyrick rebuke Deronda for self-effacingly stating that 'any other man' would have rescued Mirah, telling him: 'Saint Anybody is a bad saint to pray to' (*Deronda*, p.419). The importance of this comment is concerned with Daniel's general state of mind before he had rescued Mirah. Deronda had been drifting in his boat on the river, but metaphorically, his life itself was characterized by drifting. Daniel had no definite aims to pursue, no specific goal in life towards the achievement of which he must use

persistent effort. In *The Four Poets*, Stopford A. Brooke wrote that in Arthur Hugh Clough's work: 'A series of slight pressures of circumstance on a dreamy and sensitive soul, drifts the will away from its desired goal, and each of the drifts is accepted'.[26] Deronda could all too easily have come to represent Clough's experience. For whilst Deronda's inner life can be understood as given, George Eliot firmly believes that the attainment of Daniel's predetermined future is dependent upon the necessity to exert himself against the pressures of the external circumstances in which he has found himself. Daniel is at risk of being absorbed by a life's contingent narrative, whereby he merely drifts and shifts, until he becomes what present time has (and has not) made him. George Eliot writes:

> A too reflective and diffusive sympathy was in danger of paralysing him in that indignation against wrong and that selectness of fellowship which are the conditions of moral force; and in the last few years of confirmed manhood he had become so keenly aware of this that what he most longed for was either some external event, or some inward light, that would urge him into a definite line of action, and compress his wandering energy. (*Deronda*, p.413)

There is a concentration here of certain qualities which George Eliot believes Daniel needs if he is to contribute to the wider general life as he desires to ('sensibility', 'reflectiveness', 'sympathy', 'indignation against wrong'); but running alongside these qualities is her concern that if left untrained his characteristics could become a debilitating threat to him. Daniel's civilized sympathetic nature can only finally be countered by 'selectness', quite apart from the luck or providence of Deronda's being one of the chosen people. But in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* the selection of one aspect of Jude's life can only be achieved at the expense of another (for example, by choosing women Jude has to sacrifice his books). Clough's Dipsychus cannot or will not bring himself to select. In Clough's 'Notes on the Religious Tradition' he states his own difficulties in making a choice between the Catholic or the Protestant church. Both have their strengths and weaknesses and it would be too narrow to attempt to make a decision finally between the two:

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[26] Stopford A. Brooke, *The Four Poets: A Study of Clough, Arnold, Rossetti and Morris* (London: Isaac Pitman, 1908), p.33.

> I do not doubt that the protestant has excluded himself (necessary perhaps it was that he should do so) from large religious experience which the Catholic preserves. I am convinced again that the Unitarian is morally and religiously only half educated compared with the Episcopalian. Modern Unitarianism is, I conceive, unfortunate on the one hand in refusing to allow its legitimate force to the exercise of reason and criticism; on the other hand, in having by its past exercise of reason and criticism thrown aside treasures of pure religious tradition because of their dogmatic exterior. ('Notes on Tradition', p.119)

Indeed, as Clough illustrates, the very freedom to select is itself a problem of modern arbitrariness.

In contrast, George Eliot saw a necessity to be harder than both Clough and Hardy. In *Daniel Deronda* she illustrates that it is imperative for Daniel to temper his sympathy with the hard edge of a more Hebraic judgement. Matthew Arnold discusses the differing Hellenistic and Hebraic approaches to life in *Culture and Anarchy.* He argues that both Hellenism and Hebraism share a common aim - 'man's perfection or salvation' - but believed that the broader, more flexible position of Hellenism was most useful to the age:

> Whilst Hebraism seizes upon certain plain, capital intimations of the universal order, and rivets itself, one may say, with unequalled grandeur of earnestness and intensity on the study and observance of them, the bent of Hellenism is to follow, with flexible activity, the whole play of the universal order, to be apprehensive of missing any part of it, of sacrificing one part to another, to slip away from resting in this or that intimation of it, however capital. [...] The governing idea of Hellenism is *spontaneity of consciousness*; that of Hebraism, *strictness of conscience*. (*Culture and Anarchy*, pp.164-165)

George Eliot's Daniel Deronda is more Hebraic. He must tough-mindedly sacrifice other aspects of his life in choosing what Mordecai is offering, for too much flexibility and apprehension might well lead Deronda to Clough's position.

But in *Daniel Deronda* as a whole George Eliot employs Darwin's idea of 'artificial selection'. In *Darwin's Plots* Gillian Beer writes of Darwin's understanding of the processes of artificial selection (in contrast to natural selection):

> The fortunes of families, like plants, will be affected and to some extent can be controlled by conscious breeding and by milling the qualities of specified stock. Darwin's argument in *The Origin of Species* was based from the outset on the same analogy of husbandry: man's agency in the development of particular properties demanded in plants and animals is compared with the activity of natural selection and preservation of the characteristics most useful to the individuals of the race themselves. Man breeds plants and animals to serve *man's*

> ends - not particularly to benefit the plants or animals. In contrast, Darwin asserted, natural processes breed always for the good of the individuals of the race concerned.
> (Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, pp.32-33)

Later on she develops Darwin's position:

> He [man] is the 'artificial selector' whose efforts are disparagingly compared with the power and extent of 'natural selection'. And in later editions Darwin makes it clear that man can neither originate nor obliterate selection. He is disqualified from observing the great movements of natural law by the shortness of his life span. (Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, p.60)

To Darwin, artificial selection is concerned with man's attempt to manipulate natural processes of selection by enlisting his own developed knowledge against lesser species and life-forms. But George Eliot does not use the Darwinian idea in terms of Daniel thoughtlessly or selfishly exercising his power over others in order to benefit from their temporary usefulness (as man uses plants or animals). Instead, George Eliot asserts that in order to secure his own survival Daniel needs to return to his original heritage, grounded in the historically 'great movements' of his race. For Deronda has become dangerously detached from the processes of his natural inheritance for which he was biologically selected. But now a second-order necessity for selectiveness on his part is connected to the necessity for his self-restoration. Daniel must use thought and discretion to make an artificial readjustment to his life as a means of getting back to his original, natural state.

However, there are temptations in *Daniel Deronda* which make a selection based on his own judgement difficult. Daniel anxiously weighs his sexual temptation towards Gwendolen against the other life of devoted service which Mordecai is offering:

> There was a foreshadowing of some painful collision: on the one side the grasp of Mordecai's dying hand on him, with all the ideals and prospects it aroused; on the other this fair creature in silk and gems, with her hidden wound and her self-dread, making a trustful effort to lean and find herself sustained. It was as if he had a vision of himself besought with outstretched arms and cries, while he was caught by the waves and compelled to mount the vessel bound for a far-off coast.
> (*Deronda*, p.625)

Deronda himself is pained by the consciousness that, of the conflicting claims being placed upon him, only one can be fully answered: Gwendolen and Mordecai are two

aspects of his life which are irreconcilable. His is a hard choice consisting in either the denial of Mordecai's dying hope, or the removal of himself as the sole support in Gwendolen's life. Daniel's sexual desire for Gwendolen and his sense of responsibility towards her ('this fair creature [...] making a trustful effort to lean and be sustained') is ever more complicated by his desire for the life which Mordecai and then Mirah represent ('the ideals and prospects it aroused'). Furthermore, Daniel's strong sympathetic impulses towards Gwendolen cause him to question inwardly the fairness of his being spiritually rescued when it means leaving Gwendolen struggling and alone. However, the tough force of which Daniel is conscious in his vision as the power that 'compelled' him from Gwendolen is mysteriously a force to be obeyed separately from Mordecai himself.

In Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* sexual temptation acts as a repetitive block on Jude's socially-oriented aspirations:

> Strange that his aspiration - towards academical proficiency - had been checked by a woman, and that his second aspiration - towards apostleship - had also been checked by a woman. 'Is it,' he said, 'that the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back those who want to progress?' (*Jude*, p.279)

To Hardy the normal sex-impulse of the natural ancient world has been displaced in civilized society, yet still exists distortedly as a temptation towards downfall and degradation. In *Dipsychus* the sexual instinct is feared by Dipsychus for its destruction of ideals. The Spirit tempts Dipsychus, urging him to stop thinking about sex and, instead, enter into an encounter with a prostitute:

> Once known the little lies behind it,
> You'll go your way and never mind it.
> Ill's only cure is, never doubt it,
> To do - and think no more about it.
> (*Dipsychus*, 3.59)

The Spirit suggests that sexual appetites are problematic only because, in Dipsychus's thinking, sex is shrouded in quasi-poetic mystery which accords it too much importance. In his anti-poetry, the Spirit asserts that action and experience alone will 'cure' Dipsychus of his sense of mystery and allow him to carry on undistracted.

Dipsychus is then tempted by the very idea that indulging his sexual desires could actually be a means of eradicating the primitive hold on his nature:

> Could I believe it even of us men
> That once the young exuberance drawn off
> The liquor would run clear; that once appeased
> The vile inquisitive wish, brute appetite fed,
> The very void that ebbing flood had left
> From purer sources would be now refilled.
>
> (*Dipsychus*, 3.64)

But Dipsychus cannot be certain that he will be purified by purging himself of all that he regards as vile and brutish. For whereas the Spirit is convinced that Dipsychus's reluctance is due merely to cowardice, Dipsychus thinks that his reluctance to appease his sexual instincts might be connected to an instinctively civilized sense of moral law. Still, the Spirit has raised grave doubts in Dipsychus's mind:

> Could I think that it had been for nought
> That from my boyhood until now, in spite
> Of most misguiding theories, at the moment
> Somewhat has ever stepped in to arrest
> My ingress at the fatal-closing door,
> That many and many a time my foolish foot
> O'ertreading the dim sill, spite of itself
> And spite of me, instinctively fell back.
> [...] Shyness. 'Tis but another word for shame;
> And that for Sacred Instinct.
>
> (*Dipsychus*, 3.174)

Dipsychus is unsure whether he has truly resisted temptation because of an objective higher law, operating in his consciousness at a deeper level than he can fathom ('in spite of me'), or by the chance of his personality. In *Dipsychus* the issue of the relation between sex and ideals remains unresolved: Dipsychus is left struggling with the belief on the one side that 'Sacred Instinct' has an actual reality, and the unsettling fear on the other side that it might be merely a subjective *name*, an excuse for him which still shifts its meaning between shyness or shame or inhibition or mere chance.

Likewise, in Hardy the discrepancy between sex and ideals which he articulates through Jude is never resolved. But the most significant difference between Jude's temptation, in the form of Arabella and then Sue, and Daniel's equally real temptation in relation to Gwendolen, is the fact that Daniel is involved in a struggle within himself *beforehand*. Instead of being defeated by sexual temptations, Daniel manages

a blend of evolved hesitation and biblical vision. These are Daniel's thoughts as he waits to meet his mother for the first time:

> 'I should have loved her [Gwendolen], if -:' the 'if' covering some prior growth in the inclinations, or else some circumstances which have made an inward prohibitory law as a stay against the emotions ready to quiver out of balance. The 'if' in Deronda's case carried reasons of both kinds; yet he had never throughout his relations with Gwendolen been free from the nervous consciousness that there was something to guard against not only on her account but on his own - some precipitancy in the manifestation of impulsive feeling - some ruinous inroad of what is but momentary on the permanent chosen treasure of the heart - some spoiling of her trust, which wrought upon him now as if it had been the retreating cry of a creature snatched and carried out of his reach by swift horsemen or swifter waves, while his strength was only a stronger sense of weakness. (*Deronda*, p.683)

Unlike Jude, Daniel exhibits an instinctive nervous consciousness concerning sex in his otherwise intimate relationship with Gwendolen. Daniel's hesitation can be equated with the Old Testament 'Thou shalt not' - a 'prior growth in the inclinations, an 'inward prohibitary law' - which is already in him, and precedes the sexual temptation. Daniel is able, more objectively, inwardly to assess his thoughts by understanding them as people: Gwendolen represents his personal life and Mordecai his ideal life of service. By imaginatively internalizing his situation, Daniel is partly freed from the subjective strangle-hold in which Jude finds himself as the victim of his feelings in time. In Daniel's mind he considers as rivals the *momentary* sex impulse and the *permanent* ideals towards which the whole of his life has been aiming. His sense of greater weakness is fuelled by the realization that he cannot be all things to all people. When Daniel does decide to marry, the sexual aspect of his life is incorporated within the framework of his whole beliefs. For his marriage to Mirah is not based on the momentary impulse but is founded on the permanent bonds of a shared personal life and larger Jewish inheritance.

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Daniel Deronda represents a development in the scope of George Eliot's thinking. In her final novel she shows herself to be turning back against the Feuerbachian model which she had tested thirteen years earlier in *Romola*. George

Eliot illustrates, precisely through the relationship between Gwendolen and Daniel, that an outer, real substantiation of a religious life, historically and biologically grounded in the form of Judaism, is superior to Gwendolen's efforts to construct a religious tradition for herself when she is so far from being a Romola or a Dorothea. The salvation of Gwendolen from her narrow selfishness might, in a Feuerbachian model, have been Daniel's sole purpose and object in life:[27]

> Would her remorse have maintained its power within her, or would she have felt absolved by secrecy, if it had not been for that outer conscience which was made for her by Deronda? It is hard to say how much we could forgive ourselves if we were secure from judgement by another whose opinion is the breathing-medium of all our joy - who brings to us with close pressure and immediate sequence that judgement of the Invisible and Universal which self-flattery and the world's tolerance would easily melt and disperse. In this way our brother may be in the stead of God to us, and his opinion which has pierced even to the joints and marrow, may be our virtue in the making. That mission of Deronda to Gwendolen had begun with what she had felt to be his judgement of her at the gaming-table. He might easily have spoiled it:- much of our lives is spent in marring our own influence and turning others' belief in us into widely concluding unbelief which they call knowledge of the world, while it is really disappointment in you or me. Deronda had not spoiled his mission. (*Deronda*, pp.832-833)

George Eliot describes Deronda's relation to Gwendolen in terms of a mission, equivalent to Feuerbach's own sense of other men bringing out the god in us. What he tries to incarnate in Gwendolen throughout the length of *Daniel Deronda* is a germ of an idea of self-judgement. Deronda's personality acts as a means of influence, representative of the Invisible and the Universal, in a way that is more immediately real to Gwendolen than the abstract idea of judgement and goodness.

But even though Daniel's mission in relation to Gwendolen is predetermined even as he notices her at the gaming-table, Deronda must ultimately put an end to Gwendolen's extreme dependence on him by telling her of his Jewish inheritance. It is almost as if George Eliot is turning against her own English humanism. The necessity to tell Gwendolen is hard for Daniel: 'Deronda's anguish was intolerable. [...] She was the victim of his happiness' (*Deronda*, p.877). But Gwendolen suffers an even more extreme terror at the thought of being an outsider from Deronda. Without him, her life is totally uprooted:

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[27] In *The Essence of Christianity* Feuerbach states: 'The first object of man is man' (Feuerbach, p.117).

That was the sort of crisis which was at this moment beginning in Gwendolen's small life: she was for the first time feeling the pressure of a vast mysterious movement, for the first time being dislodged from her supremacy in her own world, and getting a sense that her horizon was but a dipping onward of an existence with which her own was revolving. All the troubles of her wifehood and widowhood had still left her with the implicit impression which had accompanied her from childhood, that whatever surrounded her was somehow specially for her, and it was because of this that no personal jealousy had been roused in her in relation to Deronda: she could not spontaneously think of him as rightfully belonging to others more than to her. But here had come a shock which went deeper than personal jealousy - something spiritual and vaguely tremendous that thrust her away, and yet quelled all anger into self-humiliation.

(*Deronda*, p.876)

It is only with Gwendolen's consciousness of the *absoluteness* with which her relation to Deronda has been brought to an end, that she experiences a terrifying 'crisis', and 'shock' of awakening to a previously unrealized realm of reality. Gwendolen has a vague, confusing sense of a spiritual world beyond the merely personal but at the same time she understands that she is forever painfully excluded ('thrust away'). Gwendolen is an unconscious Feuerbachian, having to work within an inferior realm, trying to filter-out beliefs which have always been, in her mind, confusedly mixed-up in her sexual desire for Deronda himself. Feuerbach's model was more successful in *Romola* because, in this earlier novel, George Eliot had been concerned with the construction of a tradition by a woman who from the outset, like Dorothea Brooke, *already* possessed a large and generous nature. Still, it was hard enough for Romola to extricate the valuable beliefs in Savonarola's teaching from the confusing forms in which his ideas were offered. Romola does finally gain independence from Savonarola, but Gwendolen fails to achieve any equivalent independence from Deronda as a free-standing, thinking individual. Gwendolen is that version of a smaller, more selfishly-motivated individual (closer to Hetty than to Dorothea), forever struggling in darkness and fearfully clinging to the external prop which Deronda represents. If Tito is the epitome of George Eliot's anxiety about what is to be done with non-moral beings, Gwendolen is the epitome of her concern for those who begin to search for a moral and religious way in an irreligious age.

Deronda returns from the modern oblivion of Clough and Hardy to an ancient sense of commitment in which choice is really discovered to be something not free but something given in the recognition of the past in one's present being. His instinctive but risky choice is met and recognized by his discovery of a predetermining

inheritance: 'no longer wandering in the mazes of impartial sympathy, but choosing, with the noble partiality which is man's best strength, the closer fellowship that makes sympathy practical' (*Deronda*, p.814).

Daniel Deronda is not ungrounded as is Hardy's novel, it is not a matter of modern partial choice, but rediscovers ancient roots and an anterior level of being *given* with the Jews, but then rewon by selective discipline and the narrowing called Hebraic commitment.

CHAPTER 5

GEORGE ELIOT: THE RICH HOLDING-GROUND FOR HUMAN NEEDS

I. The Mystery of Life

In the midst of writing *The Mill on the Floss,* George Eliot wrote to Barbara Bodichon of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* telling her that 'Darwin's book [...] makes an epoch'; yet, with conviction, she went on to add:

> But to me the Development Theory, and all other explanations of processes by which things came to be, produce a feeble impression compared with the mystery that lies under the processes. (Cross, p.296)

In this final chapter I shall argue that throughout her career George Eliot employed scientific and philosophical ideas to examine, as 'George Eliot', precisely what exists, otherwise unseen, beneath human processes, with consequences that are in marked contrast to the findings of that other great reader of Darwin, Thomas Hardy. What cannot find a religious form, as can Deronda himself, has to be held in solution: the George Eliot novel acts as a human holding-ground in lieu of other forms. In this chapter I shall bring together the concerns of the thesis as a whole.

In June 1857, when George Eliot was just embarking on her career as a novelist, she wrote to Sara Hennell:

> I feel every day a greater disinclination for theories and arguments about the origins of things in the presence of all this mystery and beauty and pain and ugliness that floods one with conflicting emotions.[1] (Cross, p.225)

In George Eliot's view, scientific progress offered further material for consideration but could not provide final solutions concerning the human state. I will argue that in

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[1] In April of the same year Herbert Spencer's 'Progress: Its Law and Cause' appeared in *The Westminster Review.* Spencer concluded his article, in similar terms to those used by George Eliot two months later: 'After all that has been said, the ultimate mystery remains just as it was. The explanation of that which is explicable, does but bring out into greater clearness the inexplicableness of that which remains behind. However we may succeed in reducing the equation to its lowest terms, we are not thereby enabled to determine the unknown quantity: on the contrary, it only becomes more manifest that the unknown quantity can never be found. [...] The sincere man of science, content to follow wherever the evidence leads him, becomes by each new enquiry more profoundly convinced that the Universe is an insoluble problem' (pp.196, 197).

her novels George Eliot reinstated the sense of richness and mystery of life, seemingly lost with the loss of formal religious faith, by holding in a rich solution what she calls in *The Mill on the Floss* 'a vast sum of conditions' (*The Mill*, p.363). Being widely recognized as George Eliot's most autobiographical novel, *The Mill on the Floss* is an important place to begin. For my subject-matter in this chapter is, in part, the creation of 'George Eliot' herself as a functioning principle of orientation within the novels, going beyond mere explanation.

Indeed, George Eliot sets the tension of her novel in Maggie Tulliver's need for explanation and her mistaken belief that the mystery of life can be fully understood:

> The world outside the books was not a happy one, Maggie felt: it seemed to be a world where people behaved the best to those they did not pretend to love and that did not belong to them. And if life had no love in it, what else was there for Maggie? Nothing but poverty and the companionship of her mother's narrow griefs - perhaps of her father's heart-cutting childish dependence. There is no hopelessness so sad as that of early youth, when the soul is made up of wants, and has no memories, no superadded life in the life of others; though we who look on think lightly of such premature despair, as if our vision of the future lightened the blind sufferer's present.
>
> Maggie in her brown frock with her eyes reddened and her heavy hair pushed back, looking from the bed where her father lay, to the dull walls of this sad chamber which was the centre of her world, was a creature full of eager, passionate longings for all that was beautiful and glad: thirsty for all knowledge: with an ear straining after dreamy music that died away and would not come near to her: with a blind, unconscious yearning for something that would link together the wonderful impressions of this mysterious life and give her soul a sense of home in it. (*The Mill*, p.320)

Maggie's life, 'made up of wants', is dogged by a great sense of apparently absolute solitude in what should be a world of relations. In some respects Maggie's early wants are even worse than Dorothea's early mistaken expectation of her life with Casaubon, for Maggie lacks even an idea - 'something' - as a starting place from which to direct her energies. Both the chamber and Maggie's mind are dull: she has no thought-out possibilities beyond this place. It is not only a spiritual home that Maggie is seeking but a place within that for her sensuously registered needs: 'longings', 'thirsty', 'blind', 'straining' are not simply words employed as metaphors for the want of an inward spiritual life but physically express the outwardly-directed need to be loved. Such lists denote precisely the lack of links and the desperate need of 'something that

would link together [...] this mysterious life'. When Maggie was a child, George Eliot wrote:

> At least, her father would stroke her head and say, 'Never mind, my wench'. It is a wonderful subduer, this need of love, this hunger of the heart: as peremptory as that other hunger by which Nature forces us to submit to the yoke, and change the face of the world. (*The Mill*, p.91)

In childhood 'at least' Maggie had her father, yet now, with a stronger sense of deprivation, it would mean so much more to her to have even that small bit of loving consolation. But Maggie can no longer gain her innocent childish pleasure in the security of close and familiar home-life. Her family is alien to her in this adult form, dominated by her mother's 'narrow griefs' and her father's 'heart-cutting dependence'. Maggie is even separated from old friends. Philip Wakem is viewed by Tom as the family enemy. She hardly knows the right places for her imagination or for her memory any more.

George Eliot's use of the metaphor of hunger to express Maggie's need illustrates her own respect for the necessity of love as a basic quality of evolved human existence. She does not for a moment suggest that any separate spiritual life is sufficient to eradicate Maggie's need to be loved. Indeed, it is almost as if 'that other hunger' - to change the world - may be the internalized result of the unfulfilment of the first desire to be lovingly accepted in it. What Maggie craves, like the young Marian Evans, is a sense of fulfilment, belonging, and significance for her life beyond the narrow confines of the home, in a wider, more evolved sense of home. Whilst caring for her own father, Marian wrote to Miss Lewis that she had become preoccupied with household tasks and her father's needs:

> I have of late felt a depression that has disordered the vision of my mind's eye and made me *alive* to what is certainly a fact (though my imagination when I am in health is adept in concealing it), that I am *alone* in the world. I do not mean to be so sinful as to say that I have not friends most undeservedly kind and tender, and disposed to form a far too favourable estimate of me, but I mean that I have no one who enters into my pleasures or my griefs, no one with whom I can pour out my soul, no one with the same yearnings, the same temptations, the same delights as myself. (Cross, p.43)

The 'fact', which Marian Evans begins to recognize only in her depression, equates with Maggie's new sense of the disappointing 'world outside books' - a world usually

obscured, rather than revealed, by the unrealistic fantasies of imagination. Marian Evans's own life at twenty-two, seems to have been be made up by lists of wants, without fulfilment. Maggie suffers a similarly disturbing awakening of adult consciousness: the fiction on which she has fed her imagination has no corresponding reality.

As I indicated in Chapter One, books, such as Thomas à Kempis's *Of the Imitation of Christ,* offer an extra dimension to Maggie's life; but inside books she in turn wants to find a securing sense of the world outside books (see footnote 12 in Chapter One). The great ambition of realism begins even thus from an insecure need for something very like explanation and linkage. In the later life of Marian Evans as 'George Eliot', she finds her vocation as a novelist is fuelled by this desire to reconcile imaginative fiction and helpful realism. Her aim is to create books that might help souls equivalent to Maggie. Thus the fundamental feature of all George Eliot's writing as 'George Eliot' is an experienced sense of proportion and degree which is nonetheless not retrospectively patronizing. She wrote of Maggie:

> There is no hopelessness so sad as that of early youth, when the soul is made up of wants, and has no memories, no superadded life in the life of others; though we who look on think lightly of such premature despair, as if our vision of the future lightened the blind sufferer's present.[2]

Remembering what early youth felt like brings sympathy with it rather than condescension. The wisdom George Eliot gains from experience is not used to dismiss the very inexperience of which it is itself a painful product. For the adolescent ego-trapped child in George Eliot's vision is a quintessential version of the lonely emotional individual. The truly adult state is a version of the *general* life in which the individual's troubles seem to be relatively small in the scale of human development.

Maggie's thoughts turn from childhood romantic fiction to non-fictional adult works in her desperate endeavour to solve her problems. But she still approaches these works with a child-like mind: 'if only she had books that she might learn for

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[2] In October 1859 George Eliot wrote to M. D'Albert: 'I have at last found my vocation, after which my nature had always been feeling and striving uneasily about. [...] My books are deeply serious things to me, and come out of all the painful discipline, all the most hardly-learnt lessons of my past life' (Cross, pp.289-290).

herself what wise men knew' (*The Mill* p.379). Perhaps it is lucky for Maggie that there are no 'wise men' available such as Casaubon was available to Dorothea Brooke. Her thought is reminiscent of her attitude as a small child when she had visited Tom at Mr Stelling's and thought that she could learn directly from the books if she were simply to 'look inside and see what they were about' (*The Mill* p.215). With a schoolgirl-like understanding, she turns to books to provide answers in place of experience:

> She could make dream-worlds of her own - but no dream-world would satisfy her now. She wanted some explanation of this hard, real life: the unhappy looking father seated at the dull breakfast-table: the childish bewildered mother; the little sordid tasks that filled the hours, or the more oppressive emptiness of weary, joyless leisure; the need of some tender demonstrative love; the cruel sense that Tom didn't mind what she thought or felt, and that they were no longer playfellows together; the privation of all pleasant things that had come to her more than others: she wanted some key that would enable her to understand and, in understanding, endure, the heavy weight that had fallen on her young heart. If she had been taught 'real learning and wisdom, such as great men knew,' she thought she should have held the secrets of life; if she had only books that she might learn for herself what wise men knew! (*The Mill*, p.379)

Maggie's craving for understanding is again met only by a syntax of solid lists, not explanations: 'unhappy father', 'bewildered mother', 'sordid tasks', 'joyless leisure'. These lists again denote the very lack of links. The key that Maggie needs to help her understand is missing even in the very grammar of the work. Maggie cannot see any physical relief from her situation but craves something in mental substitution for her physical frustration which would innerly lift her out of her external situation. She craves a mature and realistic substitute for the lost richness of childhood. Play has now been replaced with tasks, as the forced practical necessity of her adult life has superseded the dream-world creativity of childhood. The use of the word 'little' in this instance has become reductive - 'the little sordid tasks', jarring against her memory of when she and Tom were little 'playfellows together'. As I showed in Chapter Three, in childhood *being* little was associated with a mass of discovery, grief, pleasure and excitement, constituting all the richness which Maggie lacks in this now hard, dried-up existence. She finds her life is a mass of left-overs and half-formed half-states of being, with Tom's half-real, half-imitation adulthood and her parents' distorted regression into childhood. Maggie herself is stuck between regret for a lost

childhood which cannot be regained and a need to move on to an unknown new realm. However, she still wants the tenderness and love of her early life to have an actual presence in her new life, rather than consist in just the memory of loss. The struggle to place the related needs of explanation, imagination, mystery and the reality-principle in a right order is going on continuously in the struggling development of Maggie's life.

Without father or brother to love her, Maggie craves an impersonal external helper outside the prison of her family home as a substitute for the still-needed sustaining tenderness. *Of the Imitation of Christ,* amongst the small collection of books given her by Bob Jakin, appeals to her precisely because Thomas à Kempis moves her like 'the voice of a brother who, ages ago, felt and suffered and renounced' (*The Mill*, p.385):

> It flashed through her like the suddenly apprehended solution of a problem, that all the miseries of her young life had come from fixing her heart on her own pleasure, as if that were the central necessity of the universe, and for the first time she saw the possibility of shifting the position from which she looked at the gratification of her own desires, of taking a stand out of herself, and looking at her own life as an insignificant part of a divinely guided whole. She read on and on in the old book, devouring eagerly the dialogues with the invisible Teacher, the pattern of sorrow, the source of all strength; returning to it after she had been called away, and reading till the sun went down behind the willows. With all the hurry of imagination that could never rest in the present, she sat in the deepening twilight forming plans of self-humiliation and entire devotedness, and in the ardour of first discovery, renunciation seemed to her the entrance into that satisfaction which she had so long been craving in vain. She had not perceived - how could she until she had lived longer? - the inmost truth of the old monk's outpourings, that renunciation remains sorrow, though a sorrow borne willingly.
> (*The Mill*, p.384)

George Eliot's novels aim towards the ideal of individual development, 'shifting the position' so as to see his or her role as a 'part' rather than the 'central necessity' of the universe; but Maggie's form of doing so is prematurely mistaken. She has the right ideas as yet still in the wrong place; the new idea is understood in her old hungrily passionate way ('devouring', 'forming plans of humiliation', 'satisfaction', 'craving'). Maggie uses the book to feed her hungry imagination, but this artificial employment of an idea creates almost as much of a dream-world as did the novels which no longer help her. Maggie is still unconsciously longing to be taught a solution as a short-cut to the need to learn. Maggie rejects childish stories, seeing her new responsibility as self-

schooling. But the concept of schooling in George Eliot is concerned with much more than book-learning. Sheer time and experience is needed if an individual is to understand the true place of a new concept in real life, thus George Henry Lewes asserted that new ideas must be 'soluble' in old experience (*Problems of Life and Mind*, II, 107-108). The very emphasis of George Eliot's voice here ('how could she until she had lived longer?') is delivered in the *midst* of the sentence as if that is where the integrating links come - afterwards, thence turning back again in sympathy to the midst of experience. Thus later on, after Maggie finally renounces Stephen Guest, George Eliot reflects upon Maggie's earlier romantic understanding of sacrifice, set against the stark present reality:

> She had renounced all delights then, before she knew them, before they had come within her reach: Philip had been right when he told her that she knew nothing of renunciation: she had thought it was quiet ecstasy; she saw it face to face now - that sad patient living strength which holds the clue to life, and saw that thorns were forever pressing on its brow. (*The Mill*, p.597)

Maggie begins to realize only *after* her emotional struggle with Stephen that she had romanticized the idea of renunciation. She had prematurely tried to rush on and incorporate the idea in her own life. But in her eagerness to escape from the emotional turmoil of home, Maggie had wrongly transformed renunciation into 'quiet ecstacy'. Yet the discovery of *The Imitation* itself, even though she had mistaken its message at the time, acted as the very preparation for her later understanding of real sacrifice. George Eliot is that 'later' or 'after' which articulately exists in the writing at the very time it is only being innocently prepared for in the protagonist.

Although to Maggie the detailed richness of her early life seems to be starved of realized potential in adulthood, George Eliot constantly reminds us that even Maggie's pain, her wants and her acute consciousness of all that she lacks, are not wasted. In George Eliot, painful experience such as Maggie endures makes up the furniture of the morally adult mind. In *Adam Bede*, her earlier novel, George Eliot wrote:

> We learn the art of vision, by a good deal of hard experience, often with bruises and gashes incurred in taking things up the wrong end, and fancying our space wider than it is. (*Adam Bede*, p.206)

But whereas Adam Bede himself has the time and strength to learn in the long-term from the emotional 'bruises and gashes' which resulted from loving Hetty too blindly, Maggie does not have equivalent space or equivalent solid demands of story in which to learn and to grow. The structure of *The Mill on the Floss* begins too early and concentrates too long on Maggie's childhood to allow space for her own narrative transformation. George Eliot herself was conscious that the structure of the novel had partly forced Maggie's development to be cut-off too soon. She wrote and explained to John Blackwood:

> Love of my subject in the two first volumes, caused a want of proportionate fulness in the treatment of the third, which I shall always regret. (Cross, p.320)

Even at the end of the novel, Maggie needs still more time to mature and transform her suffering in her later life into a kind of reconstituted richness which would include the understanding which 'George Eliot' already has: the understanding that her hard deprivation is not simply wasted but is in fact a useful preparation for her wider life in relation to others.[3]

I am arguing that the richness of Maggie Tulliver's short life is not lost in the career of George Eliot the novelist. F.W.H. Myers remembered the quality of George Eliot's own voice being full of 'subdued intensity and tremulous richness [...] the mystery of a world of feeling that must remain untold'.[4] Maggie's rich qualities are densely woven into the following novels as, over a long period of time spanning nearly two decades, George Eliot develops a rich, complex, fluid syntax which enables her to operate both in and around her characters within the text.

I must therefore oppose Colin MacCabe's analysis of George Eliot as an over-dominant presence causing what he calls an illegitimate 'hierarchy of discourses' in the novels. The characters, in MacCabe's view, assume a subjugated role to both narrator and reader:

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3 William Myers asserts that even Maggie's trip with Stephen on the river, despite being a 'moral lapse' on Maggie's part is also illustrative of Maggie's rich nature: 'Maggie's psychological and moral ambivalence is represented as a (theoretically defensible) sign of the richness of her physical and moral being' (Myers, p.54).

4 F.W.H. Myers, *Essays Modern* (London: Macmillan 1883), p.265.

> The classic realist text should not, however, be understood in terms of some homology to the order of things but as a specific hierarchy of discourses which places the reader in a position of dominance with regard to the stories and characters. However, this position is only achieved at the cost of a certain fixation, a certain subjection. [...] The claim of the narrative prose to grant direct access to a final reality guarantees the claim of the realist novel to represent the invariable features of humanity.
>
> ('The End of a Metalanguage', pp.158, 159)

To MacCabe the voice of 'George Eliot' is that of a didactic, moralizing, omniscient narrator, introducing other explanatory thoughts which exist only externally from the characters themselves, claiming to offer 'direct access to a final reality'. But John Cross remembered his wife thus:

> George Eliot's was an emphatically religious mind. My own impression is that her whole soul was so imbued with, and her imagination was so fired by, the scientific spirit of the age - by the constant rapid development of ideas in the Western world - that she could not conceive that there was, as yet, any religious formula sufficient nor any known political system likely to be final. She had great hope, for the future, in the improvement of human nature by the gradual development of the affections and the sympathetic emotions, and 'by the slow and stupendous teaching of the world's events' - rather than by means of legislative enactments. (Cross, p. 624)

The complex mix of George Eliot's own nature is conveyed in this short passage. Cross describes her mind as 'emphatically religious' and simultaneously unable to 'conceive that there was, as yet, any religious formula sufficient [...] to be final'. Likewise, as I will illustrate, her books do not offer simple substitutes, nor a single or final solution. Instead, George Eliot holds in a rich solution many considerations, each waiting for the right time - personal or historical - in which to redeem their earlier half-mistaken place or mode of being.

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In writing of the unfashionable Tullivers and the insignificant lives of Middlemarchers, George Eliot rejects blindness and the sense of dullness which comes upon Maggie from only wanting to deal with the wildly dramatic. For in George Eliot it is by recognizing the importance of the wider general life that the significance of the

individual life can find a more truthful home and measure. In *Middlemarch* Lydgate says:

> 'There must be systole and diastole in all inquiry [...] a man's mind must be continually expanding and shrinking between the whole human horizon and the horizon of an object glass.' (*Middlemarch*, p.690)

This is what 'George Eliot' does: she stands as the link or the representative of the general species-consciousness expanding and contracting between the realms of the general and specific in human life, as a unifying presence. In finding links and reorderings, George Eliot clearly believed that her purpose as a novelist was connected to that of the scientist. It is agreed amongst critics that in *Middlemarch* Dr Lydgate's work under the microscope is a carefully employed metaphor for George Eliot's own work. She writes of Lydgate:

> He wanted to pierce the obscurity of those minute processes which prepare human misery and joy, those invisible thoroughfares which are the first lurking-places of anguish, mania, crime, that delicate poise and transition which determine the growth of happy or unhappy consciousness. (*Middlemarch*, p.194)

George Eliot's emphasis at the end of *Middlemarch* is thus on hidden lives, not widely visible in the larger scheme of human life.

However, it is with George Eliot's microscopic treatment of her characters that Thomas Hardy is most dissatisfied at the end of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Gillian Beer writes of Hardy:

> The problem of finding a scale for the human becomes a besetting preoccupation of Hardy's work, a scale that will neither be unrealistically grandiose, nor debilitatingly reductive. (Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, p.249)

The ending of Hardy's novel is, seemingly, a bitter parody of George Eliot's efforts in *Middlemarch* which in Hardy's view, after all, only afford her characters an 'unrealistically grandiose' status. He writes of Elizabeth-Jane in a syntax which is no longer dramatic narrative but is left in the aftermath of the loss of a larger life:

> As the lively and sparkling emotions of her early married life cohered into an equable serenity, the finer movements of her nature found scope in discovering to the narrow-lived ones around her the secret (as she had once learnt it) of making limited opportunities endurable; which she deemed to exist in the cunning enlargement, by a species of microscopic treatment of those minute forms of

> satisfaction that offer themselves to everybody not in positive pain; which, thus handled, have much of the same inspiriting effect upon life as wider interests cursorily embraced.[5]

In Hardy's view, this is the final outcome after the primitive first-order individual, in the form of Henchard, is dead. Henchard was a man unfitted for the world - too big for the torture house - and therefore finds himself crushed by it. The version of reality after Henchard lies in a world of survivors through mediocrity such as Elizabeth-Jane, who make their second-order existence appear greater than it is, employing a 'cunning enlargement' to fill up the space of desire. The 'narrow-lived' personal life is all that is left, Hardy insists, as a poor *novelistic* substitute for the previously large *dramatic* purpose once and for all embodied in Henchard. Internally psychological thought-processes take over from dramatic action at the end of *The Mayor of Casterbridge.* It is as though Hardy sees Elizabeth-Jane developing a complicated syntax, like the idea of wider interests, as a disguise for the shallowness of existence. The complexity is an illusory expansion of what is essentially small or petty.

Yet the challenge that Hardy's perspective represented to George Eliot's position was one which in her early career she had considered herself, even before Hardy, through the portrait of Latimer in *The Lifted Veil.* Latimer finds himself alienated from sympathy by his clairvoyant visions. He thinks of his brother, Alfred:

> My diseased consciousness was more intensely and continually occupied with his thoughts and emotions, than with those of any other person who came in my way. I was perpetually exasperated with the petty promptings of his conceit and his love of patronage, with his self-complacent belief in Bertha Grant's passion for him, with his half-pitying contempt for me - seen not in the ordinary indications of intonations and phrase and slight action, which an acute and suspicious mind is on the watch for, but in all their naked and skinless complication.
>
> (*Lifted Veil,* p.21)

Latimer finds himself stuck in the one microscopic mode, continually occupied with Alfred's narrow inner thoughts and emotions, instead of 'continually expanding and shrinking' his vision between the general and the specific in the way that George Eliot is able to. Gillian Beer argues that the narrative in *The Lifted Veil* reveals George

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[5] Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, first published 1886, ed. by Martin Seymour-Smith (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p.410: further references cited as '*Casterbridge*'.

Eliot's own fears about her future role as a narrative presence. Professor Beer reminds us that *The Lifted Veil* was written soon after George Eliot's true female identity behind her male pseudonym had been revealed:

> The 'I' of the narrative and the 'double consciousness' of the narrator, the fear of never finding a voice, the fear that insight and sympathy will uncover only meanness, and that once the tawdry humdrum skin is penetrated it will reveal only the tawdry and humdrum - these are all fears within George Eliot's creativity as she moves into a much more openly personal phase of her writing. Now she must find a stable address no longer facetiously playing upon masculine traits and concealing femaleness. Latimer, Tom and Maggie all represent the damage done to identity by education and by demands that the child polarise sexually and exclude those characteristics denied by society's preconceptions about the capabilities of men and women. (Beer, *George Eliot*, p.81)

Latimer is put forward as a representative of Marian Lewes's own sense of personal vulnerability once the protection of her male pen-name was lost. But in Gillian Beer's view, even whilst Latimer is a manifestation of George Eliot's anxiety concerning her abilities, *The Lifted Veil* marks the beginning of a transition in her career which was forced on her by the necessity to 'find a stable address' for her readership.

However, I am arguing that whilst Latimer is indeed a part of George Eliot's experimental world, in Latimer George Eliot tests a version of the human condition which is actually closer to the pessimistic vision of Hardy:

> This superadded consciousness, wearying and annoying enough when it urged on me the trivial experience of indifferent people, became an intense pain and grief when it seemed to be opening to me the souls of those who were in close relation to me - when the rational talk, the graceful attentions, the wittily-turned phrases, and the kindly deeds, which used to make the web of their characters, were seen as if thrust under a microscopic vision, that showed all the intermediate frivolities, all the suppressed egoism, all the struggling chaos of puerilities, meanness, vague capricious memories, and indolent make-shift thoughts, from which human words and deeds emerge like leaves covering a fermenting heap. (*Lifted Veil*, pp.19-20)

Latimer's visionary superiority which alienates him from his fellow-men is shown to be bitterly unripe and inadequate. For whilst the language employed in this extract makes distinct George Eliot's own authorial concerns as a species of 'superadded consciousness', seeing through trivial experience and make-shift thoughts, Latimer's understanding is devoid of the sympathy and richness which characterizes the 'George Eliot' consciousness in the later novels.

By the time she came to write *The Mill on the Floss*, George Eliot illustrated that she did not hold Latimer's viewpoint. She asserted her claim that as a novelist she would examine precisely the 'oppressive narrowness' of ordinary human lives:

> We need not shrink from this comparison of small things with great; for does not science tell us that its highest striving is after the ascertainment of a unity which shall bind the smallest things with the greatest? In natural science, I have understood, there is nothing petty to the mind that has a large vision of relations, and to which every single object suggests a vast sum of conditions. It is surely the same with the observation of human life. (*The Mill*, p.363)

George Eliot becomes the sophisticated eye which detects the 'minute processes' that involve not merely the physical structure of the human race but higher evolved levels of humanity itself - the tiny, invisible psychological processes which prompt men into action or inaction, the conditions both external and internal which affect their moral growth or decay. Unlike Latimer, George Eliot is neither broken nor deterred by the consciousness of man's trivial experience or suppressed egoism. Instead, she endeavours to look even deeper beneath the pettiness, to uncover the linked connections or lurking-places between the small and the large, to illustrate the huge emotions expressed in petty forms, and to disclose the right things in the wrong formulations, in order to show finally the force of individual life-efforts at transmution of the self even within conventional existence's narrow confines.

Hardy bitterly toys with that idea of transmutation in time which is of such importance in George Eliot's novels, only to show that it is impossible, save as a concept. After some time has elapsed since the incident of Tess's rape, Hardy writes: 'it was impossible that any event should have left upon her an impression that was not in time capable of transmutation' (*Tess*, p.157). The following passage centres upon that change 'in time', with the spectacle of her new-found happiness in her relationship with Angel Clare:

> Her affection for him was now the breath and life of Tess's being; it enveloped her as a photosphere, irradiating her into forgetfulness of her past sorrows, keeping back the gloomy spectres that would persist in their attempts to touch her - doubt, fear, moodiness, care, shame. She knew that they were waiting like wolves just outside the circumscribing light, but she had long spells of power to keep them in hungry subjection there.
>
> A spiritual forgetfulness co-existed with an intellectual remembrance. She walked in brightness, but she knew that in the background those shapes of

darkness were always spread. They might be receding, or they might be approaching, one or the other a little every day. (*Tess*, p.260)

To Hardy, transmutation is only ever really a form of temporary forgetfulness, the biological necessity for a physical and psychological shift of position, not a dynamic remaking of oneself. Pain in Hardy can hardly be used and incorporated as a strength in an individual; instead, Hardy shows that if still unbroken, it is human nature to try to leave painful experience behind and establish a physical and psychological distance. Transmutation and escape are so close that it is impossible to tell which is which, receding or approaching. Hardy's preoccupation with the realms of light and darkness suggests that Angel Clare, whilst representative of the saving light, is perhaps merely a dream-figure surrounded by the more encompassingly evil of physical darkness. Tess might repress the memory of the past but past events have the almost physical capability to force their way back into her life in the shape of people. The 'shapes of darkness' are figures lurking in the recesses of Tess's memory (like the work-folk, the Queen of Spades and the Queen of Diamonds, laughing as Tess is 'rescued' in the darkness by Alec d'Urberville). Even her dead baby, Sorrow, having once had a physical existence, threatens her happiness. The weight of the impending future is strong; for even whilst Tess feels protected by Angel's presence, the reader cannot help being already mentally drawn away from the scene towards the darkening future loneliness. Happiness exists only in the suspension of time and story, and the new life rests on doubtful conditionals. The old life and the past 'might be receding' but equally 'might be approaching'; the direction of time might not be simply linear or progressive. Young Tess's only hope of a future with Angel is reliant on his ignorance of her past. But from the other end of experience, like a pessimistic George Eliot, Hardy fears the worthlessness of the whole idea of future time, for everything future is determined by that which has *already* passed.[6]

In *On Pessimism* James Sully offers a passage which may be used to distinguish the fundamental difference between George Eliot and Thomas Hardy's writing. He

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[6] In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* Hardy laments the 'ingenous machinery contrived by the Gods for reducing human possibilities of amelioration to a minimum - which arranges that wisdom to do shall come *pari passu* with the departure of zest for doing' (*Casterbridge*, p.395).

argues that George Eliot's stance 'may be appropriately styled Meliorism' and continues, defining his terms thus:

> By this I would understand the faith which affirms not merely our power of lessening evil - this nobody questions - but also our ability to increase the amount of positive good. It is, indeed, only this latter idea which can really stimulate and sustain human endeavour. It might be possible, if life were not to be got rid of, to bring ourselves to labour in order to reduce to a minimum an inevitable excess of misery. But, as I have already hinted, pessimism would seem to dictate to wise men the most speedy conclusion of life, both their own and that of all for whom they care. Meliorism, on the other hand, escapes this final contradictory outcome of a life-theory. By recognizing the possibility of happiness and the ability of each individual consciously to do something to increase the sum-total of human welfare present and future, meliorism gives us a practical creed sufficient to inspire ardent and prolonged endeavour.[7]

Hardy defensively claimed to be a meliorist himself. But the distinction which Sully draws between the meliorist's resistance of final conclusions and the pessimist's insistence on final outcomes can be illustrated by examining the differing approaches of George Eliot and Thomas Hardy when the events of a story begin to go wrong. In *Middlemarch* Dorothea fails in her first attempt to comfort Casaubon. But having spent many hours in a struggle with herself over what her response should be to Casaubon's rejection, and in spite of her fears of suffering another rejection, later that evening she goes out to await her husband on the stairs:

> 'Dorothea!' he said, with a gentle surprise in his tone. 'Were you waiting for me?'
>
> 'Yes, I did not like to disturb you.'
>
> 'Come, my dear, come. You are young and need not to extend your life by watching.'
>
> When the kind quiet melancholy of that speech fell on Dorothea's ears, she felt something like the thankfulness that might well-up in us if we had narrowly escaped hurting a lamed creature. She put her hand into her husband's, and they went along the broad corridor together. (*Middlemarch*, p.465)

This scene is utterly dependent on timing. Although it is only *afterwards* that Dorothea herself is fully conscious that she has only just managed to 'narrowly escape hurting a lamed creature', even *before* Dorothea's action it is 'George Eliot' who

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[7] James Sully, *On Pessimism: A History and a Criticism* (London: Henry S. King, 1881), p.271.

inhabits the space of opportunity, recognizes the need to act and feels the rush of time. Unlike Hardy, she faithfully believes that there *are* spaces in time which allow an individual actively to institute change even in the midst of a seemingly hopeless and fixed situation. Her verbal presence keeps those spaces open.

In contrast, in Hardy once events begin to go wrong a cumulative process results - one wrong thing in the wrong place leads in a repetitive cycle to the next. The effect of Tess meeting Angel Clare after she has met Alec d'Urberville is clearly destructive and partly dictates Tess's downfall:

> It was not the two halves of a perfect whole that confronted each other at the perfect moment; a missing counterpart wandered independently about the earth waiting in crass obtuseness till the late time came. (*Tess*, p.83)

Tess's destruction is concerned with *mis*timing: the late arrival of Angel Clare - the 'missing counterpart' - has disastrous consequences. Unlike George Eliot, Hardy's wider narrative vision makes him bitterly ironic and withdrawn. In Hardy once the perfect moment is missed, the space in time which it occupied is forever closed over, and any subsequent action in the secondary realm has no power to salvage or redeem the situation.

Gillian Beer argues that as narrator Hardy is close to the scientific observer:

> Hardy like Darwin places himself in his texts as observer, traveller, a conditional presence capable of seeing things from multiple distances and diverse perspectives almost in the same moment. (Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, p.247)

But even though Hardy varies his distance from the text, when he does offer a wider view it is, in contrast to George Eliot, without any sense that the character will learn a lesson quickly enough to avert the final disaster in the novel. He says elsewhere of Angel Clare:

> No prophet had told him, and he was not prophet enough to tell himself, that essentially this young wife of his was as deserving of the praise of King Lemuel as any other woman endowed with the same dislike of evil, her moral value having to be reckoned not by achievement but by tendency. [...] In considering what Tess was not, he overlooked what she was, and forgot that the defective can be more than the entire. (*Tess*, p.338)

Hardy's prophecy is not concerned with sympathy as in George Eliot, but irony. This line of thought corresponds with the later novel *Jude the Obscure*, in which Hardy reiterates his assertion that no benign prophets or guides exist in real life:

> Somebody might have come along that way who would have asked him his trouble [...] but nobody did come, because nobody does; and under the crushing recognition of his gigantic error Jude continued to wish himself out of the world. (*Jude*, p.72)

In Thomas Hardy's realism there are no George Eliots. Jude's needs remain unheeded and unanswered from childhood until the climax of the novel in his death. In the stance of ironic prophet, Hardy can only offer a back-to-front, rueful form of self-realization. Hardy says that Angel '*forgot* that the defective can be more than the entire', but typically of Hardy he precedes the statement by showing that Angel could only know this lesson *after* it is too late. Thus Angel learns over a period of time that his first reactive disappointment towards Tess was inadequate - but only after the opportunity to redeem himself and, in turn, save Tess has passed: Hardy states elsewhere of Tess, 'Bygones would never be complete bygones till she was a bygone herself' (*Tess*, p.385).

The presence of 'George Eliot', syntactically occupying small spaces in time where the possibility to modify the outcome of a situation exists, in Hardy would merely be fictional reassurance. However, in 'Janet's Repentance' George Eliot insists that such spaces are not fictions, as Hardy might suspect, but actually do exist. She turns her own consciousness back into the plot of her novel so that Janet Dempster finds herself in the midst of one of these psychic spaces where the possibilities of past and future are held in solution, which normally are only testified to by the voice of 'George Eliot'. Janet Dempster has gone to visit the chronically ill Sally Martin but when she overhears Mr Tryan's voice her immediate impulse is to leave. She momentarily hesitates and, unseen by Sally or Tryan, Janet begins to listen to their conversation:

> Janet was surprised, and forgot her wish not to encounter Mr Tryan; the tone and the words were so unlike what she had expected to hear. There was none of the self-satisfied unction of the teacher, quoting, or exhorting, or expounding, for the benefit of the hearer, but a simple appeal for help, a confession of weakness. Mr Tryan had his deeply-felt troubles, then? Mr Tryan, too, like herself, knew

> what it was to tremble at a foreseen trial - to shudder at an impending burthen, heavier than he felt able to bear? ('Janet's Repentance', p.331)

We are reminded of F.W.H. Myers's response to the very tone of George Eliot's voice of experience. For it is precisely George Eliot's recognition that things are not perfect, but rather that the secondary state of the human condition is necessarily imperfect that Janet stumbles accidentally upon Tryan's conversation. Yet rather than have Janet belittled by the regret that it must be so, George Eliot presents Janet's accident as a moment of illumination. Accident is itself part of possibility in George Eliot. Janet's conversion is a representation of George Eliot's own ideal vision of teaching as a novelist. For Tryan reaches Janet not by means of preaching, self-righteous didacticism but by a chance overheard admission of his own mistakes and weaknesses. Whereas George Eliot would normally articulate the linking relation of the clause 'like herself', Janet has the thought herself in the midst of experience. Tryan's unguarded confession of his own vulnerability causes Janet to undergo an immediate imaginative interchange of ideas, seeing her own situation in a wider sympathetic relation to another person.

Unlike Hardy, as I indicated in Chapter Three, George Eliot provides a sustaining presence within the novel. Her vision and scope is so massive that even apparently belittling mistakes and weakness are included as ingredients within the rich solution of life and rather than representing the futility of human endeavour, as in Hardy, are utilized in some reconstituted form.

II. The Web: The Rich Complexity of George Eliot's Style

In *Fiction and Repetition* J. Hillis Miller argues that it is a characteristic of Hardy's writing to employ huge unordered lists as explanations for his character's downfall. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hillis Miller argues, various causes are offered, amongst them: 'social, psychological, biological, fate, hap'. He continues:

> The reader is faced with an embarrassment of riches. The problem is not that there are no explanations posed in the text, but that there are too many. A large group of incompatible causes or explanations are present in the novel. It would seem that they cannot all be correct. My following through of some threads in the intricate web of Hardy's text has converged towards the conclusion that it is wrong in principle to assume that there must be some single accounting cause. For Hardy the design has no source. It happens. It does not come into existence

> in any one version of the design which serves as a model for the others. There is no 'original version,' only an endless sequence of them, rows and rows written down as it were 'in some old book,' always recorded from some previously existing exemplar.[8] (Hillis Miller, pp.140-141)

Hillis Miller is right to say that Hardy's explanation takes the form of lists, eschewing the simplistic explanation of one single accounting cause. Yet the web in Hardy is never fully or clearly woven save in the form of confused entanglement. For as Hillis Miller states himself, whilst Hardy follows many different lines of thought - cause and effect, determinism and chance, character and society - his explanations are more incompatible than linked. The thrust of my argument will be to illustrate how Hardy's writing is truly 'an *embarrassment* of riches' in contrast to the richness of George Eliot's complicated but integrated 'web'.[9]

Hardy is so much a linear writer, committed to sequence and story and time, even where time itself is turning round and round. There are no links in Hardy other than the unforgiving links of time, consequence and memory. The characters are isolated and lonely, linked only by feeling alienated from each other or ironically being made separate by each other's actions. When Tess returns home after the rape, Hardy writes:

> And the despondency of the next morning's dawn, when it was no longer Sunday, but Monday; and no best clothes; and the laughing visitors were gone, and she awoke alone in her old bed, the innocent younger children breathing softly around her. In place of the excitement of her return, and the interest it had inspired, she saw before her a long and stony highway which she had to tread, without aid, and with little sympathy. Her depression was then terrible, and she could have hidden herself in a tomb. (*Tess*, p.133)

This is the thrust of Hardy's realism: godless, traditionless individuals are alone in this meaningless life. Regardless of the quantity of other individuals close-by outside, Tess remains alienated from her innocent brothers and sisters by an inner sense of guilt and shame. Tess is not literally or physically alone but on a deeper, invisible, more spiritually evolved level she is totally isolated. Her Sunday clothes are merely a

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[8] J. Hillis Miller also argues that whilst Hardy's characters cannot stop repeating at the end of the novels they are partially 'de-mystified' (even though this would not stop future repetitions were they to live on).

[9] This famous idea of George Eliot's work as a 'web' is put forward by George Eliot herself, especially in *Middlemarch*. Gillian Beer devotes a chapter of her work to examining 'the 'web of affinities' in *Middlemarch*' (Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, pp.149-180).

disguise and a distraction; the 'stony highway' is no Bunyan-like path but a disillusional journey of misery towards death.

One can almost hear the wheels of the story grinding into movement towards that end after Tess's first meeting with Alec d'Urberville. On the verge of Alec's raping her, even as he holds back, Hardy writes: 'Thus the thing began' (*Tess* p.82). Hardy's statement is heavily weighted with the question of where a story really begins and ends. For if Tess's father had not met Parson Tringham; if her father had not been a drinker so that Tess, by default, took the beehives to Casterbridge and accidentally killed Prince; if her mother had not been bothered about obtaining money; if Tess had not been pretty - all these considerations might have altered the outcome. Hardy even suggests, as one possible source of explanation, retribution for the behaviour of Tess's ancestry. But the meeting with d'Urberville is clearly a flash-point and from then on, *whatever* the explanation, the story accelerates. Hardy's role is to observe and record an unstoppable motion - all the rest is concerned with plausible explanation of unprovable and ultimately useless status; the 'thing' is what it is, is where it goes, whatever richly makes it up or undoes it. Although there are various contributory factors which Hardy considers, rather than a narrow single cause, his narrative nonetheless heads towards one final temporal if not cerebral conclusion.

In 'Progress: Its Law and Cause' Herbert Spencer writes of the 'multiplication of results' that has occurred as society progresses from a state of homogeneity towards a more highly specialized, complex, heterogeneous social organism:

> This multiplication of results, which is displayed in every event of to-day, has been going on from the beginning; and is true of the grandest phenomena of the universe as of the most insignificant. From the law that every active force produces more than one change, it is an inevitable collary that through all time there has been an ever-growing complication of things. Starting with the ultimate fact that every cause produces more than one effect, we may readily see that throughout creation there must have gone on, and must still go on, a never-ceasing transformation of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous.
>
> (Spencer, p.177)

Spencer's sense of the 'complication of things' translates in George Eliot's novels into a consciousness of the rich, complex density of life. The richness of George Eliot's style, the overlapping levels and dimensions achieved by her consideration of the 'vast sum of conditions' which make up George Eliot's presentation of the web of human

experience, makes for something always less definite than the settled conclusions of pessimism.

In his essay 'George Eliot's Art', James Sully discusses George Eliot's dense style and argues that the characters of her novels are shown not as determined but 'in the making', 'crossed and complicated by antagonistic forces which may for a time seem to carry the day':

> I have observed that the distinction between the characters and the plot of a novel is only a rough distinction. This remark applies with special force to George Eliot's stories. These appear in a remarkable degree, when regarded from one point of view, as the outcome of her characters, from another point of view, as the formation of these characters. (Sully, *Mind*, pp.382, 385)

In *Adam Bede*, for example, the complicated interweaving of the story as both the 'outcome of character' and at the same time the 'formation of character' is evident in the case of Hetty and of Adam Bede himself. Neither are simply victims of circumstance: temperament and personality partly create the situations from which they suffer, whatever it is that has created these temperaments and personalities, while the characters are themselves changed even by what is suffered at their own hands. George Eliot offers a more indeterminate shape to life than Hardy can allow.

Thus, Hetty is presented as an unformed creature. Dinah views Hetty's deficiencies in terms of 'a blank in her nature' (*Adam Bede*, p.203). The purpose of the story is, in part, to fill up the blank yet, at another level, the blank in Hetty's nature causes the events of the story. In the following scene Hetty is in her bedroom fantasizing about a future with Arthur Donnithorne:

> They are but dim and ill-defined pictures that her narrow bit of imagination can make of the future; but of every picture she is the central figure, in fine clothes; Captain Donnithorne is very close to her, putting his arm around her, perhaps kissing her, and everybody else is admiring and envying her - especially Mary Burge, whose print dress looks very contemptible by the side of Hetty's resplendent toilette. Does any sweet or sad memory mingle with this dream of the future - any loving thought of her second parents - of the children she had helped to tend - of any youthful companion, any pet animal, any relic of her own childhood even? Not one. There are some plants that have hardly any roots: you may tear them from their native nook of rock or wall, and just lay them over your ornamental flower-pot, and they blossom none the worse. Hetty could have cast all her past life behind her and never cared to be reminded of it again.
> (*Adam Bede*, p.199)

Hetty has a narcissistic version of the future: everyone and everything else pales into insignificance in the imagination of her own splendour. Even Arthur, who in her fantasy holds the key to her future material happiness, has no place other than as a symbol of her status - a further adornment to her 'resplendent toilette'. George Eliot's question - 'does any sweet or sad memory mingle with this dream of the future?' - becomes gradually despairing as she moves from parents to children, to companion, to animal, to object. The vanity and sheer preoccupation with herself which characterize Hetty's nature means that she is a dislocated individual who lacks any psychological sense of structure to her life. She exists in the unreal present with no vividly remembered past, while at the same *time* she is always placing herself imaginatively in a scene from a self-designed fantasy future. But the lack of deep roots both creates and is further reinforced by Hetty's own rejection of memory and her rejection of the familiar and routine aspects of her young life. Hetty, as an unformed creature, gives herself a form or false shape (though fantasy) which will actually undo her. George Eliot writes of Hetty:

> Hetty had never read a novel: if she had ever seen one, I think the words would have been too hard for her: how then could she find a shape for her expectations? They were as formless as the sweet languid colours of the garden at the Chase, which had floated past her as she walked by the gate. (*Adam Bede*, p.181)

The suggestion behind George Eliot's thought - 'I think the words would have been too hard for her' - is not simply that, intellectually, Hetty is uneducated. For even if Hetty were to know more vocabulary it would be in Hetty's nature to reject the form of the unfolding events in the shape of George Eliot's realistic novel. Hetty understands the future not as an unfolding process but as variations on one specific scene in which she is the central figure. The fantasy that Hetty sees as her story, we read as the psychological expression of her character.

James Sully's idea that there is no clear distinction between plot and character in George Eliot's novels, and that her characters are presented 'in the making', is further illustrated through Adam Bede's experience. For two years after the external events which made up the story are over and Adam is left to carry on with his life, his nature is still being inwardly rewritten by the impact of events which externally have no physical existence:

> Love, he thought, could never be anything to him but a living memory - a limb lopped off, but not gone from consciousness. He did not know that the power of loving was all the while gaining new force within him; that the new sensibilities bought by a deep experience were so many new fibres by which it was possible, nay, necessary to him, that his nature should intertwine with another. Yet he was aware that common affection and friendship were more precious to him than they used to be, - that he clung more to his mother and Seth, and had an unspeakable satisfaction in the sight or imagination of any small addition to their happiness. The Poysers, too - hardly three or four days passed but he felt the need of seeing them and interchanging words and looks of friendliness with them: he would have felt this, probably, even if Dinah had not been with them; but he had only said the simplest truth in telling Dinah that he put her above all other friends in the world.
> (*Adam Bede*, p.532)

Adam believes that he is an emotionally mutilated individual, incapable of loving again as a result of losing Hetty. However, in truth it is precisely the pain of his own suffering that has increased his sensitivity and strengthened his desire to secure the happiness of those around him. The hardness which affected Adam's imaginative capacity, particularly towards his father's feelings, has been enlarged by a new imaginative vision all the more authentic for seeming to Adam deservedly smaller: 'he clung more to his mother and Seth and had an unspeakable satisfaction in the sight or imagination of any small addition to their happiness'. Adam's pleasure is 'unspeakable' because he cannot himself place a logical understanding on the originating force of such feelings. It is not simply as a result of the events of the story (cause and effect) that Adam has come to place a compensatingly new value on his close bonds. Such feelings were always in Adam - but he has himself to be broken by his relation to, and loss of, Hetty before he is able to appreciate their worth to him. His movement forward in life after the apparent end of 'story' is governed by changes in him which, psychologically, were wrought in the past. Adam believes his feelings are naturally strong towards Dinah as a consequence of her involvement in the painful events connected to Hetty. For Adam's consciousness of Hetty's pain continues to dominate every memory in connection with his past. But Adam's feelings towards Dinah, though he does not fully realize it himself, are more emotionally developed and deep-rooted than in his first love for Hetty. When Adam does begin to think of loving Dinah as a wife, George Eliot states:

> Dinah was so bound up with the sad memories of his first passion, that he was not forsaking them, but rather giving them a new sacredness by loving her. Nay

> his love for her had grown out of that past: it was the noon of that morning. (*Adam Bede*, p.546)

In George Eliot there can be no simplistic settling of accounts whereby Hetty, Adam's first love, would merely be superseded by his love for Dinah. I return briefly to the passage concerning Adam's recovery which I cited in Chapter Three:

> That is a base and selfish, even blasphemous spirit, which rejoices and is thankful over the past evil that has blighted or crushed another, because it has made a source of unforseen good for ourselves [...] he could never thank God for another's misery. (*Adam Bede*, p.573)

Adam cannot be glad that his gain has resulted from Hetty's loss, for there are overlapping concerns and stories operating in George Eliot's web which mean that Adam's newly realized love for Dinah is inextricably '*bound up* with sad memories' of losing Hetty.

The fluid nature of George Eliot's writing 'crossed and complicated', as Sully describes it, by so many considerations is further illustrated by her treatment of Mr Tulliver's thoughts and feelings towards his sister in *The Mill on the Floss*. Mr Tulliver returns to his sister to tell her not to worry, after all, about the money he loaned to her husband:

> And so the respectable miller returned along the Basset lanes rather more puzzled than before as to ways and means, but still with the sense of danger escaped. It had come across his mind that if he were hard upon his sister, it might somehow tend to make Tom hard upon Maggie, at some distant day, when her father was no longer there to take her part; for simple people, like our friend Mr Tulliver, are apt to clothe unimpeachable feelings in erroneous ideas, and this was his confused way of explaining to himself that his love and anxiety for the 'little wench' had given him a new sensibility towards his sister. (*The Mill*, p.144)

George Eliot's use of the term 'erroneous ideas' is related to Spinoza's own term in the *Ethics*, in which he describes human emotion as a 'confused idea', by which he argues, the body's action is 'increased, diminished, aided or restrained' (*Ethics*, p.152). Tulliver believes that he has resolved not to call in the loan because of a superstitious forward-looking dread. But his decision is in fact more psychologically backward-looking, and later on in the novel George Eliot confirms her idea by overlapping Mr Tulliver's own feelings with those of his son, young Tom Tulliver.

She reveals Tom's feelings on returning home from the Stelling's school at the end of his first session:

> There is no sense of ease like the ease we felt in those scenes where we were born, where objects became dear to us before we had known the labour of choice, and where the outer world seemed only an extension of our personality: we accepted and loved it as we accept our own sense of existence and our own limbs. (*The Mill*, p.222)

George Eliot concludes by saying that the 'loves and sanctities of life' have 'deep immovable roots in memory'. The source of Mr Tulliver's decision thus rests in his psychological attachments 'before we had known the labour of choice'. His superstitious thoughts about Maggie would not have been so strong without his having been a brother first. But at another level, the force of his feelings of tenderness towards his sister are fuelled equally by the combination of memory and of what George Eliot referred to earlier as the 'superadded life in the life of others' - Mr Tulliver's fatherhood and his love for his daughter (*The Mill*, p.320). Although the larger thoughts articulated by the presence of 'George Eliot' cannot be said to belong overtly to her characters, the knowledge to which George Eliot gives expression emanates *from* them even if most often it is not fully understood or owned *by* them. George Eliot uses her richly evolved syntax to disentangle emotion and decipher its true meaning and originating force.

In *The Lifted Veil*, Latimer expresses his regret at the reductive effect of simple syntax. He states:

> So much misery - so slow and hideous a growth of hatred and sin, may be compressed into a sentence! And men judge of each other's lives through this summary medium. They epitomise the experience of their fellow-mortal, and pronounce judgement on him in neat syntax, and feel themselves wise and virtuous - conquerors over the temptations they define in well selected predictates. Seven years of wretchedness glide glibly over the lips of the man who has never counted them out in moments of chill disappointment, of head and heart throbbings, or dead and vain wrestling, of remorse and despair. We learn *words* by rote, but not their meaning; *that* must be paid for with our life-blood, and printed in the subtle fibres of our nerves. (*Lifted Veil*, p.52)

But it is a reaction against a 'summary medium' and a 'neat syntax' that drives Marian Evans in her novelistic career to develop a complicated syntax and create 'books with *more* in them' such as the young Maggie Tulliver craved (*The Mill*, p.379). The ideal

of genuine fellowship becomes incarnate in the novel as the presence of 'George Eliot', placing herself in the midst of her character's speech and thought in a way that holds and sustains both character and reader, forming the missing links that Maggie Tulliver so required.

In a letter to Barbara Bodichon 12 May 1863, George Eliot told her friend:

> If there is one attitude more odious to me than any other of the many attitudes of 'knowingness,' it is that air of lofty superiority to the vulgar. (Cross, p.361)

The 'George Eliot' consciousness within her novels, whilst superior to that of the individual view, avoids the trap of which she was critical in those writers whose smug narrative-superiority was in place of efforts at sympathetic fellowship. In 'Janet's Repentance', for example, George Eliot uses her syntax to provide an almost physical presence in her text. George Eliot's voice enters in the form of a small paragraph which occurs in the middle of the page, on the level in a literal sense with Tryan's story. Her presence ensures that the reader sees Mr Tryan as not entirely alone even when he feels entirely alienated from human kindness and support:

> I am not poised at that lofty height. I am on the level and in the press with him, as he struggles his way along the stony road, though the crowd of unloving fellow-men. He is stumbling, perhaps; his heart now beats fast with dread, now heavily with anguish; his eyes are sometimes dim with tears, which he makes haste to dash away; he pushes manfully on, with fluctuating faith and courage, with a sensitive failing body; at last he falls, the struggle is ended, and the crowd closes over the space he has left. ('Janet's Repentance', p.322)

Thomas Hardy cannot cross over from narrator to fellow-man; for him the narrator is a merely bitterly fictional presence. Tess, we have seen, is alone on the 'long and stony highway which she has to tread, without aid, and with little sympathy' (*Tess* p.133). But whilst the Tryan scene is also concerned with the 'stony road' towards death, George Eliot inhabits the void where God once was. George Eliot speaks not for something that is *not* there, as Hardy suspects, but for something that *is* there, she riskily believes, but is not otherwise realized. There are invisible laws and forces in and around people which George Eliot's language represents.

It is George Eliot's capacity to operate at different levels within her novels gives the force to David Lodge's criticism of Colin MacCabe's analysis of George Eliot. Instead of understanding George Eliot's work in terms of 'a "metalanguage"

controlling, interpreting and judging the other discourses, and thus putting the reader in a position of dominance over the characters and their stories', Lodge believes it is more helpful to understand George Eliot's work in terms of 'mimesis' (narrating by imitating another's speech) and 'diegesis' (narrating in one's own voice). He argues:

> The device is an extremely flexible one, which allows the narrator to move very freely and fluently between poles of mimesis and diegesis within a single paragraph, or even a single sentence: and its effect is always to make the reader's task of interpretation more active and problematic.[10]

What David Lodge articulates as George Eliot's ability to move fluently between these modes of mimesis and diegesis is illustrated in the very making of *Middlemarch*. George Eliot's fluid syntactic technique becomes sophisticatedly refined so as to be even more richly intertwined in the sentence-structure with her characters' own thoughts and feelings. This is illustrated by examining her treatment of Lydgate and his growing awareness that his marriage has failed to meet his expectations:

> To Lydgate it seemed that he had been spending month after month in sacrificing more than half of his best intent and best power to his tenderness for Rosamond; bearing her little claims and interruptions without impatience, and above all, bearing without betrayal of bitterness to look through less and less of interfering illusion at the blank unreflecting surface her mind presented to his ardour for the more impersonal ends of his profession and of scientific study, an ardour which he had fancied that the ideal wife must somehow worship as sublime, though not in the least knowing why. But his endurance was mingled with a self-discontent which, if we know how to be candid, we shall confess makes more than half our bitterness under grievances, wife or husband included. It always remains true that if we had been greater, circumstance would have been less strong against us. (*Middlemarch*, p.632)

Bitterly Lydgate sees that Rosamond has not fulfilled his expectations as the ideal (or fantasy) wife he had hoped for. And there is no doubt, objectively, as to her very real and culpable deficiencies. In a one-sided world, Lydgate would simply blame her. But in George Eliot's world, created by thoughts that lie parallel with Lydgate's own, Lydgate is half-consciously aware that, now, the very idea of blame is an illusion behind which he hides rather than confront his own inadequacies. His choice of Rosamond is also relative to a flaw in himself in the first place. Simultaneously, in this

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[10] David Lodge, '*Middlemarch* and the Idea of a Classic Realist Text', Newton, pp.175-176.

complex and fluid mix, Lydgate would fear blaming Rosamond merely if it means admitting his mistake in loving her. There are good and bad reasons for his compromise and his endurance, 'if we know how to be candid'. So often 'we' in George Eliot's language offers what 'he' himself can barely bring himself to know.

There are self-doubts which exist in Lydgate that his strong egoism would rather disown. But George Eliot also locates thoughts which, without Lydgate's realization, have come to own him. The following conversation with Farebrother illustrates as much:

> 'I shall set up a surgery,' he said. 'I really think I made a mistaken effort in that respect. And if Rosamond will not mind, I shall take an apprentice. I don't like these things, but if one carries them out faithfully they are not really lowering. I have had a severe galling to begin with: that will make the small rubs seem easy.'
>
> Poor Lydgate! the 'if Rosamond will not mind', which had fallen from him involuntarily as a part of his thought, was a significant mark of the yoke he wore. But Mr Farebrother, whose hopes entered strongly into the same current as Lydgate's, and who knew nothing about him that could now raise a melancholy presentiment, left him with affectionate congratulations. (*Middlemarch*, p.768)

George Eliot notes the tiny clause in Lydgate's sentence ('if Rosamond will not mind') as a 'part of his thought' disclosing 'the significant mark of the yoke he wore'. It is out of these minute, subtle processes, changes which George Eliot marks syntactically, that the formation of character is presented, as James Sully states, '*in the making*'. George Eliot earlier wrote of Lydgate:

> There is always a good number who once meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little. The story of their *coming to be* shapen after the average and fit to be packed by the gross, is hardly ever told even in their consciousness.
> (*Middlemarch*, p.174 *my italics)

In the melting-pot of her novels, where shaping and being shaped become densely reciprocal and intervolved, it is as though we can see life in the making - indeed, in the following we can see, through George Eliot's presence, how Lydgate's most habitual thoughts have become formal, this time with George Eliot not so much alongside his thoughts but virtually inside them:

> His marriage would be a mere piece of bitter irony if they could not go on loving each other. He had long ago made up his mind to what he thought was her negative character - her want of sensibility, which showed itself in disregard both

> of his specific wishes and of his general aims. The first great disappointment had been borne: the tender devotedness and docile adoration of the ideal wife must be renounced, and life must be taken up on a lower stage of expectation, as it is by men who have lost their limbs. But the real wife had not only her claims, she had still a hold on his heart, and it was his intense desire that the hold should remain strong. In marriage, the certainty, 'She will never love me much', is easier to bear than the fear, 'I shall love her no more.' Hence, after that violent outburst, his inward effort was entirely to excuse her, and to blame the hard circumstances which were partly his fault. He tried that evening, by petting her, to heal the wound he had made in the morning, and it was not in Rosamond's nature to be repellent or sulky; indeed she welcomed the signs that her husband loved her and was under her control. But this was something quite distinct from loving *him*. (*Middlemarch*, p.702)

Indeed, James Sully's assertions concerning the overlap and mix in George Eliot of characters both suffering their fate and creating or even needing it is further illustrated here. Even the failure to shape a life itself shapes it. For in the very failure of Lydgate's marriage, George Eliot discloses a sense of urgency beneath Lydgate's attachment to Rosamond which is fuelled by *more* as well as less than simply love or sexual appetite: desire, fear, love, cowardice, fidelity - all these aspects richly go into Lydgate's motivation towards his efforts to salvage something from his impoverished marriage.[11] What we see again 'in the making', is the very archaeology of sentences hidden like layers of pain and experience beneath the cover-up required to sustain the marriage as apparently just another realistically rendered commonplace: 'In marriage, the certainty, "She will never love me much", is easier to bear than the fear, "I shall love her no more." ' It is characteristic of human nature, George Eliot understands, to try to keep love alive in some form, even if that love is not reciprocated. It is another version of Spinoza's 'conatus'. Lydgate's renunciation of the ideal wife is rendered in medical metaphor: in Lydgate's mind it is eas*ier* to carry on as if he has undergone some sort of psychological amputation. For his love of Rosamond is inextricably mingled with the fear of what he will himself become if he ceases to love her. George Eliot uses the metaphor to reveal the hidden reality of Lydgate's situation, not for the purpose of exaggeration or microscopic enlargement but for the verbal expression of

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[11] It is this sort of tacit work done by George Eliot within the text which justifies William Myers's interpretation of George Eliot. He argues that an understanding of George Eliot's teaching merely as moral preaching is 'a reduction of her teaching to a mere message, a trivially organicist moral', without giving credit to the way in which George Eliot herself 'acts within her own writing' (Myers, pp.241-242).

what is otherwise hidden in secondary reality. The complex mixture of concerns involved in Lydgate's situation makes easy escape or evasion impossible.

In Hardy a compromise such as Lydgate's would merely be a part of a cycle of bleak entrapment. In *Jude the Obscure* Jude finds that his higher aspirations are curtailed by his marriage to Arabella. After Jude discovers that Arabella is not pregnant, Hardy writes:

> He was inclined to inquire what he had done, or she had lost, for that matter, that he deserved to be caught in a gin which would cripple him, if not her also, for the rest of a lifetime? There was perhaps something fortunate in the fact that the immediate reason of his marriage had proved to be non-existent. But the marriage remained. (*Jude*, p.107)

George Eliot's characters set out in moral ignorance of the unknown workings of life and are then enriched by experience even if it apparently impoverishes them: Lydgate's situation is both complex and rich even in its failure. In Hardy experience is reductive, resulting only in a loss of faith in human nature, in loneliness and disappointment. To George Eliot, even when the marriage is painfully disappointing, remaining in the mixture and working within it is part of the richness or equivocal fulness of life. Realism denies escape or transcendence; it is the staying-in the human system even in its apparent mess. But in Hardy the concept of staying in is bitterly depressing. As narrator Hardy cannot work within the syntax of his text to provide any equivalent sense of the enriching presence of George Eliot, and there is nobody inside the plot of the novel to offer Jude a wider vision beyond the finality of being crippled by a punitive life-sentence relation to Arabella. Nobody came to Jude 'because', says Hardy, 'nobody does'. But in George Eliot people do come forward within the plot of the novel, characters who themselves are capable of enlarging upon the perspective: believers. After the trouble over the suspicious death of Raffles, it is Dorothea who goes to Lydgate and by offering him her belief in his honour, restores him, with a greater sense of wholeness, to his true self:

> The presence of a noble nature, generous in its wishes, ardent in its charity, changes the lights for us: we begin to see things again in their larger, quieter masses, and to believe that we too can be seen and judged in the wholeness of our character. That influence was beginning to act on Lydgate, who had for many days been seeing all life as one who is dragged and struggling amid the throng. He sat down again and felt that he was recovering his old self in the consciousness that he was with one who believed in it. [...] He gave himself up,

> for the first time in his life, to the exquisite sense of leaning entirely on a generous sympathy without any check of proud reserve.
>
> (*Middlemarch*, pp.819, 820)

Maggie Tulliver's passionate nature and the hard lessons of her early life were not transformed within the confines of *The Mill on the Floss* into the rich wider consciousness which constitutes the presence of George Eliot. Instead, I have said, Maggie's qualities were absorbed by George Eliot the novelist and later, in *Middlemarch*, are reinvested in the construction of Dorothea, an actual physical 'presence' within the novel, a better-developed version of Maggie. Dorothea is a believer acting within the plot of the novel, representing that 'larger', 'whole' vision which the 'George Eliot' consciousness offers within the syntax of the text as *Middlemarch*'s greatness of enlarged vision.

In *Middlemarch* the voice of George Eliot actualizes Lydgate's thoughts for him, but in *Daniel Deronda* as the crucial final test and development of what Hardy would dismiss as George Eliot's fictional presence, Gwendolen Harleth has to make explicit to *herself* that consciousness which Lydgate has only implicitly. There are no get-out clauses in life Gwendolen discovers, even as Tito refused to admit; there is only the staying in and working through the consequences of one's decisions. Gwendolen quickly begins to realize that her imagined status in marriage as the ruler of Grandcourt was naively mistaken:

> Whatever her husband might come at last to be to her, she meant to wear the yoke so as not to be pitied. For she did think of the coming years with presentiment: she was frightened at Grandcourt. The poor thing had passed from her girlish sauciness of superiority over this inert specimen of personal distinction into an amazed perception of her former ignorance about the possible mental attitude of a man towards the woman he sought in marriage - of her present ignorance as to what their life with each other might turn into. [...] 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. (*Deronda*, pp.479-480)

Gwendolen's defiant assertion to herself that she will bear her unhappy marriage to Grandcourt, 'whatever her husband might come at last to be to her', is mixed with a suppressed terror of that unknown future. Going even further than Lydgate, she recognizes that her situation is the inescapable consequence of her choice to marry but now, on the other side of that decision, Gwendolen's imagination is torturously kept

in suspense, faced with an infinite expanse of time ('blank uncertainty'). She has no means of filling up the gap with the knowledge of how long the yoke must be worn, or how much worse the situation with Grandcourt will become. The extent of her mistake becomes terrifyingly immediate and real to her when aligned in opposition to her previous 'girlish' fantasy of marriage. Whereas Lydgate remained wilfully unconscious of the small clauses which disclosed the fact of 'the yoke that he wore' in his marriage to Rosamond, Gwendolen has an equivalent sense of the adult 'George Eliot' vision involuntarily thrust upon her with a new 'amazed perception'. Indeed, the amazement at what she has done is *itself* a richer thing than what she did, though she cannot get it clear of her own horror. Gwendolen is lacking in a framework of ideas and beliefs by which to make any sense of that vision. Instead, it is Daniel Deronda who, externally, must try to create some sort of form for understanding, providing the ideas in which Gwendolen is deficient. But at least she will not try to escape now, but remains *in* a fuller consciousness of her situation as George Eliot's realism increasingly demands of itself.

When Gwendolen confesses to Deronda that she has sacrificed the needs of others to her own selfish ends, he tells her:

> 'That is the bitterest of all - to wear the yoke of our own wrongdoing. But if you submitted to that, as men submit to maiming or a life-long incurable disease? - and made the unalterable wrong a reason for more effort towards a good that may do something to counterbalance the evil? One who has committed irremediable errors may be scourged by that consciousness into a higher course than is common. [...] Life *would* be worth more to you: some real knowledge would give you an interest in the world beyond the small drama of personal desires. It is the curse of your life - forgive me - of so many lives, that all passion is spent in that narrow round, for want of ideas and sympathies to make a larger home for it.' (*Deronda*, pp.506, 507)

Daniel uses the metaphor which in *Middlemarch* George Eliot employed to express the real state of Lydgate's inward condition - the maiming of limbs and life. In this final novel, Daniel acts as the voice of George Eliot and, almost as if Gwendolen were another version of Lydgate, forces upon her the consciousness which she can hardly bear to actualize herself. In Hardy his protagonists never get beyond a 'full look at the worst' such as Gwendolen must endure; instead their sense of being crippled is

mingled with mental resistance and hopeless kicking against the unfairness of things universal until, finally worn out, they go to the wall.[12] But in *Daniel Deronda* making truly *explicit* the inward condition is a part of the therapy towards reconstructing a better life, a source for future hope. What Daniel is offering is some level of certainty ('your life *would* be worth more to you') which is not based on evasion or escape in the realm of time or chance and story. He speaks from the faithfully held conviction that compensatory measures are practically impossible and that only the refusal of compensation or escape is the true way to real compensation itself. But if Gwendolen is to break free of the trap into which Hardy's protagonists fall (suffering a future determined by the past or by their preoccupation with it), she must somehow take charge of her body of experience and make a determined redoubled effort against the damaging results of her actions in her very self. James Sully described George Eliot's teaching as 'the faith which affirms our ability to increase the amount of positive good [...] a practical creed sufficient to inspire ardent and prolonged endeavour'.

In her earlier novel, George Eliot wrote of Maggie Tulliver precisely in terms of her need of ideas, her craving for something beyond the narrow, confined personal concerns of home which would provide a better understanding of 'this mysterious life and give her soul a sense of home in it'. But in Maggie's short life the force of her rich, passionate nature was partly self-destructive: it remained unchannelled, unable to transcend what here Deronda calls the 'small drama of personal desires [...] the narrow round'. Gwendolen's position, in a sense, is even worse than that of the young Maggie. She has not even read any books which might provide ideas to help her such as *Of the Imitation of Christ*. The idea of submission as the only means of genuinely moving forward is completely alien to Gwendolen who has lived a life dominated by the principle of crude self-assertion. Gwendolen has never before sought the enlarging perspective of a truly wider vision. She has feared that vision and habitually evaded it:

> Solitude in any wide scene impressed upon her with an undefined feeling of immeasurable existence aloof from her, in the midst of which she was helplessly incapable of asserting herself. (*Deronda*, pp.94-95)

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[12] Thomas Hardy, 'In Tenebris' II, *The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by James Gibson, New Wessex edn (London: Macmillan, 1976), p.168.

Gwendolen would have preferred to eschew her deep, instinctive, *spiritual* dread merely dismissing it as a strange, internal, *psychological* peculiarity of her nature instead of understanding the originating force of her fear as a half-buried consciousness of something genuinely external and 'other'. Yet as the plot of the novel unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that a stance based on a Darwinian version of survival is not sufficient to sustain Gwendolen. Indeed, it results in Gwendolen's life being ordered arbitrarily on the basis of her own selfish desires. George Eliot had always picked up the implicit 'roar on the other side of silence', as narrator. Now, her explicitness is itself what the characters have to take on.

In the contrasting relation between Gwendolen Harleth and Daniel Deronda George Eliot reclaims the religious concept of the necessity for a vocation. She reveals her strong conviction that human beings must have a framework of belief in something that constitutes more than the narrowly personal, something truly external and real towards which they must single-mindedly strive. Even with Gwendolen in her deprivation and inchoateness, George Eliot challenges Hardy's later sense of ironic paradox in the fact that so much rich complexity of life goes into what is still human failure. Now at the end of her career, George Eliot turns towards the need for some explicit structure of belief in which the richness of human content is no longer threatened with irony and paradox but can be invested and harnessed in order that man can benefit from and fulfil its potential. In her final novel George Eliot illustrates that those multifarious ingredients which comprise the rich mixture of life need to be fully incorporated within the individual's larger experience. Whatever 'George Eliot' stands for must finally be made incarnate *within* the characters themselves, *inside* the very persons of Gwendolen and Deronda. There must be a point at which all the weakness, the mistakes, the sadness, the failure, and the passion of early youth makes for something that does credit to its hidden force. Daniel finds a home and a context for understanding through his return to Judaism. But even whilst Gwendolen is left still lacking an equivalent form in which to concentrate the rich stuff of life, still the materials remain contained in solution in George Eliot's novel waiting for a future form in which to be invested, so that human nature does not let itself down.

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