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THEMES AND STRUCTURAL SYMBOLS

IN THE

NOVELS OF GEORGE ELIOT

by

David R. Carroll

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PREFACE

This study is an attempt to trace George Eliot's artistic development. During the past few years several critical studies of the novels have appeared, but none of them has been primarily concerned with this aspect of her writing: Barbara Hardy's pioneer work, The Novels of George Eliot (1959), is a 'study in form' in which Mrs Hardy abstracts certain formal aspects for discussion; Jerome Thale's The Novels of George Eliot (1959) consists of separate studies of the novels and makes little attempt to see any connection between them; W. J. Harvey's The Art of George Eliot (1961) is highly selective in its general discussion of certain of George Eliot's conventions and techniques. The present study consists basically of separate studies of the novels; but an attempt is made throughout, first, to suggest with the aid of George Eliot's other writings the significance of certain themes which persist through the novels, and secondly, to trace the development of George Eliot's use of symbol and structure to express these themes.

Three parts of this study have already been published:

- (i) The final section of chapter one has appeared in more extended form as "An Image of Disenchantment in the novels of George Eliot," Review of English Studies, II (1960), 29-41.
- (ii) Chapter ten is an expanded version of "The Unity of Daniel Deronda," Essays in Criticism, 9 (1959), 369-380.
- (iii) Chapter eleven is an expanded version of "Unity Through Analogy: an Interpretation of Middlemarch," Victorian Studies, 2 (1959), 305-316.

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INTRODUCTION

(i)

George Eliot's main concern in her novels is the nature and quality of human relationships; how does one character regard his own self in relation to the selves of others? The answers she gives to this question in the novels are many and varied, but at the two extremes she places egoism and selflessness and both are seen as unsatisfactory. In 'Looking Inward', the first of the Impressions of Theophrastus Such, we have a convenient summary of this range of attitudes as the imaginary author describes his progress from one extreme of the moral spectrum to the other. First, he enjoyed a 'self-partiality', 'the consolations of egoism', but quickly came to realise how negative and blinding this attitude of mind was:

Examining the world in order to find consolation is very much like looking carefully over the pages of a great book in order to find our own name, if not in the text, at least in a laudatory note: whether we find what we want or not, our preoccupation has hindered us from a true knowledge of the contents.

Society would quickly come to consist in this way of an aggregate of self-engrossed, isolated atoms, each the centre of its own imaginary world. Recovering from this malaise, "I have at least succeeded in establishing a habit of mind which keeps watch against my self-partiality and promotes a fair consideration of what touches the

feelings or the fortunes of my neighbours...." But the movement from one extreme to a more balanced central position is given too much momentum by the unrepentant egoism of the people with whom Theophrastus is in contact, and he quickly swings to the other extreme of selflessness:

While my desire to explain myself in private ears has been quelled, the habit of getting interested in the experience of others has been continually gathering strength, and I am really at the point of finding that this world would be worth living in without any lot of one's own.... But this sounds like the lunacy of fancying oneself everybody else and being unable to play one's part decently--another form of the disloyal attempt to be independent of the common lot, and to live without a sharing of pain.

This denial of the self is condemned because it is a rejection of self-commitment, and consequently as obstructive to effective social action as is the denial of others. These two extremes are presented together in their most diametrically opposed forms at the beginning of George Eliot's final novel in the characters of Deronda, the essence of self-abnegation, and Grandcourt, the essence of self-will; and their actions, prompted by such different motives, are shown to be outwardly almost identical--vacillating, uncertain, and random. Society, George Eliot is saying, is neither an aggregate of selfish egos nor an amorphous mass of selfless beings, but a community in which the uniqueness of the individual is synthesised with an awareness of corporate existence.

These personal relationships are of fundamental importance because they form the tissue out of which society with its complex of associations and institutions is made. And the most heroic aspect of George Eliot's work is her continued attempt to connect meaningfully the minutiae of personal conduct with the ^{increasingly impersonal} forces at work in society. Rousseau can help us to understand this. His major concept of the General Will is

attempting a similar synthesis. The General Will does not only find expression in political and social organisations; it also links these organisations with the most intimate of the individuals personal relationships. The idea of the General Will is rational—being that part of the will of the individual or the group which is directed to the advantage of the community—but it requires a guiding impulse or sentiment, and this is to be found in the nature of human relationships. G. D. H. Cole describes this sentiment in terms which lead us back to George Eliot:

The nature of this guiding sentiment is explained in the Discourse on Inequality...where egoism (amour-propre) is contrasted with self-respect (amour de soi). Naturally, Rousseau holds, man does not want everything for himself, and nothing for others. 'Egoism' and 'altruism' are both one-sided qualities arising out of the perversion of man's 'natural goodness'. 'Man is born good', that is, man's nature really makes him desire only to be treated as one among others, to share equally. This natural love of equality (amour de soi) includes love of others as well as love of self, and egoism, loving one's self at the expense of others, is an unnatural and perverted condition. The 'rational' precepts of the General Will, therefore, find an echo in the heart of the 'natural' man, and, if we can only secure the human being against perversion by existing societies, the General Will can be made actual.^I

This is the area, where the quality of specific human relationships touches the forces controlling society, that George Eliot persistently explores. She never seeks to avoid the fundamental problems either by creating a fully deterministic universe or by falling back on a distinction between the sanctity, the 'truth' of face-to-face relationships and the falsity of a materialistic, inhuman society. Indeed, her whole work can be seen as a refusal to acknowledge this distinction; and this refusal is at work in the novels, where the dramatisation of individual relationships is continually penetrated

by George Eliot's awareness of the larger social forces at work destroying and transforming societies.

(ii)

What are the qualities which enable the individual to achieve this correct relationship with other human beings? George Eliot is in no doubt. Morality is a fusion of the sympathetic emotions and knowledge, with knowledge giving direction to emotion and emotion animating knowledge:

...let our habitual talk give morals their full meaning as the conduct which, in every human relation, would follow from the fullest knowledge and the fullest sympathy—a meaning perpetually corrected and enriched by a more thorough appreciation of dependence in things, and a finer sensibility to both physical and spiritual fact—and this ~~very~~ ridiculous ascription of superlative power to minds which have no effective awe-inspiring vision of the human lot, no response of understanding to the connection between duty and the material processes by which the world is kept habitable for cultivated man, will be tacitly discredited....²

This definition of morality is the basis of George Eliot's belief in the unitary nature of culture. As she says in her essay on Young, "On its theoretic and preceptive side, morality touches Science; on its emotional side, Art."³ Her acceptance of this triunity provides a firm standing-ground from which to criticise each of its members. An artist like Young, for example, who over-emphasises the "theoretic and preceptive side" of morality, writes poems of empty abstraction: "A man who is perpetually thinking in monitory apothegms...can have little energy left for simple feeling."⁴ Similarly, the scientist must not

ignore the "emotional side" of morality. In discussing Dr Cumming's "unscrupulosity of statement", George Eliot comments: "A distinct appreciation of the value of evidence—in other words, the intellectual perception of truth—is more closely allied to truthfulness of statement, or the moral quality of veracity, than is generally admitted....that highest moral habit, the constant preference of truth, both theoretically and practically, pre-eminently demands the co-operation of the intellect with the impulses...."⁵ One thinks of Lydgate destroyed by the division between his intellectual and his emotional life, and, on the other hand, of Goethe ('the poet as man of science', G. H. Lewes calls him in his biography)⁶ who came to symbolise for the nineteenth century the possibility of unifying the two extremes of a divided culture by means of this fusion of emotion and intellect.

In his personal relations, the individual must combine a detailed knowledge and understanding with full sympathy. In Middlemarch, George Eliot gives a particularly vivid description of what this means in terms of day-to-day living; Dorothea halfway through the novel begins at last "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 Mr ~~fit~~ Casaubon had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference"(xxi). The images which carry the meaning are effectively modulated from the 'scientific' to the 'artistic.'⁷

Within a small, organic community, one can understand how this achieved quality of personal relationships can have full play and wide efficacy. By the end of Adam Bede the ripples of the personal drama have spread throughout Hayslope, influencing the whole community. But the character

of the community, with its eighteenth century hierarchical structure, remains unchanged; it is only that now the characters are more fully aware of its organic nature. Difficulties arise when these small, self-contained, organic communities are disrupted by science and industry. Then the bonds which hold society together become more and more impersonal, and personal relations are no longer the fundamental tissue of the community. In such a situation, the individual desiring to revitalise society has no generally accepted framework or structure through which to work. Saint Theresa's 'passionate, ideal nature' could find in the sixteenth century an outlet and fulfilment in the reform of a religious order. In the nineteenth century this is no longer possible "for these later-born Theresas were helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul."⁸ Before Dorothea Brooke can act she has to try to discover 'the primitive tissue' of society. By the time she has done this, we have come to realise that the multiplicity and variety of world-pictures formed from that tissue go a long way towards precluding any effective social action.

But George Eliot, writing in the age of the machine, does not merely indulge in nostalgia for the organic. However stable and satisfying was the relationship between the individual and society in such rural communities as Hayslope, it was also limited and parochial. So alongside her feeling of loss at the disintegration of the world of her childhood goes the hope that a more universal society is in process of being created. In The Mill on the Floss, the rising commercial middle-class is destroying the time-honoured, instinctive way of life of the Tullivers, but it is simultaneously developing the Floss as a life-line linking "the small pulse of the

old English town with the beatings of the world's mighty heart"(IV, i). As George Eliot says tersely in one of her reviews, "railways, steamships, and electric telegraphs...are demonstrating the interdependence of all human interests, and making self-interest a duct for sympathy."⁹ The difficult task is to ensure that sympathy uses and controls this new network of connections created by the intellect.

The danger is that the more the individual becomes aware of these ~~connections~~"conditions which are of a nature to awaken men's consciousness of their mutual dependence and to make the world one great society,"¹⁰ the less he will feel able to interfere with or utilise this complexity. Felix Holt becomes so aware of the delicate organism of society, "with all its various parts depending on one another, and with a terrible liability to get wrong because of that delicate dependence,"¹¹ that he finally eschews political action altogether. As the individual awaits the scientific discovery of the unalterable and unchanging laws of the universe, his organic and reciprocal relationship with the society of which he is a member falls into abeyance. He will come to see himself as a product of society rather than an agent determining the ethos of the society in which he lives. As George Eliot rounds off her review of Lecky's History of Rationalism with a paean of praise for positivist science, we catch a momentary glimpse of the individual, however 'ideal' and 'passionate' his nature, watching and waiting in silence:

The supremely important fact, that the gradual reduction of all phenomena within the sphere of established law, which carries as a consequence the rejection of the miraculous, has its determining current in the development of physical science, seems to have engaged comparatively little of his attention; at least, he gives it no prominence. The great conception of universal regular sequence, without

partiality and without caprice—the conception which is the most potent force at work in the modification of our faith, and of the practical form given to our sentiments—could only grow out of that patient watching of external facts, and that silencing of preconceived notions, which are urged upon the mind by the problems of physical science. ¹²

The belief in positivist science is strengthening the Burkean belief in caution and passivity in the face of the complexity of the social organism and its traditions.

One might wonder how in such a situation the idea of the individual as a morally responsible being survives, and how the conception of 'character' so indispensable to the novelist can flourish in an atmosphere so charged with "the high complexity of the causes at work in social evolution." ¹³ F. H. Bradley faced this problem in his Ethical Studies, which appeared in the same year as Daniel Deronda. There he shows how the advocates both of Free-Will and Necessity deny in fact the possibility of moral responsibility. Richard Wollheim summarises Bradley's position in this way:

A man has a character which 'makes itself'; and it is in the possession of this character—rather than in any occult or noumenal faculty of Will or Choice—that the secret of human responsibility lies. Neither of the great philosophical schools does justice to the role of character in human action: the Free Will School doesn't, because it totally separates character from the initiation of action, and the School of Necessity doesn't, because it denies the existence of character. By contrast, the theory of moral development that Bradley has adumbrated allows everything that vulgar opinion demands: a self, a self that develops freely, and a self that having attained development can then act, without its actions being naturally attributable either to external causes or to mere whim. ¹⁴

George Eliot, too, although fully aware of the deterministic

encroachments upon character, remains confident that the self is inviolate and ultimately responsible. She attempts to instil the same confidence into one of her friends in 1875:

...every fresh morning is an opportunity that one can look forward to for exerting one's will. I shall not be satisfied with your philosophy till you have conciliated necessitarianism—I hate the ugly word—with the practice of willing strongly, willing to will strongly, and so on, that being what you certainly can do and have done about a great many things in life, 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.

Are you not making a transient confusion of intuitions with innate ideas? The most thorough experientialists admit intuition—i.e., direct impressions of sensibility underlying all proof—as necessary starting-points for thought. (Letters, VI, 166-7)

By their existence, such intuitions preclude the deterministic nightmare in which everything is explicable and predictable.¹⁵ It is upon this essential basis that the self creates what George Eliot calls "the moral tradition",¹⁶ which is the individual's character. Every thought and action is a product of, and in turn modifies this tradition. In some ways George Eliot is here developing Aristotle's belief, as it is stated in his Ethics, that moral goodness is a confirmed disposition to act rightly, and this bent of character is formed by a continuous series of right actions. It is ⁱⁿ the presentation and analysis of the creation and destruction by the individual of his moral tradition that George Eliot is supreme. And it is this moral responsibility of the self and the rhythm of illusion and disenchantment, by means of which it comes to terms with world, that constitutes the essential unifying element of the novels. This rhythm will be the subject of the next chapter.

(iii)

Even if the idea of the morally responsible self has been salvaged, what course of action can the individual follow in the disintegrating world of the nineteenth century in order to assert and propagate his values? Aware that morality is not utilising the new links created by science and industry, George Eliot seems at times to be reconciled to the fact that only through his immediate personal contacts can the individual be certain of doing good without disturbing society's elaborate structure. "The progress of the world," George Eliot says in 1874, "can certainly never come at all save by the modified action of the individual beings who compose the world" (Letters, VI, 99). But she is aware, on the other hand, that if this course of action does not attempt to transcend what she calls "the pain and limitations of one's personal lot", then the result will be, like Dorothea's, temporary and unsatisfactory: "Certainly those determining acts of her life were not ideally beautiful. They were the mixed result of young and noble impulses struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect social state, in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion" (Finale). This dilemma finds repeated expression in her letters. In 1868, we find her writing: "I see clearly that we ought, each of us, not to sit down and wail, but to be heroic and constructive, if possible, like the strong souls who lived before, as in other cases [eras?] of religious decay" (Letters, IV, 472). The plaintive 'if possible' undermines the rest of the sentiment; and yet George Eliot herself was fortunate, for she could be heroic and constructive through the medium of her novels.

Her conception of the artist's role is Wordsworthian. Already in

in 1800 Wordsworth was fully aware of the threat to the traditional forms of society, and the consequent high importance of the poet:

For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where in the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies.¹⁷

The poet must lead the counter-revolution, not as the artist in isolation, but as "a man speaking to men", "nothing differing in kind from other men but only in degree."¹⁸ The poet is the good citizen par excellence, strengthening through his poems the bonds of society by his ability to fuse, at a higher temperature than the ordinary individual, thought and emotion: "For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings...." Then, says Wordsworth, "the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time."¹⁹ If the poet can fulfil this role, then there is nothing to fear from science and industry, and he goes on to anticipate closely the revolution in the midst of which George Eliot was writing:

If the labours of Men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the Man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself.²⁰

George Eliot has less confidence than Wordsworth; the poet has lagged much further behind the scientist than Wordsworth ever expected. But nevertheless, she is certain that through her art she can help to strengthen the tissue out of which society is formed. In 1868, she says that "the inspiring principle" which gives her courage to write is "that of so presenting our human life so as to help my readers in getting a clearer conception and more active admiration of those vital elements which bind men together" (Letters, IV, 472). Art is an effective force in society because, she says in her review of Riehl, it links us with human beings outside the confines of our restricted private lives:

The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies.... a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment. When Scott takes us into Luckie Mucklebackit's cottage, or tells the story of 'The Two Drovers', —when Wordsworth sings to us the reverie of 'Poor Susan'... more is done towards linking the higher classes with ^{the} lower, towards obliterating the vulgarity of exclusiveness, than by hundreds of sermons and philosophical dissertations. Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bonds of our personal lot.²¹

This highly moral approach to art, reminiscent of Ruskin, depends upon

the reality and truthfulness of the artist's vision, not upon his didacticism. "The thing for mankind to know is, not what are the motives ~~which~~ and influences which the moralist thinks ought to act on the labourer or the artisan, but what are the motives and influences which do act on him." ²² But however assured George Eliot is in discussing the role of the artist in her critical writings, it is noticeable that in the presentation of artists in her novels she seems fully aware of the artist's difficulty of maintaining the balance between his sensibility and his function in society. This balance is merely a finer and more complex manifestation of the equilibrium each individual in society must achieve between egoism and altruism, and an artistic failure is, for George Eliot, invariably caused by a failure in morality. One possible danger is that in face of a disintegrating and hostile world, the artist will concentrate on the cultivation of his sensibilities. This is amusingly exemplified in Middlemarch, where, after Ladislaw has passionately defined the poet in this way: "to be a poet is to have a soul so quick to discern, that no shade of quality escapes it, and so quick to feel, that discernment is but a hand playing with finely-ordered variety on the chords of emotion—a soul in which knowledge passes instantaneously into feeling, and feeling flashes back as a new organ of knowledge"; Dorothea briefly comments, "But you leave out the poems" (xxii). The poet must not allow his undissociated sensibility to turn him merely into a passive, suffering victim. This is what happens to the narrator of The Lifted Veil: "I saw in my face now nothing but the stamp of a morbid organisation, framed for passive suffering—too feeble for the sublime resistance of poetic production" (i). At the other extreme, there are the egoists like Naumann, Ladislaw's

friend, and Hans Meyrick, Deronda's friend, secure in their solipsistic worlds, regarding the universe solely as material for their art. George Eliot, herself seeing art from a moral point of view, is severe upon these artists who see morality from the point of view of art. At either extreme, the result is artists mangues, who instead of advancing with society are taking up defensive positions from which to criticise it. When the artist rejects his responsibility, culture quickly becomes, not a way of life, but a question of taste for a cultivated minority; "as if", says Wordsworth, "Poetry were a thing as¹indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing, or Frontinac or Sherry." ²³ Such is the state of affairs, Esther Lyon realises, at Transome Court "where poetry was only literature, and the fine ideas had ~~a~~ to be taken down from the shelves of the library when her husband's back was turned"(xliv).

(iv)

Effective action through art is obviously a very limited solution to the universal dilemma. The desire of the individual to act, to stem the destructive tide of nineteenth century materialism, and to preserve the essential human values, requires a more general outlet. And this need becomes more desperate through the novels as the time of action creeps closer to the date of composition. In Adam Bede, the individual is ~~connected~~ organically with his society as a whole; he inherits a "coherent social faith and order" which can perform for him "the function of knowledge." Adam can seek to understand and assess his

personal love for Hetty through the medium of the church service, in which the whole community of Hayslope participates:

But Adam's thoughts of Hetty did not deafen him to the service; they rather blended with all the other deep feelings for which the church service was a channel to him this afternoon, as a certain consciousness of our entire past and our imagined future blends itself with all our moments of keen sensibility. And to Adam the church service was the best channel he could have found for his mingled regret, yearning, and resignation; its interchange of beseeching cries for help with outbursts of faith and praise--its recurrent responses and the familiar rhythm of its collects, seemed to speak for him as no other form of worship could have done....The secret of our emotions never lies in the bare object, but in its subtle relations to our own past. (xviii)

The traditional structure of society, which is inseparable from the traditional forms of thought and feeling, has not yet broken down. By the time of Daniel Deronda, individual thought and action seem almost completely divorced from the forces shaping society, and George Eliot's reassertions of their inseparability appear at times slightly hysterical:

Could there be a slenderer, more insignificant thread in human history than this consciousness of a girl, busy with her small inferences of the way in which she could make her life pleasant?--in a time, too, when ideas were with fresh vigour making armies of themselves, and the universal kinship was declaring itself fiercely....

What in the midst of that mighty drama are girls and their blind visions? They are the Yea and Nay of that good for which men are enduring and fighting. In these delicate vessels is borne onwards through the ages the treasure of human affection. (xi)

To re-establish a living connection between microcosm and

macrocosm, George Eliot has to resort to her final solution. It is first adumbrated in Romola where Savonarola hopes to create out of Florence a model organic community, united in a revitalised faith, which will reform, like a newly chosen people, the whole of 'the divine organism' of the Church. In their different ways, this is what Felix Holt is hoping to do with his craftsmen, and Deronda with the Jews, and what the lesser known reformer, Zarca, is hoping to do with his Spanish gypsies:

Restore me to my tribe--five hundred men
Whom I alone can save, alone can rule,
And plant them as a mighty nation's seed.
Why, vagabonds who clustered round one man,
Their voice of God, their prophet and their king,
Twice grew to empire on the teeming shores
Of Africa, and sent new royalties
To feed afresh the Arab sway in Spain.
My vagabonds are a seed more generous,
Quick as the serpent, loving as the hound,
And beautiful as disinherited gods.
They have a promised land beyond the sea;
There I may lead them, raise my standard, call
The wandering Zingali to that new home,
And make a nation--bring light, order, law,
Instead of chaos. (bk I)

All these reformers are trying to create organic communities through membership of which the individual will have protection against the impersonal forces at work in society, and a means of influencing and perhaps controlling these forces.

It is in the context of these ideas that I wish to examine George

Eliot's novels. The meaning of each novel will be studied separately through its imagery, structure and symbolism. The assumption behind the thesis as a whole, however, is that the novels follow a traceable line of development which is dependent upon the growing complexity of George Eliot's vision of the world. Therefore, the separate critical studies are linked by intermediate chapters which discuss the most important themes running through the novels and other writings. These chapters try to show how the problems, artistic and moral, emerging from the analyses of the separate novels lead to a new orientation. In this way, an attempt is made to respect the integrity of the individual novels and, at the same time, to show the increased understanding which comes from an awareness of George Eliot's prevailing interests and beliefs. The only departure from the chronological order of the novels is that Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda are examined together; the chapter on Middlemarch is therefore placed last.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 G. D. H. Cole, trans and introd. The Social Contract and Discourses, by Jean Jacques Rousseau, Everyman edition (London, 1913), pp. xl-xli.
- 2 'Moral Swindlers', Impressions of Theophrastus Such.
- 3 'Worldliness and Other-Worldliness: The Poet Young,' Westminster Review, 67(January 1857), 37.
- 4 Ibid., p. 38.
- 5 'Evangelical Teaching: Dr. Cumming,' Westminster Review, 64(October 1855), 442.
- 6 The Life and Works of Goethe, Everyman edition(London, 1908), pp. 336-378.
- 7 George Eliot often uses scientific or geometrical analogies to emphasise forcibly that the certainties of the moral life are based as much upon knowledge as upon emotion. For example, "Pity and fairness—two little words which, carried out, would embrace the utmost delicacies of the moral life—seem to me not to rest on an unverifiable hypothesis but on facts quite as irreversible as the perception that a pyramid will not stand on its apex"(Letters, VI, 407). In The Mill on the Floss, the beneficial influence of home-life is a similar certainty: "...the pattern of the rug and the grate and the fire-irons were 'first ideas' that it was no more possible to criticise than the solidity and extension of matter"(II, i).
- 8 Middlemarch, Prelude.
- 9 'The Influence of Rationalism,' Fortnightly Review, 15 May 1865, p. 46. Hereafter cited as Lecky.
- 10 'Moral Swindlers', Impressions of Theophrastus Such.

II 'Address to Working Men, by Felix Holt,' Blackwood's, 103
(January 1868),

I2 Lecky, p. 55.

I3 Lecky, p. 54.

I4 F. H. Bradley, 1959, pp. 264-5.

I5 "Prediction is contingent," says Sephardo, the astrologer
in The Spanish Gypsy:

Thus, ~~the~~ loadstone draws,
Acts like a will to make the iron submit;
But garlick rubbing it, that chief effect
Lies insuspense; the iron keeps at large,
And garlick is controller of the stone.
And so, my lord, your horoscope declares
Not absolutely of your sequent lot,
But, by our lore's authentic rules, sets forth
What gifts, what dispositions, likelihoods
The aspects of the heavens conspired to fuse
With your incorporate soul. Aught more than this
Is vulgar doctrine. For the ambient,
Though a cause regnant, is not absolute,
But suffers a determining restraint
From action of the subject qualities
In proximate motion. (bk 2)

I6 Romola, xxxix.

I7 Wordsworth's Preface to 'Lyrical Ballads', ed. and introd.
W. J. B. Owen, Anglistica, IX (Copenhagen, 1957), p. II7.

I8 Ibid., p. 125.

I9 Ibid., p. 124.

20 Ibid., p. 124.

21 'The Natural History of German Life', Westminster Review,
66 (July 1856), 54. Hereafter cited as Riehl.

22 Ibid., p. 54. ²³ Wordsworth's Preface, p. 122.

THE BASIC RHYTHM

(i)

In all of George Eliot's novels a basic movement can be discerned in the central character's progress from illusion and a false attitude to life, through sudden and severe disenchantments, to a final knowledge and regeneration. The successive disenchantments are a stripping of the self of all its illusions so that a realistic self-awareness results which can provide the basis for a correct understanding of the world. This theme is, of course, common to a great deal of nineteenth century literature; it is not by chance that Arthur Donnithorne, about to embark upon his course of sin and suffering in Adam Bede, is led to comment on The Ancient Mariner, "I can hardly make head or tail of it as a story, but it's a strange, striking thing"(v). Few writers, however, deal with this theme so repeatedly and with such variety as George Eliot. She uses it again and again to give shape and significance to the lives of her characters and consequently to the novels. At first, this rhythm of illusion, disenchantment and regeneration is used as the central organising principle and it is defined explicitly and carefully. In the later novels, it is ^epresupposed as a basic rhythm and the more complex structures built upon it.

In an early letter, written to Sara Hennell in 1848, George Eliot gives her most explicit definition of this process which is essential in the development ~~in~~ of the individual:

Alas for the fate of poor mortals which condemns them to wake up some fine morning and find all the poetry in which their world was bathed only the evening before utterly gone —the hard angular world of chairs and tables and looking-

glasses staring at them in all its naked prose. It is so in all the stages of life--the poetry of girlhood goes--the poetry of love and marriage--the poetry of maternity--and at last the very poetry of duty forsakes us for a season and we see ourselves and all about us as nothing more than miserable agglomerations of atoms--poor tentative efforts of the Natur Princip to mould a personality. This is the state of prostration--the self-abnegation through which the soul must go, and to which perhaps it must again and again return, that is poetry or religion, which is the same thing, may be a real everflowing ~~rare~~ river fresh from the windows of heaven and the fountains of the great deep--not an artificial basin with grotto work and gold fish. (Letters, I, 264)

This description brings out the dialectical nature of the rhythm with its triple movement leading to a deeper and deeper understanding. An apparently unified vision of life, "its poetry or religion," is shattered by the intrusion of the "naked prose" reality of the world; the apparent harmony between the individual and his world is destroyed and he suddenly becomes aware of his helplessness and insignificance. Upon this real awareness can be formed a more comprehensive and secure ~~ix~~ vision of life. This secure vision may then become illusory from the standpoint of a new dialectical rhythm. J. N. Findlay in a recent work emphasises the triplicity of the Hegelian dialectic in terms which throw light on George Eliot's description:

From what has been said it will be easily grasped how Hegel came to connect Dialectic with the triad, or with triplicity. A dialectical rhythm essentially involves a triplicity of stages, though there is more than one sense in which this will be so. There will be three stages in such a rhythm in so far as there is a movement from an initial stage^{of} positiveness and stability, characteristic of the Understanding, through a stage of contradictory, sceptical malaise, characteristic of Dialectic proper, to a stage of accommodation which will reinstate stability

and positiveness at a higher level, and will therefore be typical of Reason.¹

The final stability achieved in George Eliot's novels re-establishes the harmony between the self and world; and now illusion has become hope and confidence, and disenchantment has been converted into an ability to face reality. In a letter written in 1848, she suggests how the stages of illusion and disenchantment are taken up into the final stage of regeneration and their contradiction resolved:

All creatures about to moult or to cast off an old skin, or enter on any new metamorphosis have sickly feelings. It was so with me, but now I am set free from the irritating worn-out integument. I am entering on a new period of my life which makes me look back on the past as something incredibly poor and contemptible. I am enjoying repose strength and ardour in a greater degree than I have ever known and yet I never felt my own insignificance and imperfection so completely. (Letters, I, 269)

A final knowledge of self and the world is not achieved by one decisive experience. The triple movement is constantly recurring—checking, destroying and strengthening. This is, for George Eliot, the rhythm of life, the only way in which the individual can develop. It is interesting to compare Emerson's description of this rhythm which leads to growth and expansion in his essay, 'Compensation' (1841). George Eliot knew and admired Emerson and his works, and throughout the novels we have clear echoes of his essays. Here, he uses an analogy very similar to George Eliot's own, and his phraseology is like hers a mixture of the biblical and the scientific:

Such, also, is the natural history of calamity. The changes which break up at short intervals the prosperity of men are advertisements of a nature whose law is growth. Every soul is by this intrinsic necessity quitting its whole

system of things, its friends, and home, and laws, and faith, as the shell-fish crawls out of its beautiful but stony case, because it no longer admits of its growth, and slowly forms a new house. In proportion to the vigour of the individual, these revolutions are frequent, until in some happier mind they are incessant, and all worldly relations hang very loosely about him, becoming, as it were, a transparent fluid membrane through which the living form is seen, and not, as in most men, an indurated heterogeneous fabric of many dates, and of no settled character, in which the man is imprisoned. Then there can be enlargement, and the man of to-day scarcely recognises the man of yesterday. And such should be the outward biography of man in time, a putting off of dead circumstances day by day, as he renews his raiment day by day. But to us, in our lapsed estate, resting, not advancing, resisting, not co-operating with the divine expansion, this growth comes by shocks.

This quotation from Emerson emphasises the constantly recurring nature of the triple movement we have been defining and also reminds us that George Eliot's basic rhythm is not in itself an original concept. Her originality lies in the consistent use she makes of it as a structural principle in her novels.

The illusions of the characters are destroyed when they come into contact with the prose reality of the world because they are inadequate as explanations of life. The illusions in the novels are engendered by an inability or a refusal to accept one's real position in the universe and the suffering which that entails. Whatever the type of illusion, whether the dreams of gentility of Esther Lyon or the horrified rejection by Gwendolen Harleth of her own insignificance, all are condemned by George Eliot as opiates which lead to blindness and wrongdoing. The deeper the illusion the more severe will be the shock of disenchantment. And in a letter written in 1860, George

Eliot suggests how the development of the individual towards a final knowledge of himself and ~~know~~^w the world can be achieved most directly: "The highest 'calling and election' is to do without opium and live through all our pain with conscious clear-eyed endurance" (Letters, III, 366).

The final goal, towards which the constantly recurring process of illusion, disenchantment, and regeneration is conducting the characters in the novels, is a full awareness of the structure of the universe in which they live. One of George Eliot's clearest statements of the nature of this universe occurs in her review of R. W. Mackay's Progress of the Intellect in 1851:

The master key to this revelation, is the recognition of the presence of undeviating law in the material and moral world--of that invariability of sequence which is acknowledged to be the basis of physical science, but which is still perversely ignored in our social organisation, our ethics and our religion. It is this invariability of sequence which can alone give value to experience and render education in the true sense possible. The divine yea and nay, the seal of prohibition and of sanction, are effectually impressed on human deeds and aspirations, not by means of Greek and Hebrew, but by that inexorable law of consequences, whose evidence is confirmed instead of weakened as the ages advance; and human duty is comprised in the earnest study of this law and patient obedience to its teaching. ²

Within the framework of these unchanging laws, the individual is free to choose and fully responsible for his choice. He can either seek to understand this universe and live in accordance with it, or ignoring this predetermined scheme of things can create his own scheme. In either case, the individual will either from ignorance or perversity come into collision with the unchanging laws which will shatter his illusory world and disenchant him into a full awareness of reality.

If the illusion is not dispelled and the individual sinks into error and wrongdoing, then the inexorable law of consequences will ^{punish} in proportion to the wrong committed.

George Eliot repeatedly envisages the working of these laws of consequence in terms of the Nemesis of Greek tragedy. Sometimes it is merely a passing reference, as in 'Janet's Repentance', to assure us melodramatically that the villain will get his deserts: "Nemesis is lame, but she is of colossal stature, like the gods; and sometimes, while her sword is not yet unsheathed, she stretches out her huge left arm and grasps her victim. The mighty hand is invisible, but the victim totters under the dire clutch"(xiii). Sometimes it is insisted that fear of Nemesis is a necessary element in the individual's understanding of the laws controlling the universe. Tito in Romola lacks this dimension of character:

His mind was destitute of that dread which has been erroneously decried as if it were nothing higher than a man's animal care for his own skin: that awe of the Divine Nemesis which was felt by religious pagans, and, though it took a more positive form under Christianity, is still felt by the mass of mankind simply as a vague fear at anything which is called wrongdoing. Such terror of the unseen is so far above mere sensual cowardice that it will annihilate that cowardice: it is the initial recognition of a moral law restraining desire, and checks the hard bold scrutiny of imperfect thought into obligations which can never be proved to have any sanctity in the absence of feeling. 'It is good,' sing the old Eumenides, in Aeschylus, 'that fear should sit as the guardian of the soul, forcing it into wisdom....'(xi)

The discipline of Nemesis becomes superfluous only when the individual is in complete harmony with the fixed laws of his universe, "only when," says George Eliot in Romola, "duty and love have united in one stream and made a common force."(xi).

The unfailing activity of Nemesis is one of the most distinctive features of the world of George Eliot's novels. We are ^amade aware of its inexorable workings in many ways, either explicitly, for example, through Adam Bede's mechanistic analogies, or dramatically through the miniature Greek tragedy at Transome Court. There is, however, a change in emphasis in the course of the novels: as the milieus of the novels become more sophisticated, there is a tendency to internalise the retribution. In the early novels, punishment usually comes in one decisive action, whereas later, with George Eliot's increasing powers of psychological drama, retribution appears more insidiously in the torment of a guilty conscience or a corroding personal relationship. These later manifestations of Nemesis, George Eliot says in Daniel Deronda, are "those fatal meshes which are woven within more closely than without, and often make the inward torture disproportionate to what is discernible as outward cause"(liv). In the final novels, the violence of retribution has gone almost entirely into metaphor.

The most extensive discussion of Nemesis in the novels takes place in Adam Bede in the conversation between the Rev. Irwine and Arthur Donnithorne. This conversation helps to clarify the relationship between individual responsibility and the predetermined universal laws. Irwine is the mouthpiece of this rigid framework of irreversible laws within which the events of the novel take place, and, as such, his classical tastes are emphasised: "His mental palate, indeed, was rather pagan, and found a savouriness in a quotation from Sophocles or Theocritus that was quite absent from any text in Isaiah or Amos"(v). And during the discussion with Arthur, there is lying significantly on the table "the first volume of the Foulis Aeschylus, which Arthur knew well by sight", but from which he has learned little since he

does not "think a knowledg^de of the classics is a presssing want to a country gentleman"(xvi). They begin by talking about the degree of individual responsibility for wrongdoing. With his infatuation for Hetty in mind, Arthur seeks to evade full responsibility for unaccountable, irrational actions: "It's a desperately vexatious thing, that after all one's reflections and quiet determinations, we should be ruled by moods that one can't calculate on beforehand. I don't think a man ought to be blamed so much if he is betrayed into doing things in that way, in spite of his resolutions." But Irwine will not allow him to ease his conscience in this way: "Ah, but the moods lie in his nature, my boy, just as much as his reflections did, and more. A man can never do anything at variance with his own nature. He carries within him the germ of his most exceptional action..."(xvi). This 'germ' of action is controlled by the individual's 'moral tradition'—the successive choices of good and evil the individual has made in the past.

Having failed next to shift blame onto "a combination of circumstances", Arthur asks, "But surely you don't think a man who struggles against a temptation into which he falls at last as bad as the man who never struggles at all?" Irwine's emphatic reply can be taken as ~~xxx~~ the definitive statement on the workings of Nemesis in the novels:

"No, certainly; I pity him in proportion to his struggles, for they foreshadow the inward suffering which is the worst form of Nemesis. Consequences are unpitying. Our deeds carry their terrible consequences quite apart from any fluctuations that went before—consequences that are hardly ever confined to ourselves. And it is best to fix our minds on that certainty, instead of considering what may be the elements of excuse for us."(xvi)

Irwine combines a full understanding of these laws of consequence with sympathy for the suffering which they cause.

This belief of George Eliot's in the inevitable operation of Nemesis controls the working out of the action in all the novels.

(ii)

An understanding of this rational, deterministic structure of the universe must be combined with a sympathy for one's fellow human beings, who are also subject to its laws and have to suffer accordingly. The basic rhythm already described should achieve these ~~in~~ two objects simultaneously. If it does not, emotion and intellect become severed, and the individual's view of the world is inadequate. The most readily recognisable form of this dissociation is the unsympathetic rectitude we find, for example, in Adam Bede and Felix Holt. Whereas the relationship between the individual and the unchanging laws is invariably envisaged in terms of ~~the~~ Nemesis, the relationship of the individual to his fellow men is seen principally in Christian terms and symbols.

The Christian ideas and symbols used most frequently by George Eliot to express the essential nature of human relationships within her deterministic universe are the Pauline conception of death and rebirth, of the crucifixion of the old man and the resurrection into a new life, of the first Adam and the last Adam, of baptism and the Last Supper. These ideas and symbols have a natural accord with the basic triadic rhythm of the novels, to which they give a concrete and

universal embodiment. Indeed, we ~~can~~ find George Eliot herself in 1840, before she had lost her Christian faith, expressing by means of these same religious terms the rhythm which forms so important a part of the novels:

There is a stage of grief when the really smitten heart shrinks from the tenderest mortal touch....And this is the season when trial if not futile, operates according to God's gracious design on the soul; the curtain is drawn before the glare that in worldly peace deceives the mental eye, and we see things in their true colours and relations, we no longer 'walk in a vain show,' we are awakened as by a minute bell at night to a consciousness of our real position, that of beings whose eternal weal or woe is pending, and ~~may~~ may be decided in a moment. There is a degree of satisfaction even amidst this grief and anxiety, to which thoughtless freedom from pain can offer nothing equal; it is the satisfaction of having partially set our feet on the firm foundations of truth, and it is a law of our nature that peace should be experienced in proportion as we steadily grasp eternal truth and walk by its guidance. (Letters, I, 49)

Even if the 'eternal truth' described here underwent a drastic change, the inevitability and value of suffering remained for George Eliot the same. The Christian symbols were retained to express the striving towards an understanding of the deterministic universe of the novels, and, in particular, to express the sympathy which must be part of that understanding. The religious symbols are secularised in order to express the ultimate human values of George Eliot's world.

She was most directly in contact with the secularising tendency of nineteenth century thought through her translations of Strauss and Feuerbach, and a glance at The Life of Jesus will help us to understand the reorientation she tried to impart to the Christian symbols. In the concluding dissertation ^{of} this work, Strauss sets out to "re-establish

dogmatically that which has been destroyed critically." ³ Having rejected the Christology of the orthodox system and that of rationalism, Strauss examines Schleiermacher's 'eclectic Christology.' The main fault with this is "the difficulty of supposing that the ideal should be realised in one historical individual"(p. 421). Schleiermacher argues that the historical limitations and imperfections of Christ did in no way affect the essentially ideal character of his thoughts and actions; but, Strauss replies, "to surpass the historical appearance of Christ, is to rise nearer, not to his nature, but to the idea of humanity in general"(p. 422). Strauss next examines the symbolic Christology of Kant which has close affinities with that of Spinoza. Here, the historical element has fallen "as a natural residuum to the ground", and for Kant "it is the duty of men universally to elevate themselves to the ideal of moral perfection deposited in the reason"(p. 426). Strauss's elucidation of this process brings us close to the world of George Eliot's novels:

To elevate himself to such a state of mind, man must depart from evil, cast off the old man, crucify the flesh; a change which is essentially connected with a series of sorrows and sufferings. These the former man has deserved as a punishment, but they fall on the new: for the regenerated man, who takes them on himself though physically and in his empirical character, as a being determined by the senses, he remains the former man; is morally, as an intellectual being, with his changed disposition, become a new man....the suffering which the new man, in dying to the old, must perpetually incur through life, being conceived in the representative of mankind as a death suffered once for all. (pp. 428-9)

This in turn is ~~is~~ rejected on the grounds that if this ideal has "no corresponding reality, it is an empty obligation"(p. 437). Finally,

Strauss turns to Hegel's God-man as "the true and real existence of the spirit," but again he is unable to conceive "how the divine and human natures can have constituted the distinct and yet united portions of an historical person" (p. 436). Then comes Strauss's own synthesis. The human race is substituted for the historical Jesus:

This is the key to the whole of Christology, that, as subject of the predicate which the Church assigns to Christ, we place, instead of an individual, an idea; but an idea which has an existence in reality, not in the mind only, like that of Kant. In an individual, a God-man, the properties and functions which the Church ascribes to Christ contradict themselves; in the idea of the race, they perfectly agree. Humanity is the union of the two natures--God become man, the infinite manifesting itself in the finite, and the finite spirit remembering its infinity....It is Humanity that dies, rises, and ascends to heaven, for from the negation of its phenomenal life there ever proceeds a higher spiritual life....By faith in this Christ, especially in his death and resurrection, man is justified before God: that is, by the kindling within him of the idea of Humanity, the individual man participates in the divinely human life of the species. (pp. 437-8)

In order to establish the dogmatic import of the life^{of} Jesus, Strauss has discarded the Christian symbols; George Eliot re-employs them in her novels in order to elucidate the development of her characters towards a vision of suffering humanity. The philosophy of suffering in the novels seems to combine elements from both Kant's Christology and Strauss's final synthesis. The characters undergo the Kantian 'series of sorrows and sufferings', which are the successive 'deaths' of disenchantment already defined. And from this experience of suffering they come to a knowledge of the inescapable suffering of the world, and so finally attain to a universal sympathy: "by the kindling within him of the idea of Humanity, the individual man participates in the divinely

human life of the species."

George Eliot uses these symbols and this imagery skilfully for her own purposes. The original religious symbols which form a vital whole are re-integrated without any sense of strain into the structures of the novels; and the force and dignity which they carry with them are injected into these new structures of which they now form a part. For example, such symbols express the significance of Adam Bede's 'death', his 'baptism' of suffering, his participation in the re-enactment of the Last Supper in Stoniton, and his 'resurrection'. They are used skilfully and movingly to show his gradual understanding and acceptance of the supreme values of George Eliot's world--a knowledge of the world and a sympathy with the individual leading to a love of humanity. And this is repeated throughout the novels. All the major characters, and many of the minor ones, undergo the disenchantments which in 'Janet's Repentance' George Eliot says "are but types of death--when we are cut off abruptly from the life we have known, when we can no longer expect tomorrow to resemble yesterday, and find ourselves on the confines of the unknown"(xv). The regeneration from this death is invariably described in religious or semi-religious terms. It might be effected by the 'resurrection angel,' Dinah, in Adam Bede, or it might come like Dorothea's vision of suffering humanity in the dawn, or through Esther's love for Felix Holt which is seen insistently as a religious experience leading to an understanding of humanity.

These, then, are the two main dimensions of the world of George Eliot's novels: the universal laws in action, correcting and punishing the characters, and secondly, the characters striving towards a full understanding of these laws and towards a participation in the community of suffering such an understanding brings. The first theme, the system of unchanging laws, is envisaged in terms of the Nemesis of Greek drama;

the second, the process of understanding the suffering inherent in a world controlled by this system, is envisaged in terms of religious symbols, particularly of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. We find these two strands of imagery and symbolism complementing each other again and again in George Eliot's novels. We may find them together in such an ideally balanced character as the classicist Irwine, who combines a full awareness of the laws of consequence with "a sufficiently subtle moral fibre to have an unwearying tenderness for obscure and monotonous suffering"(v); or we may find the two strands of imagery and symbolism clearly separated, with each inhabiting its own world, as in the contrasting halves of Felix Holt--the world of Transome Court and the world of Malthouse Yard. The two dimensions are however always finally linked in the idea of suffering: suffering is inherent in a world governed by the laws of consequence, and it is through his own experience of this that the individual participates in the community of suffering humanity.

(iii)

George Eliot is not, however, completely dependent upon the symbols of Christian mythology for the articulation of the rhythm which leads to regeneration. As this rhythm becomes progressively accepted as an integral part of the novels, we see her creating her own symbols and images to express its phases and significance. For example, the phase of illusion during which a character refuses to

comes to terms with life's unpleasant realities is repeatedly described by means of images of opiates, or embodied in scenes and landscapes of false enchantment. This strand of imagery and symbolism originates in George Eliot's belief that private escapist worlds must be rejected and the suffering inherent in reality faced and accepted, 'without opium.'⁴ The next phase, the central key phase of disenchantment, is the one in which the apparent harmony between the individual and his environment is suddenly destroyed; he finds himself regarding a fragmentary, disjointed world which has neither order nor meaning. The image frequently used to convey this state of mind is the image of ruins, and it is instructive to trace it briefly through the novels to show both George Eliot's consistency of treatment and how such images become more and more firmly integrated into the structure of the novels.

We have already examined the letter in which George Eliot describes most fully the disenchanted 'state of prostration.'⁵ In this description, the most immediately striking symbol and one which George Eliot develops through the novels is that of "the hard angular world of chairs and tables and looking-glasses."⁶ But another important archetypal image is latent in the sentence, "we see ourselves and all about us as nothing more than miserable agglomerations of atoms," and it is the development of this into a pervasive symbol of disenchantment that I wish to examine.

In an earlier letter, written to Maria Lewis in 1839, George Eliot uses another version of this image to describe her 'irretrievably scattered' wits:

I have lately led so unsettled a life and have been so

desultory in my employments, that my mind, never of the most highly organised genus, is more than usually chaotic, or rather it is like a stratum of conglomerated fragments that shews here a jaw and rib of some ponderous quadruped, there a delicate alto-relievo of some fernlike plant.... My mind presents just such an assemblage of disjointed specimens of history, ancient and modern...all arrested and petrified and smothered by the fast thickening every day accession of actual events, relative anxieties, and household cares and vexations. (Letters, I, 29)

The 'agglomerations of atoms' and the 'stratum of conglomerated fragments' are preparatory stages leading us into the ruined, disjointed worlds of disenchantment in the novels.

At first, George Eliot employs similes to convey ~~the~~ the impact of disillusionment. Janet Dempster's mental confusion and self-despair are depicted by the image of sunshine on ruins; the prosaic light of broad day now shines upon the remnants of the shattered dream-world:

The daylight changes the aspect of misery to us, as of every thing else. In the night it presses on our imagination—the forms it takes are false, fitful, exaggerated; in broad day it sickens our sense with the dreary persistence of definite measurable reality. The man who looks with ghastly horror on all his property aflame in the dead of night, has not half the sense of destitution he will have in the morning when he walks over the ruins lying blackened in the pitiless sunshine. (xvi)

The emphasis here is upon the daylight-night antithesis, but the passage is noteworthy as the first example of the use of the image of ruins. Lisbeth Bede's desolation after her husband's death is the second occasion. In this Pascalian⁷ image, the physical confusion of environment is an extension of the confusion of mind, and we have a distant hint of the impressive Roman chapters of Middlemarch:

She looked round with blank eyes at the dirt and confusion on which the bright afternoon's sun shone dimly; it was all of a piece with the sad confusion of her mind--that confusion which belongs to the first hours of a sudden sorrow, when the poor human soul is like one who has been deposited sleeping among the ruins of a vast city, and wakes up in dreary amazement, not knowing whether it is the growing or the dying day--not knowing why and whence came this illimitable scene of desolation, or why he too finds himself desolate in the midst of it. (x)

Dinah comes to visit Lisbeth and prepares us for her later role in relation to the major characters by literally clearing up first Lisbeth's external and then, by extension, her mental confusion.

Maggie Tulliver, like the majority of the heroines, has to undergo two 'deaths' of disenchantment before she arrives at a state of regeneration at the end of the novel. Book four of The Mill on the Floss describes the first of these after her father's bankruptcy, when "no dream world would satisfy her now"(iii). The book opens in this way:

Journeying down the Rhone on a summer's day, you have perhaps felt the sunshine made dreary by those ruined villages which stud the banks in certain parts of its course, telling how the swift river once rose, like an angry destroying god, sweeping down the feeble generations whose breath is in their nostrils, and making their dwellings a desolation...these dead-tinted, ~~hollow~~ hollow-eyed, angular skeletons of villages on the Rhone oppress me with the feeling that human life--very much of it--is a narrow, ugly, grovelling existence, which even calamity does not elevate, but rather tends to exhibit in all its bare vulgarity of conception; and I have a cruel conviction that the lives these ruins ~~were~~ are the traces of, were part of a gross sum of obscure vitality that will be swept into ^{the same} oblivion with the generations of ants and beavers.

The earlier similes of ruins have been replaced by this 'objective correlative' of disenchantment, which fulfills two functions simultaneously. The description of ruins conveys the sense of misery and inevitable destruction hanging over large areas of life in the universal struggle for existence, and places the individual's predicament in the perspective of this larger struggle. Secondly, it prepares us for the final events of the novel when the Floss itself rises "like an angry destroying god", and punishes both macrocosm and microcosm, both St Ogg's and Maggie.

By the time of Romola, George Eliot is using the image more unobtrusively, for now she seems to accept it intuitively as part of her psychological terminology. For example, she employs it to convey Tito's dread of Romola's discovering his past: "Tito awaited her, with a sickening sense of the sunlight that slanted before him and mingled itself with the ruin of his hopes"(xvii). It is the combination of the sunlight and the ruins which converts this from an undistinguished metaphor into a striking and adept underlining of an important psychological phase. Tito's 'moral tradition' which has 'no memories of self-conquest'(xxxix) is a result of his successive escapes from imminent disenchantments.

If we look at the ^{cont}apuntal theme in this novel, namely the creation of Romola's opposite 'moral tradition', there is a significant modification of the ruin image. Romola's growing disappointment with Tito reaches a climax when he sells, without her permission, her father's library. Her disenchantment comes to its culmination amidst the confused litter of packing:

It was more than three weeks before the contents of the library were all packed and carried away. And Romola

instead of shutting her eyes and ears, had watched the process. The exhaustion consequent on violent emotion is apt to bring a dreamy disbelief in the reality of its cause; and in the evening when the workmen were gone, Romola took her hand-lamp and walked slowly round amongst the confusion of straw and wooden cases, pausing at every vacant pedestal, every well-known object laid prostrate, with a sort of bitter desire to assure herself that there was a sufficient reason why her love was gone and the world was barren for her. (xxxvi)

For Romola, this is the departure of what George Eliot called in her letter of 1848 'the poetry of love and marriage'; by means of her hand-lamp she is making certain that it has been replaced by the 'naked prose'. To appreciate the scene fully we must remember that this chaos of 'well-known objects' which externalises the confusion of Romola's mind, is her father's collection of salvaged remnants of the past. Early in the novel, the blind Bardo, seated 'among his books and his marble fragments of the past,' expresses his attitude to life: "For me, Romola, even when I could see, it was with the great dead that I lived, while the living often seemed to me mere spectres—shadows dispossessed of true feeling and intelligence"(v). ~~This~~ This escapist attitude to the present reality of life looks forward to Casaubon whose eyesight is also symbolically deteriorating: "I feed too much on the inward sources; I live too much with the dead. My mind is something like the ghost of an ancient, wandering about the world and trying mentally to construct it as it used to be, in spite of ruin and confusing changes"(ii). These ruins, these 'fragments of the past', still symbolise a state of disenchantment, but with the additional implication that the disillusioned person will not progress towards regeneration because he ~~is~~ refuses to face the 'naked prose' of the present. So that when we see Romola in the confusion of the

library, we must interpret the scene on two levels: the confusion of the library signifies that it is about to be removed and so symbolises her disillusionment with Tito; but these confused objects, we must remember, are her father's marble 'fragments of the past' and so symbolise the false approach to life she has inherited, and which has led her into disillusionment. The ruins have emerged from the early similes into the reality of the novels, and in doing so take on increasingly complex meanings.

In Felix Holt, the image is realised with amazing actuality and significance in the description of Transome Court. As we read the first chapter of the novel, the decrepit house becomes the fifteen years of Mrs Transome's disillusioned waiting which have elapsed since her son left her. In this highly charged atmosphere of disenchantment and fearful anticipation, objects are quickly transmuted into symbols. "There was a great deal of tarnished gilding and dinginess on the walls and furniture of this smaller room"—such an external detail becomes, by the end of the chapter, descriptive of character:

Mrs Transome had been in her bloom before this century began, and in the long painful years since then, what she had once regarded as her knowledge and accomplishments had become as valueless as old-fashioned stucco ornaments, of which the substance was never worth anything, while the form is no longer to the taste of any living mortal. (i)

Her perpetually disenchanted condition is aggravated on the occasions when she meets Jermy; after one of these meetings, we have a terse, metaphoric continuation of the previous ruin images: "Mrs Transome shivered as she stood alone; all around her, where had once been brightness and warmth, there were ashes, and the sunshine looked dreary as it fell on them"(ix). At the climax of the novel, it is Esther's 'vision' of Mrs

Transome in her supreme grief which is the deciding factor in her final choice of Felix. But before this climax, we have witnessed Esther in one of her crises of disenchantment, her mental condition reminiscent of George Eliot's 'stratum of conglom⁹erated fragments': "Her life was a ~~map~~ heap of fragments and so were her thoughts: some great energy was needed to bind them together"(xv). And just before her final choice at the end of the novel George Eliot indicates the next stage in the metaphor—if the 'great energy' is forthcoming the fragments become a 'temple':

It seemed to her that she stood at the first and last parting of the ways. And, in one sense, she was under no illusion. It is only in that fresh^eness of our time that the choice is possible which gives unity to life, and makes the memory a temple where all relics and all votive offerings, all worship and all grateful joy, are an unbroken history sanctified by one religion. (xliv)

From her experience of Transome Court she has learnt that she will find no such temple there as the wife of Harold Transome.

We have the culmination of all the previous ruin images and symbols in Middlemarch, in Dorothea's visit to Rome.⁸ The 'stupendous fragmentariness'(xx) of Rome goes back directly to the 'agglomerations of atoms' and the 'conglomerated fragments' of the early letters; but now there is a subtle ambivalence in the symbol's relations to the different characters which was not attempted before. The basic meaning is that the chaos of Rome precipitates and crystallises Dorothea's disenchantment in her marriage with Casaubon:

...let them conceive one more historical contrast: the gigantic broken revelations of that Imperial and Papal city thrust abruptly on the notions of a girl who had been brought up in English and Swiss Puritanism, fed on meagre Protestant histories and on art chiefly of the

hand-screen sort....Ruins and basilicas, palaces and colossi, set in the midst of a sordid present, where all that was living and warm-blooded seemed sunk in the deep degeneracy of a superstition divorced from reference... all this vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual, mixed confusedly with the signs of breathing forgetfulness and degradation, at first jarred her as with an electric shock, and then urged themselves on her with that ache belonging to a glut of confused ideas which check the flow of emotion. (~~xxx~~)

The impact of Rome is so shattering because it expresses and hastens the disintegration of her ideas about life.⁹ And through Dorothea's personal experience, George Eliot is expressing a fundamental opposition between two ways of looking at life—the Protestant way and the way represented by 'the gigantic broken revelations of that Imperial and Papal city.' In her use of the ruins of Rome in this novel, George Eliot has passed emphatically from the merely adjectival description of a mental phase to the truly symbolic realisation.

As a vividly realised symbol, Rome has more than one ~~purpose~~ purpose in the novel. This symbol gives final expression to Casaubon's academic futility. Seeing him at work in Rome, we realise that ~~his~~ he is unwilling to acknowledge his disillusionment with life and is attempting to construct his own academic dream-world from "what might be called shattered mummies, and fragments of a tradition which was itself a mosaic wrought from crushed ruins..."(xlvi). The images and symbols ramify in all directions from this central symbol of Rome, and this consistency together with an almost poetic economy of expression brings the mental world of a Casaubon into an intimate and significant relationship with the actual world in which he moves. There is an interaction between these two worlds, the images preparing us for the significance of actual events, whilst the actual events modify

the images meaningfully. Finally, there is Ladislav's reaction to Rome. Unlike Casaubon, he is not attempting to create a vast, theoretical synthesis out of the relics of the past; he enjoys "the very miscellaneousness of Rome" because "the fragments stimulated his imagination and made him constructive"(xxii). The contrast in attitudes to the past is a contrast of character. Ladislav's mind, "flexible with constant comparison," is Hellenistic in its enjoyment of the variety of life, both past and present; and George Eliot had expressed the significance of such an attitude in one of her reviews in 1851:

It may be doubted, whether a mind which has no susceptibility to the pleasure of changing its point of view, of mastering a remote form of thought, of perceiving identity of nature under variety of manifestation—a perception which resembles an expansion of one's own being, a pre-existence in the past—can possess the flexibility, the ready sympathy, or the tolerance, which characterises a truly philosophic culture.¹⁰

Thus, the original image of the early works has moved gradually from the periphery into the centre of the novels, and here, at this point in Middlemarch, it stands firmly in its own right prompting the main characters to reveal their true selves.

Finally, there is the important symbol of the ruined chapel in Daniel Deronda (xxxv). This will be examined in more detail later, but we may notice briefly that the ambivalence of this symbol points to the unity of this often dismembered novel. Viewed from Gwendolen's point of view, the chapel is an image of the 'desecrated sanctities' of her married life, and of her desire to turn Deronda into her absolving priest; viewed from the point of view of Deronda, conscious of Mordecai's claims upon him, the chapel is a symbol of the Jewish religion, ignored by the modern Jews who are deprived of their 'organic

centre' and ignorant of their inheritance. Deronda must attempt to fuse the two roles, and the ambivalence of the symbol suggests how intimately connected these roles are.

It should be clear that it is impossible to understand fully the final uses to which George Eliot puts her images of disenchantment without a thorough knowledge of the whole structure of the novels. Esther Lyon's 'heap of fragments' waiting to be formed into a 'temple' was only realised on the mental plane, as the milestone of a single character's development; whilst still performing this basic function, the complex and concrete symbols of the final novels are used confidently to inter-relate the characters and action for a definition of the total meaning of the work. The function of the image has changed from an adjectival and peripheral comment on the state of mind of the characters to a many-sided symbolic embodiment of the central meaning of the novel.

This is one of the images which helps to delineate the rhythm which is basic to George Eliot's novels and which will be examined in what is perhaps its simplest form in the next chapter. The importance of this rhythm of illusion, disenchantment and regeneration cannot be over-emphasised. It is this which gives form and meaning to the individual's struggle to come to terms with the world in which he lives. It is this which in the progression of its phases makes us experience the impression time makes upon the characters. And finally, it is the integration of this rhythm into the novels which enables George Eliot to avoid the besetting sin of so much Victorian fiction--the enforced happy ending. She always knows when the redemption of her characters is possible and at what pace. If she has not sufficient time to effect such a redemption, then by means of her control of this basic

rhythm she can hint at the direction of her character's future and leave the rest with confidence to the reader.

FOOTNOTES

1 J. N. Findlay, Hegel: A Re-examination, (London, 1958), pp. 68-9.

2 'The Progress of the Intellect,' Westminster Review, 54
(January 1851), 355. Hereafter cited as Mackay.

3 Dr. David Friedrich Strauss, The Life of Jesus (London, 1846),
III, 396.

4 See Barbara Hardy, 'The Image of the Opiate in George Eliot's
Novels,' Notes and Queries, IV(1957), 487-490.

5 See above, pp. 20-1.

6 Mrs. Barbara Hardy, in an article to which I am indebted,
'The Moment of Disenchantment in George Eliot's Novels',
R.E.S., n.s. V (1954), 256-64, uses this quotation as a
starting-point and traces this particular image and its
offshoots through the novels.

7 Compare Pascal's 'En voyant l'aveuglement et la misère de
l'homme, en regardant tout l'univers muet, et l'homme sans
lumière, abandonné à lui-même et comme égaré dans ce recoin
de l'univers, sans savoir qui l'y a mis, ce qu'il y est
venu faire, ce qu'il deviendra en mourant, incapable de toute
connaissance, j'entre en effroi, comme un homme qu'on aurait
porté endormi dans une île déserte et ~~si~~ effroyable, et
qui s'éveillerait sans connaître où il est et sans moyen
d'en sortir.' Pensées et opuscules (Paris, 1946), No. 693.

8 See Q. D. Leavis, 'A Note on Literary Indebtedness: Dickens,
George Eliot, Henry James,' Hudson Review, VIII (1955), 423-8.
Mrs Leavis compares the use the three writers make ^{of Rome} in their
novel, Little Dorrit, Middlemarch, and The Portrait of a Lady.

9

Ladislaw's annoyance with Rosamond on his 'detection' by Dorothea reduces her ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ dream world to ruins: 'the terrible collapse of the illusion towards which all her hope had been strained was a stroke which had too thoroughly shaken her: her little world was in ruins, and she felt herself tottering in the midst as a lonely bewildered consciousness'(lxxviii).

10

Mackay, p. 354. Compare Emerson's essay, 'History' (1841):

"The world exists for the education of each man...he must transfer the point of view from which history is commonly read, from Rome and Athens and London to himself and not deny his conviction that he is the court.... He must attain and maintain that lofty sight where facts yield their secrets sense, and poetry and annals are alike. The instinct of the mind, the purpose of nature, betrays itself in the use we make of ^{the} signal/narration of history. Time dissipates to shining ether the solid angularity of facts....All history becomes subjective; in other words, there is properly no history; only ~~big~~ biography." And in his next essay, 'Self-Reliance', Emerson describes what happens when 'the solid angularity of facts' proves too much for the imagination, when "he who travels to get somewhat which he does not carry, travels away from himself, and grows old even in youth among old things. In Thebes, in Palmyra, his will and mind have become old and dilapidated as they. He carries ruins to ruins." The final correlation epitomises the relationship between Rome and the author of the 'Key to all Mythologies.'

ADAM BEDE

Adam Bede presents the two main dimensions of George Eliot's universe clearly and explicitly, without excessive elaboration. The titular hero has an exact knowledge of the impersonal laws of the universe, but is lacking the second requirement--sympathy with other people who are subject to these laws and being punished by them. The novel traces Adam's education through which he achieves this sympathy. It is an education through personal suffering, and it is intertwined with the similar educations of Hetty and Arthur. The novel is George Eliot's most direct treatment of the suffering which she finds inherent in the world and which can lead ultimately to the communion of suffering humanity.

The centrality of the theme of suffering is indicated by the use the author makes of a minor character who appears briefly on two occasions in the novel. At the end of the first chapter, an anonymous 'elderly horseman' observes Adam returning home from work, and, in the next chapter, watches Dinah preaching ^{to} the villagers of Hayslope. He is a character of no importance, merely a convenient centre of vision from which George Eliot can give us, a little awkwardly, a description of the countryside, the village, and some of the characters of the novel. But he has a second and more significant function. He reappears at the climax of the novel and by his presence draws attention to the general theme. This, quite

simply, is the impact of suffering upon the people of Hayslope.

The anonymous stranger is first struck by "the singular contrast presented by the groups of villagers with the knot of Methodists"(ii), who, with their 'look of melancholy compassion', appear strangely incongruous in this fertile agricultural district. He listens to Dinah's sermon which is reported in detail and which anticipates the trajectory of the novel. At first, she speaks quietly about the bringing of the gospel to the poor, and the omnipotence of God, but rises to a climax of appeal "as if she had suddenly discovered a destroying angel hovering over the heads of the people":

But now she had entered into a new current of feeling. Her manner became less calm, her utterance more rapid and agitated, as she tried to bring home to the people their guilt, their wilful darkness, their state of disobedience to God—as she dwelt on the hatefulness of sin, the Divine holiness, and the suffering of the Saviour, by which a way had been opened for their salvation. At last it seemed as if, in her yearning desire to reclaim the lost sheep, she could not be satisfied by addressing her hearers as a body. She appealed first to one then to another, beseeching them with tears to turn to God while there was yet time; painting to them the desolation of their souls, lost in sin, feeding on the husks of this miserable world, far away from ^{God} their Father; and then the love of the Saviour, who was waiting and watching for their return. (ii)

Having impressed upon the villagers the picture of Christ crucified, Dinah "began to tell of the joys that were in store for the penitent, and to describe in her simple way the divine peace and love with which the soul of the believer is filled...." This in fact is a statement of the development of the novel from a calm and idyllic opening, through sin and suffering to final regeneration. The stranger, we are told,

"had been interested in the course of her sermon, as if it had been the development of a drama"; he reappears at the end of the novel, at the climax of the acting out of this drama. Then he is identified as a magistrate, Colonel Townley, who gives Dinah permission to spend the night with Hetty in Stoniton jail. The transformation from the opening scenes of the novel is brought home to us: "I have seen you before," he said at last. "Do you remember preaching on the village green at Hayslope in Loamshire?" (xlv). No longer does the teaching of Christ crucified appear incongruous in Hayslope. The suffering from Hetty's crime has spread and, indeed, at this point in the novel, almost all the main characters are in Stoniton for her trial and probable execution. Thanks largely to Dinah, the drama ends on the prophesied note of peace and hope.

The shift from Hayslope to Stoniton at the climax of the novel is significant. Throughout, there is an obvious contrast between Hayslope in Loamshire, and Snowfield and Stoniton in Stonyshire: "That rich undulating district of Loamshire to which Hayslope belonged, lies close to a grim outskirts of Stonyshire, overlooked by its barren hills..." (ii). The description of these two districts is a static, geographical expression of the first two phases of the basic rhythm described in the last chapter. Hayslope is a materialistic, unexact district, the 'land of Goshen' (iii); it is the escapist world of illusion, ignorant of the reality of suffering, which George Eliot insists is an essential part of life. "I've noticed," says Dinah, "that in these villages where the people lead a quiet life among the green pastures and the still waters, tilling the ground and tending the cattle, there's a strange deadness to the Word..." (viii). Stonyshire,

in contrast, is the world of disenchantment, "of high-walled streets, where you seemed to walk as in a prison-yard, and the ear is deafened with sounds of wordly toil"(viii). Here, the suffering self has a more vivid awareness and need of God; as Dinah says to Irwine, "I had a wonderful sense of the Divine love as we walked over the hills, where there's no trees, you know, sir, as there is here, to make the sky look smaller, but you see the heavens stretched out like a tent, and you feel the everlasting arms around you"(viii).^I

The departure of the main characters from Hayslope and their gathering in Stoniton at the climax of the suffering indicates to what extent they have been disillusioned, shaken out of their complacency. Now they are aware of the powers which control their world, and, in the face of these, their own insignificance and need to depend upon one another. But there is still the final phase of regeneration to be achieved, and, as the characters return to Hayslope, we are reminded that whilst they must assimilate the lesson of disenchantment they must not swing from their previous egoism to the opposite extreme of selflessness. This is the failing of Dinah, who is a native of Stonyshire. The self must not become so obsessed by the suffering of others as to become incapable of action in its own right.

Throughout the novel, the emphasis is on the individual; yet there is some indication at the end that the people of Hayslope as a whole have come to understand Irwine's statent^{me} that "Men's lives are as thoroughly blended with each other as the ~~xxx~~ air they breathe: evil spreads as necessarily as disease"(xli). And the evil was the more contagious in this case because it was initiated by the head of this of society, Arthur Donnithorne. "Trouble's made us kin"(xlviii), says Adam to Mr Poyser after the trial, acknowledging

the strengthening of the bonds of the organic community in which they live.

Within this general movement, George Eliot concentrates on the development of the four main characters—Adam, Arthur, Hetty and Dinah. In the histories of the first three of these characters, she is intent upon showing how the suffering of disenchantment, which often leads to wrongdoing and further suffering, must be absorbed into the final state of regeneration. Suffering is an integral part of a world subject to an unpitiful Nemesis; this is "the sorrow wherewith the whole creation groaneth and travaileth"(xxx). The individual achieves a knowledge of this world by successive disenchantments; in doing so he experiences personally and comes to sympathise with the suffering of a world not fully in accord with ~~the laws of consequence.~~ ^{the laws of consequence.} As we have seen in Dinah's sermon, George Eliot in this novel takes Christ crucified as the supreme symbol of the acceptance of and sympathy with this suffering. All the other religious symbols and images spring from this central symbol:

What a glad world this looks like, as one drives or rides along the valleys and over the hills ! I have often thought so when, in foreign countries where the fields and woods have looked to me like our English Loamshire ...I have come on something by the roadside which has reminded me that I am not in Loamshire: an image of a great agony—the agony of the Cross...and surely, if there came a traveller to this world who knew nothing of the story of man's life upon it, this image of agony would seem to him strangely out of place in the midst of this joyous nature. He would not know that hidden behind the apple-blossoms, or among the golden corn, or under the shrouding boughs of the wood, there might be a human heart beating heavily with anguish....No wonder man's religion has much sorrow in it: no wonder he needs a suffering God. (xxxv)

Hayslope in Loamshire must be made aware of the meaning of this 'image of agony' in a world of illusion.

It is important that we should realise, with Strauss in mind, exactly how George Eliot is using these Christian symbols. In the early novels, particularly here and in Silas Marner, she is describing integrated and unsophisticated communities where traditional beliefs are accepted implicitly, and ~~more~~ expressed through religious ~~and~~ worship and symbolism^s. The Methodists, for example, a new force in Hayslope society, "believed in present miracles, in instantaneous conversions, in revelations by dreams and visions; they drew lots, and sought for Divine guidance by opening the Bible at ~~hazard~~; having a literal way of interpreting^{the} Scriptures, which is not at all sanctioned by approved commentators..."(iii). George Eliot utilises these beliefs and symbols, not because she accepts their supernatural superstructure, but because she finds in them an expression of the essentially human relationships holding the community together. This is the belief without which, George Eliot says in 1874, she would not have written any of her novels—"namely, that the fellowship between man and man which has been the principle of development, social and moral, is not dependent on conceptions of what is not man: and that the idea of God, so far as it has been a high spiritual influence is the ideal of a goodness entirely human (i.e. an exaltation of the human)"(Letters, VI, 98). Always, in the novels, we find her gauging and assessing the essentially human content of any form of religious expression, and praising or condemning accordingly.

Dinah is used most extensively by George Eliot to help us understand this redefinition or readjustment of the Christian symbols. Her letter to Seth, for example, in the middle of the novel,

emphasises and elucidates the necessary connection between suffering and sympathy, which we have discussed, as it is inherent in the Crucifixion:

"yea, all the anguish of the children of men, which sometimes wraps me round like sudden darkness--I can bear with a willing pain, as if I was sharing the Redeemer's cross. For I feel it, I feel it--infinite love is suffering too--yea, in the fullness of knowledge it suffers, it yearns, it mourns; and that is a blind self-seeking which wants to be freed from the sorrow wherewith the whole creation groaneth and travaileth. Surely it is not true blessedness to be free from sorrow, while there is sorrow and sin in the world: sorrow is then a part of love, and love does not seek to throw it off. It is not the spirit only that tells me this--I see it in the whole work and word of the gospel. Is there not pleading in heaven? Is not the Man of Sorrows there in that crucified body wherewith He ascended? And is He not one with the Infinite Love itself--as our love is one with our sorrow?"

"These thoughts have been much borne in on me of late, and I have seen with new clearness the meaning of those words, 'If any man love Me, let him take up My cross'.... The true cross of the Redeemer was the sin and sorrow of this world--that was what lay heavy on His heart--and that is the cross we shall share with Him, that is the cup we must drink of with Him, if we would have any part in that Divine Love which is one with His sorrow." (xxx) 2

This is a further definition of the central theme of the novel--the inseparability of sorrow and love at the Crucifixion, the way in which the suffering of disenchantment must be absorbed into the final phase of regeneration and transmuted into sympathy. We are encouraged to translate Dinah's religious beliefs into such basic human terms by the stylised nonconformist phraseology which distances

the reader, discouraging us from accepting her sentiments literally. Dinah, as well as being used to clarify and demythologise the Christian symbols, is at the same time being assessed critically and any lapse into other-worldliness or self-abnegation (of which there are hints in this letter) is reprimanded.

This letter comes significantly just after the celebrations of Arthur's coming of age and immediately upon the first disillusionment of the discovery in the Grove. The romantic, illusory love of the three lovers at this point in the novel is quite insulated from sorrow or suffering;³ Dinah's letter indicates that for all three characters involved in this crisis ~~the two must~~ ^{love and sorrow must} ultimately be fused. The process by which ~~the two emotions~~ ^{the two emotions} are changed and merged into each other has its symbolic culmination in the re-enactment of the Last Supper in Stoniton, anticipated in Dinah's 'the cup we must drink of with Him.' It is principally for the purpose of defining this process that George Eliot re-employs the Christian symbols and the development of Adam's character provides the most detailed example of such a re-employment.

Adam's name is not fortuitous. In the first chapter of the novel, we see as Seth says, that "Adam will have his way." Mr Casson considers him "a little lifted up an' peppery-like"(ii), whilst the Rev. Irwine says, "He has independence enough for two men—rather an excess of pride if anything"(ix). The death of his father seems to be calculated to bring out these qualities in Adam—his pride, his harsh judgments, his lack of sympathy for the weak. At the funeral he becomes aware of this side of his character:

"Ah! I was always too hard," Adam said to himself.
"It's a sore fault in me as I'm so hot and out o'

patience with people when they do wrong, and my heart gets shut up against 'em so, as I can't bring myself to forgive 'em. I see clear enough there's more pride nor love in my soul, for I could sooner make a thousand strokes with th'hammer for my father than bring myself to say a kind word to him. And there went plenty o'pride and temper to the strokes, as the devil will be having his finger in what we call our duties as well as our sins... the real tough job for me 'ud be to master my own will and temper, and go right against my own pride." (xviii)

Adam's fault of character throughout the novel is the sin of the first Adam. He wants to put himself in the place of God and to judge other human beings. He thinks he has the right to administer Nemesis. The suffering he has to undergo finally breaks down this conception of himself.

George Eliot depicts with subtlety and with complete conviction the way in which this side of his character is fused almost inextricably with his good qualities. The gradual humanising of 'Adam's strength' by the removal of 'its correlative hardness' (xix) is central, and there is a naturalness in this development which controls the movement of the whole novel. The strength of Adam's character is to be found in his mechanistic philosophy which shows a complete acceptance of the undeviating laws of George Eliot's deterministic universe:

"the natur' o' things doesn't change, though it seems as if one's own life was nothing but change. The square o' four is sixteen, and you must lengthen your lever in proportion to your weight, is as true when a man's miserable as when he's happy; and the best o' working is, it gives you a grip hold o' things outside your own lot." (xi)

But Adam is aware, even early in the novel,⁴ that such a philosophy is not comprehensive; as he says to his mother, "the figures tell us a fine deal, and we couldn't go far without 'em, but they don't tell us about folk's feelings" (xiv).

Later in the novel when the regenerated Adam, now an old man, speaks with the author about the doctrinal Mr Ryde who succeeded Irwine, he uses another mathematical analogy, but on this occasion it is in order to reveal the inadequacy of intellect without emotion:

"I've seen pretty clear, ever since I was a young un, as religion's something else besides notions. It isn't notions sets people doing the right thing—it's feelings. It's the same with the notions in religion as it is with math'matics, —a man may be able to work problems straight off in's head as he sits by the fire and smokes his pipe; but if he has to make a machine or a building, he must have a will and a resolution, and love something else better than his own ease." (xvii)

Yet, at first, the most important thing in life, as far as Adam is concerned, is a knowledge of the unchangeable laws controlling the universe, and here lies the strength of his character. Unlike Arthur, he is fully aware of the laws of consequence, and, having assessed a situation, he has both 'a will and a resolution' to act effectively. Yet it is here also that George Eliot locates his fault of character: he judges others by his own logical, practical standards.

Whenever Adam was strongly, convinced of any proposition, it took the form of a principle^{le} in his mind: it was knowledge to be acted on, as much as the knowledge that damp will cause rust. Perhaps here lay the secret of the hardness he had accused himself of: he had too little fellow-feeling with the weakness that errs in spite of foreseen consequences. (xix)

Only through the extended suffering of his love for Hetty does Adam achieve this fellow-feeling. Only his own suffering can bring him and understanding of a world suffering from the unpitiful consequences of Nemesis. The quotation continues:

Without this fellow-feeling, how are we to get enough patience and charity towards our stumbling falling companions in the long

and changeful journey? And there is but one way in which a strong determined soul can learn it—by getting his heart-strings bound round the weak and erring, so that he must share not only the outward consequences of their error, but their inward suffering. That is a long and hard lesson, and Adam had at present only learned the alphabet of it in his father's sudden death....(xix)

His mechanistic philosophy must be humanised by an understanding of the Christian symbols of the novel.

Adam's education proper begins with his love for Hetty. Here for the first time, we see his emotions getting the better of his realistic approach to life, for Hetty is a shallow, ^{romantic} girl, quite unworthy of him. His love leads him into illusions. For example, after the birthday dance, he deceives himself into thinking, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that Hetty has no other lover: "And so Adam went to bed comforted, having woven for himself an ingenious web of probabilities—the surest screen a wise man can place between himself and the truth"(xxvi). Adam's suffering and his attainment of 'fellow feeling' comes from the gradual dispelling of all these illusions.

The first disenchantment occurs when Adam suddenly comes upon Hetty and Arthur in the Grove. George Eliot emphasises the distinctness and decisiveness of the ending of this first phase of illusion: "For the rest of his life he remembered that moment when he was calmly examining the beech, as a man remembers his last glimpse of the home where his youth was passed, before the road turned, and he saw it no more"(xxvii). It is a double disillusionment for Adam, since Arthur is the virtual head of Hayslope society which Adam accepts as part of the scheme of things, inclined as he is "to admit all established claims unless he saw very clear grounds for questioning them"(xvi). This twofold shock brings Adam momentarily back to reality: "He understood it all now...

a terrible scorching light showed him the hidden letters that changed the meaning of the past"(xvi). But Arthur's casualness about the discovery incites Adam to exact his own revenge, to act in place of Nemesis. He immediately realises the futility of this action: "What had he done by fighting? Only satisfied his own passion, only wreaked his own vengeance. He had not rescued Hetty, not changed the past-- there it was just as it had been, and he sickened at the vanity of his own rage"(xvii). This is the first of Adam's series of sufferings. It is, as his mother says, a death of disenchantment: "He's like as if he was struck for death this day or two"(xxx). It is not the last because it is not sufficiently decisive; there is no fellow-feeling, no sympathy for Arthur's wrongdoing and so Adam's forgiveness is a negative attitude--"I know forgiveness is a man's duty, but, to my thinking that can only mean as you're to give up all thoughts o' taking revenge"(xxix).

Adam's illusions about Hetty return after Arthur's departure from Hayslope. He convinces himself that it was a mere passing flirtation and that Hetty's reconciling herself to marriage with him is genuine love. This unrealistic hope is preparatory to the climax of suffering: "For this new promise of happiness following so quickly on the shock of pain, had an intoxicating effect of the sober Adam, who had all his life been used to much hardship and moderate hope"(xxxiii).

This intoxication is shattered by the second, more extended disenchantment when he discovers Hetty's disappearance. Now he begins to realise how he has been deluding himself, and in the description of his return home there is a clear recollection of the 'naked prose' passage of the letter of 1848:⁵ "...and now that by the light of this new morning he was come back to his home, and surrounded by the

familiar objects that seemed for ever robbed of their charm, the reality—the hard, inevitable reality—of his troubles pressed upon him with a new weight"(xxxviii). Adam's immediate reaction is again to punish Arthur: "I'll fetch him, I'll drag him myself"(xl). But Irwine checks him with "The punishment will surely fall without your aid," and yet Adam's desire for justice persists up to the climax of his suffering. This comes at Stoniton at Hetty's trial.

To elucidate this penultimate stage of Adam's regeneration, George Eliot uses the symbols of the Last Supper.⁶ These represent the ultimate fellowship with suffering humanity which he finally achieves, and from which proceeds his resurrection. At first, he still hankers after revenge, and the desire to judge Arthur, but again Irwine corrects him, and in doing so defines the nature of ^{Adam's} ~~Arthur's~~ pride and independence which refuse to acknowledge his reliance upon others:

"...you have no right to say that the guilt of her crime lies with him, and ~~thought~~^{that} he ought to bear the punishment. It is not for us men to apportion the shares of mortal guilt and retribution....The evil consequences that may lie folded in a single act of selfish indulgence, is a thought so awful that it ought surely to awaken some feeling less presumptuous than a rash desire to punish." (xli)

This pride is finally transcended on the morning of the trial.⁷ Adam is waiting in an 'an upper room in a dull Stoniton street'(xli) when Bartle Massey enters and tries to persuade him to have "a bit of the loaf and some of that wine Mr Irwine sent this morning"(xlii). We have been prepared for the recognition of these symbols of suffering on the previous page:

Deep unspeakable suffering may well be called a baptism, a regeneration, the initiation into a new state....all the intense emotions which had filled the days and nights of the

past week, and were compressing themselves again like an eager crowd into the hours of this single morning, made Adam look back on all the previous years as if they had been a dim sleepy existence, and he had only now ~~awakened~~ awakened to full consciousness. It seemed to him as if he had always before thought it a light thing that men should suffer; as if all that he had himself endured and called sorrow before, was only a moment's stroke that had never left a bruise. Doubtless a great anguish may do the work of years, and we may come out from that baptism of fire with a soul full of new awe and new pity.

And Adam is muttering to himself, "and men have suffered like this before....and poor helpless young things have suffered like her," as Massey enters.

In this re-enactment of the Last Supper, we see George Eliot using her symbols precisely to articulate the final stages of Adam's therapy of suffering. Bartle offers the bread and wine: "Come now," he went on, bringing forward the bottle and the loaf, and pouring some wine into a cup, "I must have a bite and a sup myself. Drink a drop with me, my lad--drink with me." (xlii). Adam at first refuses, until he hears Massey's account of Martin Poyser's suffering in court: "Adammy boy, the blow falls heavily on him as well as you: you must help poor Martin; you must show courage. Drink some wine now, and show me you mean to bear it like a man." By drinking some wine, Adam shows he can now generalise his own suffering into sympathy with others. Massey then continues to describe ~~himself~~ Hetty in court and Adam's suffering finally destroys his pride and hardness. He achieves a sympathy for the criminal herself: "I'll go into court. It's cowardly of me to keep away. I'll stand by her--I'll own her--for all she's been deceitful. They oughtn't to cast her off--her own flesh and blood. We hand folks over to God's mercy, and show none ourselves. I used to be hard sometimes: I'll never be hard again." To symbolise the completion of his 'initiation into

a new state', Adam this time takes both bread and wine:

"Take a bit, then, and another sup, Adam, for the love of me. See, I must stop and eat a morsel. Now, you take some."

Nerved by an active resolution, Adam took a morsel of bread and drank some wine. He was haggard and unshaven, as he had been yesterday, but he stood upright again, and looked more like the Adam Bede of former days.

This new Adam then goes into the trial to suffer with Hetty: "It was the supreme moment of his suffering: Hetty was guilty: and he was silently calling to God for help"(xliii).

The taking of the bread and wine has pinpointed exactly and movingly the moment of transformation of pain into sympathy. Adam's involvement in Hetty's suffering is, in Dinah's words, "the cup we must drink of with Him, if we would have any part in that Divine Love which is one with His sorrow"(xxx). He now understands the nature of suffering. He has died his final death of disenchantment, and now comes his gradual regeneration; in terms of Kant's Christology, "the suffering which the new man, in dying to the old, must perpetually incur through life, being conceived in the representative of mankind as a death suffered once for all." The old Adam whose sin was pride is dead, and the new Adam⁸ identifies his own suffering with that of suffering humanity, even with that part of it which "errs in spite of foreseen consequences." He has attained the synthesis of suffering and love which we have already seen embodied in Irwine, from whom he receives significantly the communion symbols. He shares the bread and wine with Bartle Massey who, through his sympathy for Adam's suffering, also achieves a new understanding and shows Irwine's fears ("I'm afraid you have too little fellow-feeling in what you consider his weakness about Hetty." xl) to be groundless. This powerful climax to the process we have been tracing is achieved

without any explicit reference to the Christian symbols which have been used so extensively in the novel. Confident that these are by now fully naturalised and sufficiently pervasive, George Eliot makes her characters enact unostentatiously the communion service. The dialogue fuses colloquial idiom with traditional Biblical phraseology, and suggests with admirable tact the significance of the scene.

Adam's regeneration has begun, as Massey prophesies, at the trial: "you'll rise above it all, and be a man again" (xlvi). But this is a gradual process and when later he meets Arthur in the wood and forgives him, he is still suffering from his death of disenchantment—"he might have been taken, with his pale & wasted face, for the spectre of Adam Bede who entered the Grove on that August evening eight months ago" (xlviii). Even in 'the second autumn of his sorrow,' Adam's therapy of suffering is not complete; the pain is still being transmuted into sympathy with suffering humanity:

Let us rather be 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....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. (1)

Out of this new sympathy comes his love for Dinah which completed his regeneration. Early in the novel, when she comes to comfort Lisbeth on the death of her husband, Dinah is associated with the Resurrection: "I could be fast sure that pictur was drawed for her i' thy new Bible —th'angel a-sittin on the big stone by the grave" (xiv). And it is the sight of this same picture, at this point in the novel, which prompts Lisbeth to open Adam's eyes to his love for Dinah and to Dinah's love for him: "And now there was a new leaf to be turned over, and it was a

picture--that of the angel seated on the great stone that had been rolled away from the sepulchre. This picture had one strong association in Lisbeth's memory, for she had been reminded of it when she first saw Dinah...(li). Even at the mention of Dinah's love, it seems to Adam "as if there was a resurrection of his dead joy." But the fulfilment which he finds in this love is very different from his illusory love for Hetty:

Her love was like that calm sunshine that they seemed to make one presence to him, and he believed in them both alike. And 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. (li)

The intimate, necessary relationship between suffering and the 'sense of enlarged being' which Adam enjoys at the end of the novel is poetically and economically symbolised in the 'Harvest Home' chant, which he hears whilst awaiting Dinah's verdict. "It was enough to make Adam feel that he was in a great temple, and that the distant chant was a sacred song"(liii). And his statement which follows relates effortlessly and organically the Crucifixion with the Resurrection, disenchantment with regeneration:

"It's wonderful," he thought, "how that sound goes to one's heart almost like a funeral-bell, for all it tells one o' the joyfulest time o' the year, and the time when men are mostly the thankfulest. I suppose it's a bit hard to us to think anything over and gone in our laves; and there's a parting at the root of all our joys. It's like what I feel about Dinah: I should never ha' come to know that her love 'ud be the greates o' blessings to me, if what I count a blessing hadn't been wrenched and torn away from me, and left me with a greater need, so as I could crave and hunger for a greater and better comfort." (liii)

This harvest symbol expresses the culmination of the process which the Christian symbols have been articulating. It expresses a state of mind which synthesises the apparent dialectic between love and suffering. And this state of mind is identified with Adam's love for ~~Mitty~~ Dinah which has been engendered with great naturalness and inevitability from the painful antithesis of illusion and disenchantment.

Arthur and Hetty, in contrast to Adam, refuse to acknowledge the irreversible laws of consequence controlling the universe. Their illusions and disenchantments are interwoven symmetrically with Adam's and, although their development through suffering is more drastic than his, the basic process is the same. Their love for each other epitomises their failings. This love is essentially unrealistic and escapist; Arthur is merely amusing himself, whilst Hetty is carried away by romantic dreams of aristocracy. In portraying the world of illusions which they inhabit, George Eliot develops certain opiate symbols to correspond to the symbols of disenchantment and regeneration we have already examined. These symbols are many and various in the novels, ranging from Janet Dempster's brandy to Casaubon's researches. In this novel, the most extended symbol of illusion is "the delicious labyrinthine wood which skirted one side of the Chase, and which was called Fir-tree Grove"(xii). This is the setting of Arthur's and Hetty's love-affair:

It was a wood of beeches and limes, with here and there a light, silver-stemmed birch--just the sort of wood most haunted by the nymphs: you see their white sunlit limbs gleaming athwart the boughs, or peeping from behind the smooth-sweeping outline of a tall lime....

It was along the broadest of these paths that Arthur Donnithorne passed, under an avenue of limes and beeches. It was a still afternoon--the golden light was lingering

languidly among the upper boughs, only glancing down here and there on the purple pathway and its edge of faintly sprinkled moss: an afternoon in which destiny disguises her cold awful face behind a hazy radiant veil, encloses us in downy wings, and poisons us with violet-scented breath. (xii)

In George Eliot's world such enchantment can only lead to one thing--disenchantment and a sudden waking to reality. But, for the moment, escape from reality seems possible, especially as Arthur has an additional refuge in his Hermitage which 'stood in the heart of the wood,' and in which on one occasion we find him reading the adventures of that archetypal romantic villain, Zeluco.⁹ On his second meeting with Hetty, Arthur comes to realise that the Grove is 'haunted by his evil genius': "Those beeches and smooth limes--there was something enervating in the very sight of them"(xiii). Hetty's beauty is at one with the scene, weakening Arthur's moral resolution despite Irwine's advice.

Arthur's degeneration is counterpointed with the public celebrations for his coming of age. It is already well advanced by the time his birthday feast arrives in July, and the premonitions George Eliot sees in this season of the year are an extension of the threats implicit in the Grove. Again, she makes an effective correlation between the seasons and the phases of the basic rhythm:

Perfect weather for an outdoor July merrymaking, yet surely not the best time of year to be born in. Nature seems to make a hot pause just then--all the loveliest flowers are gone; the sweet time of early growth and vague hopes is past; and yet the time of harvest and ingathering is not come, and we tremble at the possible storms that may ruin the precious fruit in the moment of its ripeness. (xxii)

His first shock of disillusionment comes like Adam's at the sudden discovery in the Grove. In 'the strange evening light', and 'having tried to make unpleasant feelings more bearable by drinking a little more wine than usual at dinner," Arthur is confronted by reality in

the person of Adam. We have seen that this meeting was a shock to Adam because his nature depended "for so much of its happiness on what it can believe and feel about others"(xxvii). Conversely, Arthur "lived a great deal in other people's opinions and feelings concerning himself"(xvi), and now the shock of disenchantment comes from seeing himself through Adam's eyes: "The discovery that Adam loved Hetty was a shock which made him for the moment see himself in the light of Adam's indignation, and regard Adam's suffering as not merely a consequence, but an element of his error...he stood face to face with the first great irrevocable evil he had ever committed"(xxvii). This shock is Arthur's first 'death' and it is dramatised when he is knocked unconscious and Adam "could feel nothing but that death was in Arthur's face....He made not a single movement, but knelt like an image of despair gazing at an image of death."

Arthur agrees to sever his relationship with Hetty and resolves to leave Hayslope. In doing so, he ^{is} merely agreeing to Adam's demands; he has not accepted realistically his own sin, for he refuses to believe in 'the irrevocableness of his own wrongdoing'(xxix). The disenchantment has not been sufficiently decisive to lead to regeneration: it merely encourages Arthur in self-deception and self-exoneration. So, moving in opposition to the successive disillusionments which conduct the ~~in~~ individual towards a clear vision of reality, is the self-exoneration which by fostering illusion leads further away from it:

There is a terrible coercion in our deeds which may first turn the honest man into a deceiver then reconcile him to the change; for this reason--that the second wrong presents itself to him in the guise of the only practicable right. The action which before commission has been seen with that bledded common-sense and fresh untarnished feeling which is the healthy eye of the soul, is looked at afterwards

with the lens of apologetic ingenuity, through which all things that men call beautiful and ugly are seen to be made up of textures very much alike. Europe adjusts itself to a fait accompli, and so does an individual character--until the placid adjustment is disturbed by a convulsive retribution. (xxix)

Such moral adjustment is the prevalent state of mind in the periods of illusion, until the irreversible laws, working both in microcosm and macrocosm, redress the swing away from reality by the sudden disillusionment which is a form of retribution. George Eliot substantiates the universality of her laws of consequence by referring us briefly out of Hayslope to the Napoleonic wars, to the 'convulsive retribution' in European politics.¹⁰ This suggestion of the consistency of the irreversible laws at all levels of society anticipates her later, more detailed definition by analogy of the social organism.

Arthur is away from Hayslope whilst the evil consequences of his sin multiply. Adam, as we have seen, wants to punish Arthur but Irwine insists on man's inability to judge "how far a man is to be held responsible for the unforeseen consequences of his own deed"(xli). This must be left to Nemesis. And Arthur returns home to his 'convulsive retribution' at the climax of the suffering. It is at the height of his second illusion that ~~Arthur~~ when, "conscious of that quiet wellbeing which perhaps ~~you~~ you and I have felt on a sunny afternoon, when, in our brightest youth and health, life has opened a new vista for us,"^{that} Arthur reads Irwine's letter telling him of the murder and Hetty's trial. Again, the shock is expressed as a kind of death: "He started up from his chair, and stood for a single minute with a sense of violent convulsion in his whole frame as if the life were going out of him with horrible throbs." After Hetty's reprieve Arthur and Adam meet in the Grove by the beech tree where they both suffered their first death of disenchantment. Now, they have both undergone their second: Adam is a 'spectre' of his former self, and

whilst feeling affection for Arthur he is aware that "It was affection for the dead: that Arthur existed no longer"(xlvi). The new Arthur has come both to understand the undeviating laws of the universe and to accept the changed attitude to his fellow human beings which this entails. He appeals to Adam: "I only wish to ask you if you will help me to lessen the evil consequences of the past, which is unchangeable. I don't mean consequences to myself, but to others. It is but little I can do, I know. I know the worst consequences will remain; but something may be done, and you can help me." This earnest of Arthur's regeneration is given foundation a few pages later in his reference to Dinah, the resurrection angel: "I could worship that woman; I don't know what I should do if she were not there." And finally, the Last Supper, which celebrated the community of suffering humanity, is recalled by the phrase with which he gives Adam his watch, saying "tell her I asked you to give her this in remembrance of me."

Although the Christian symbols have been used to delineate the development of Arthur's, as well of Adam's character, and although the basic phases of their development are the same, there is clearly a shift in emphasis. Since his illusions are more deep-seated, Arthur's shocks of disenchantment, the last of which extends to his exile and illness, bears more the character of retribution for sin than a gradual education through suffering as in Adam's case. The education is present as we have seen, but the main impression one is left with is that of rigid, unpitying laws shocking Arthur into an awareness of their presence. Adam's development on the other hand, evolves internally since it is essentially the reconciling of his mathematical philosophy (which represents his acceptance of these same laws) with sympathy for Hetty and Arthur. His development is rather a reorientation and for this

reason it has a complexity and inner conviction which Arthur's lacks.

Hetty, likewise, is presented as an ignorant victim of Nemesis. We are shown at great length 'the narrow circle of her imagination'(xxxi), and the shattering of her successive illusions. At first, we see her under the influence of Arthur ~~moving~~ moving in a typically enchanted, illusory world, depicted in George Eliot's characteristic images:

But for the last few weeks a new influence had come over Hetty—vague, atmospheric, snapping itself into no self-confessed hopes or prospects, but producing a pleasant narcotic effect, making her tread the ground and go about her work in a sort of dream, unconscious of weight or effort, and showing her all things through a soft liquid veil, as if she were living not in this ^{solid} world of brick and stone, but in a beatified world, such as the sun lights up for us in the waters. (ix)

Cut off from reality by these illusions, she is shown cut off also from any real contact with other people. She is 'isolated from all appeals by a barrier dreams'(ix), and her 'religious rites' are the worshipping of her own beauty in the blotched mirror. George Eliot develops Adam's illusory 'web of probabilities' which prevented him from seeing the truth into something more sinister in the description of Hetty's egoism:

...it is too painful to think that she is a woman, with a woman's destiny before her—a woman spinning in young ignorance a light web of folly and vain hopes which may one day close round her and press upon her, a rancorous poisoned garment, changing all at once her fluttering, trivial butterfly sensations into a life of deep human anguish. (xxii)

'The shattering of all her little dream-world'(xxi) occurs almost simultaneously with that of Adam's and Arthur's. It is as a result of the meeting in the Grove that Arthur leaves Hayslope, ending their

relationship. Hetty's 'dry-eyed morning misery' recalls Adam's, and George Eliot points out the extra suffering of this first of the series of disillusionments: "For there is no despair so absolute as that which comes with the first moments of our first great sorrow, when we have not yet known what it is to have suffered and be healed, to have despaired and to have recovered hope"(xxxi). This first contact with suffering and disappointment has little effect upon Hetty. She has "a mind where no strong sympathies are at work, where there is no supreme sense of right", and so the shock of disenchantment has not been severe enough to be therapeutic:

Poor Hetty's vision of consequences, at no time more than a narrow fantastic calculation of her own probable pleasures pains, was now quite shut out by reckless irritation under present suffering, and she was ready for one of those convulsions^{ve}, motiveless actions by which wretched men and women leap from a temporary sorrow into a lifelong misery. (xxxi)

This action is her decision to marry Adam.

This temporary illusion is shattered by the realisation of her pregnancy, and she begins the long journey of her suffering, "seeing nothing in this wide world but the little history of her own pleasures and pains"(xxxvi), which is to end in Stoniton jail. The discovery of Arthur's departure from Windsor comes as the next shock, when, on fainting, she looks 'like a beautiful corpse'(xxxvi); and when we last see her before the murdering of her child, she is feeling "as if she were dead already, and knew that she was dead, and longed to get back to life again"(xxxvii).

Dinah comes at last to effect the regeneration, and once again to act out with the other main characters in the novel the full movement of her opening sermon. At first, "some fatal influence seems to have shut up Hetty's heart against her fellow-creatures"(xli), but on the eve of the execution Dinah eventually prevails upon her, first by

appealing to Christ at the moment of his supreme disenchantment:
 "Jesus, thou present Saviour! Thou hast known the depths of all sorrow: Thou hast entered that black darkness where God is not, and hast uttered the cry of the forsaken." Then, she appeals to the risen Christ: "I can only clasp her in my weak arms, and urge her with my weak pity. Thou—Thou wilt breathe on the dead soul, and it shall arise from the unanswering sleep of death" (xlv). Then Hetty confesses and asks forgiveness. This does not mean the end of her suffering for the inevitable logic of George Eliot's world demands that she has to die an early death. In this final appeal of Dinah, the reorientated Christian symbols re-emerge into a fully religious expression.

Finally, there is Dinah. Some of the subtlety of George Eliot's juxtaposition ~~of character~~ of characters for the purpose of moral definition comes out when we attempt to place her in the novel. At first sight, she appears to be simply the resurrection angel who first warns and then comes at the end of the novel to save. She is obviously the direct opposite of Hetty, and in the chapter 'The Two Bed-Chambers' (xv) this contrast is presented simply and schematically. In adjacent bedrooms at the Hall Farm, Hetty performs her 'religious rites' before her looking-glass, whilst Dinah, who 'delighted in her bedroom window' which 'gave her a wide view over the fields,' thinks about 'all the dear people whom she had learned to care for among those peaceful fields.' The window and the mirror, the altruist and the egoist—it appears a simple moral contrast of good and bad. The ending of the novel however suggests something quite different, for there we see Dinah herself undergoing an educative experience. But we cannot appreciate this if we have oversimplified our categories.

As we have seen earlier, the fault at the opposite extreme to egoism

is selflessness, "the lunacy," as Theophrastus Such says, "of fancying oneself everybody else and being unable to play one's ^{own} part decently— another form of the disloyal attempt to be independent of the common lot, and to live without a sharing of pain." ^{II} This fault is latent in Dinah's altruism even at the beginning of the novel. On her first appearance, we are told her eyes "had the liquid look which tells that the mind is full of what it has to give out, rather than impressed by external objects"(ii). And it is this attitude of mind which is so discouraging to the hopeful lover, Seth: "It was an expression of ~~an~~ unconscious placid gravity—of absorption in thoughts that had no ~~an~~ connection with the present moment or with her own personality"(iii). When they have argued over the rightness and wrongness of marriage, each quoting Paul, Dinah delivers her ultimatum: "I seem to have no room in my soul for wants and fears of my own, it has pleased God to fill my heart so full with the wants and sufferings of His poor people"(iii). This prompts the question whether it is possible to sympathise fully with the suffering of others if oneself has no independent suffering existence. The difficulty for most of George Eliot's characters is to transcend their egoism and to acknowledge, in the words of Middlemarch, 'the equivalent centre of self' of others. But conversely, to acknowledge this equivalence is impossible if one denies one's own centre of self. In Mrs Poyser's constant criticism of Dinah's self-sacrifice, there is an effective undertone of seriousness, and at one point she defines neatly the danger latent in Dinah's attitude:

"She provoked me past bearing sometimes; and, as I told her, she went clean again the Scriptur', for that says, 'Love your neighbour as yourself'; 'but', I said, 'if you loved your neighbour no better nor you do yourself, Dinah, it's little enough you'd do for him. You'd be thinking he might do well enough on a half-empty stomach.'" (xviii)

Dinah's loss of self-awareness in mystical trances is another aspect of this side of her character; she explains to Irwine, "it's my besetment to forget where I am and everything about me, and to lose myself in thoughts that I could give no account of"(viii). In her important letter where she defines the inseparableness of love and suffering, she describes one such trance: "I sit on my chair in the dark room and close my eyes, and it is as if I was out of the body, and could feel no want for evermore"(xxx). The treatment of Dinah's character looks ahead to the more detailed presentation of Deronda's disease of sympathy. Dinah's mystical trances are not far removed from his experiments in self-projection: "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...."(xvii). The main difference is that Deronda's self-projection has a debilitating effect upon his social action--he can sympathise with too many points of view--whilst Dinah becomes the resurrection angel. Yet, George Eliot clearly wants us to see Dinah trying in one way to escape from full self-commitment. This is, at first, a mere suggestion, but ^{it} is developed convincingly in her relationship with Adam. Early in the novel, when she meets Adam just after his father's death, she becomes aware of an aspect of her life which up to now she has not fully accepted: "Dinah, for the first time in her life, felt a painful self-consciousness; there was some thing in the dark penetrating glance of this strong man so different from the mildness and timidity of his brother Seth. A faint blush came, which deepened as she wondered at it"(xi). Here, George Eliot is not merely giving us a sly hint at their ultimate marriage; she is showing that this sudden and 'painful' awareness of self is something that Dinah is trying to

escape from. For the moment, we see her in moral contrast not with Hetty but with Adam, with his excessive self-dependence which is epitomised in his text, "God helps them as help theirsens"(iv).

For thirty chapters Dinah is away from Hayslope as the tragedy develops. She returns, as we seen, at the climax. Now, she is confronted with the new Adam in whom "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"(1). His suddenly realised love for Dinah is the completion of Adam's resurrection, the end of the transformation of pain into sympathy. When this new, humble Adam declares his love ("I love you with my whole heart and soul. I love you next to God who made me.") Dinah again undergoes a painful, shattering awareness of self: "Dinah's lips became pale, like her cheeks, and she trembled violently under the shock of painful joy. Her hands were cold as death between Adam's"(lii). Thus the shock of reality for Dinah is not a sudden stripping, but an obtrusion of self. She acknowledges her love for Adam, but still resists marriage, using Paul's terms: "I fear I should forget to rejoice and weep with others; nay, I fear I should forget the Divine presence, and seek no love but yours." The argument which follows is delicately poised. Now, however, it is Adam who is speaking from a position of strength and knowledge; he has come to understand suffering from his involvement with Hetty, and now he knows love in his feeling for Dinah. He expresses the need for sympathetic understanding of others to be built upon personal experience and commitment:

"I don't believe your loving me could shut up your heart; it's only adding to what you've been before, not taking away from it; for it seems to me it's the same with love and happiness as with sorrow--the more we know of it the

better we can feel what other people's lives are or might be, and so we shall only be more tender to 'em, and wishful to help 'em. The more knowlédge a man has, the better he'll do's work; and feeling's a sort o' knowlédge." (lii)

Thus Adam has extended his earlier mechanistic idea of knowledge to include feeling, and so make possible a fusion of the two essential elements in George Eliot's definition of morality. But it still requires the final meeting on the hill at Snowfield to make Dinah accept this ~~statement~~ argument. As he draws near, Adam expresses the satisfactory nature of this would-be union of complementary natures: "I shall look t'her to help me to see things right. For she's better than I am—there's less o' self in her, and pride" (liv). Pride and selflessness are to meet and be finally educated in this marriage. This union is expressed simply in the meeting on the hill. The fact that Dinah accepts Adam's love on the hill in Stonyshire where there was "no presence but the still lights and shadows, and the great embracing sky" (liv), shows the compatibility of Dinah's awareness of 'the Divine love' with her love for Adam. Here at the end, George Eliot emphasising the stage-directions, insists that Adam waits 'almost at the top of the hill' watching Dinah climb towards him. When they meet and go on together, we see she has attained at last the ability to strengthen her altruism with an independent, fully committed life of her own.

George Eliot's most considerable achievement in Adam Bede is to establish naturally and pervasively the rhythm of illusion, disenchantment and regeneration as the basis of life. This rhythm gives meaning and dignity to even the humblest form of life in the novel, transforming

what is in outline the romantic triangle of aristocratic seducer, innocent dairymaid and faithful village wooer into a ~~vivid~~ ~~and~~ disturbing picture of reality. It is this achievement which gives such force ^{to} the aesthetic George Eliot explicitly formulates, an aesthetic which attacks the ~~conventional~~ ^{exclusions} upon which such conventionally romantic ideas must be based. This is given its fullest statement in chapter xvii, 'In Which the Story Pauses a Little':

All honour and reverence to the divine beauty of form! Let us cultivate it to the utmost in men, women, and children—in our gardens and in our houses. But let us love that other beauty too, which lies in no secret of proportion, but in the secret of deep human sympathy.... do not impose on us any aesthetic rules which shall banish from the region of Arts those old women scraping carrots with their work-worn hands, those heavy clowns taking holiday in a dingy pot-house.... In this world there are so many of these common coarse people, who have no picturesque sentimental wretchedness! It is so needful we should remember their existence, else we may happen to leave them quite out of our religion and philosophy, and frame lofty theories which fit only a world of extremes.¹²

'Art is the nearest thing to life,' George Eliot had said earlier, and this later statement of the same moral aesthetic gains force, occurring as it does in Adam Bede when the symbols and images have already begun to order and make significant the prosaic hopes and disappointments of the people of Hayslope, at the same time as they question the illusory, romantic values of Arthur and Hetty. Irwine is the most complete embodiment of this aesthetic as it is translated into terms of practical living. His mother is contrasted with him. She, "an Olympian goddess", "as erect in her comely embonpoint as a statue of Ceres", has no sympathy with the undistinguished life around her nor with her

daughters, Irwine's 'two hopelessly maiden sisters.' She expresses the opposite, what is later to be developed as a Hellenistic, aesthetic:

"Nonsense, child. Nature never makes a ferret in the shape of a mastiff. You'll never persuade me that I can't tell what men are by their outsides. If I don't like a man's looks, depend upon it I shall never like him. I don't want to know people that look ugly and disagreeable, any more than I want to taste dishes that look disagreeable." (v)¹³

The result is that throughout the novel she is carefully insulated from the suffering and the tragedy, and is therefore unable to participate in the final regeneration. George Eliot's success is indicated by the fact that we even extend our sympathy to her in her non-participation, though she is attacking the belief upon which the novel is constructed.

FOOTNOTES

- I In her use of Loamshire and Stonyshire in this novel, George Eliot constantly calls to mind Hawthorne. In particular, the preaching scene on the village green is reminiscent of his story, 'The Maypole of Merry Mount.'
- 2 If we compare this letter of Dinah's with George Eliot's own, very similar letter written in 1840 (quoted above p.29) which also discusses the importance of suffering, we can see how George Eliot uses the phases of her own early religious development as material for her fiction.
- 3 The immature, unsatisfactory nature of this love is suggested by Irwine's quotation from The Choephoroi: "Ah, my boy, it is not only woman's love that is ἀπέρωτος ἔρως, as old Aeschylus calls it. There's plenty of 'unloving love' in the world of a masculine kind"(xxii). The complete quotation ~~quotation~~ from Aeschylus is revealing in this context:
- But man's rash heart, his stubborn will,
And woman's desperate love and hate--
Who can set forth their train of ill
Disastrous and insatiate?
For reckless passion, that makes blind
Each female heart, comes thwart and sly
To flout the fond connubial tie
And mock both beasts and human kind.
- (The Oresteian Trilogy, trans Philip
Vellacot, Penguin Books, 1956, p. 125.)
- 4 Barbara Hardy, in The Novels of George Eliot, pp. 45-6, maintains that Adam's tragic education can be seen in his final rejection (as an old man in ch. xvii) of his mathematical analogies. In fact, as this quotation shows, Adam is aware of the inadequacy of this philosophy throughout the novel, even if he does not modify his actions accordingly.
- 5 See above, pp. 20-I.

6

The symbolism of the Last Supper used in ch. xlii has been commented on by G. Creeger, 'An Interpretation of Adam Bede,' Journal of English Literary History, 22 (1956), 218-238, and by Reva Stump, Movement and Vision in George Eliot's Novels, Seattle, 1959, pp. 46-51.

7

At an earlier point in the novel, it appears that the religious symbolism of the Last Supper is going to gain additional emphasis from the time-scheme. At the betrothal, Mr Poyser supported by his wife, says: "Well, well," said Mr Poyser at last, "we needna fix everything tonight. We must take time to consider. You canna think o'getting married afore Easter." (xxxiv).

Later, however, George Eliot seems to have altered her time-scheme for we learn that the day of Hetty's execution, March 15, should ironically have been the day of her marriage with Adam. From this we can see that the trial which is part of the Lent Assizes took place on Friday, March 12. Thus George Eliot's re-enactment of the Last Supper precedes the events of Easter.

See Daniel P. Deneau, 'Inconsistencies and Inaccuracies in Adam Bede,' Nineteenth Century Fiction, 14 (1959), 71-75; and W. J. Harvey, 'The Treatment of Time in Adam Bede,' Anglia, 75 (1957), 24-40.

8

Dinah's constant references to St Paul encourage us to see the action in these terms. For example, she quotes Paul in support of her resolve ~~z~~ not to marry (iii); she is prompted, by opening her Bible "on that memorable parting at Ephesus, when Paul had felt bound to open his heart in a last exhortation and warning" (xv), to attempt to gain Hetty's confidence; she returns to Snwfield under similar guidance—"And this morning when I opened the Bible for direction, the first words my eyes fell on were, 'And after we had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia'" (iii); and in her letter to Seth (xxx) she quotes from Paul.

9

See Jerome Thale, 'Adam Bede: Arthur Donnithorne and Zeluco,' Modern Language Notes, 70 (1955), 263-5. Thale suggests certain parallels between the careers of Arthur and Zeluco. See below, footnote 13.

10

For example, the anonymous horseman comments on seeing Adam,

'"We want such fellows as he to lick the French"'(ii); in ch. v, we are told Mrs Irwine's beauty "made her a graceful subject for conversation in turn with the King's health, the sweet new patterns in cotton dresses, the news from Egypt, and Lord Darcey's lawsuit..."; Mr Poyser lost in admiration of "'them fellows as make the almanesks,"' says, "'Why, that pictur was made afore Christmas, and yit it's come as true as th'bible. Why, th'cock's France, an'th'anchor's Nelson--an' they told us that beforehand"'(xviii); in ch. xxxiii, George Eliot makes one of her ironic analogies--"The news that 'Bonny' was back from Egypt was comparatively insipid, and the repulse of the French in Italy was nothing to Mrs Poyser's repulse of the old Squire"; Arthur on his return to Hayslope feels as gay "as if there had been news of a fresh Nelson victory"(xliv); and at the end of the novel, in the diminuendo of the love of Adam and Dinah, there are rumours of peace--"It's pretty certain, they say, [said Adam] that there'll be peace soon, though nobody believes it'll last long"(1).

II

See above, p. 2.

I2

Ruskin's influence seems to be at work most clearly at this point in the novel. In her review of volume three of Modern Painters in the Westminster Review of April 1856, George Eliot closely anticipates her statement in Adam Bede and explicitly generalises the aesthetic statement into a universal doctrine:

The truth of infinite value that he teaches is realism--the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms, bred by imagination on the mists of feeling, in place of definite substantial reality. The thorough acceptance of this doctrine would remould our life; and he who teaches its application to any one department of human activity with such power as Mr Ruskin's, is a prophet for his generation. (p. 626)

Several letters about this time express her familiarity with and admiration for Ruskin's writings, e.g. Letters, II, 255, 422, and 228.

I3

George Eliot may well have got a hint for Mrs Irwine's ethic from Zeluco's mother: "His mother had parted from him with reluctance; her fond partiality remained strong as ever, in spite of all the proofs of a vicious disposition he had displayed: she viewed his character

in a manner precisely the reverse of that in which Desdemona contemplated Othello's; she saw Zeluco's mind in his visage; and as this was fair and regular, she fondly believed it to be a faithful index of the other; imputing all that part of his conduct which she could not justify, to the warmth of youth, which time and reflection would soon correct"(iv). This is identical with Mrs Irwine's attitude to her godson, Arthur.

THE SOCIAL ORGANISM

In her first novel, George Eliot has shown the individual living in a universe controlled by the rigid laws of consequence. Adam Bede's mechanistic analogies expressed the true nature of this universe, even though his application of this knowledge had to be humanised by suffering. This unchangeable order was reflected in the traditional society of Hayslope, which was accepted by the characters without question as part of the scheme of things. George Eliot was concentrating upon the individual's double yet simultaneous relationship to the eternal laws and to his fellow human beings, and so a society in transition would have been an unnecessarily complicating factor. The novel was therefore set at the turn of the century, and, despite the suffering which comes to Hayslope, we are left at the end with an impression of stability and calm. This is very different from all the succeeding novels where the society as well as the individual is shown developing in terms of its own dialectic towards a closer harmony with ^{the} universal laws. In the later novels, George Eliot is concerned less with the individual's understanding of these laws than with his understanding of and relations with the particular developing society in which he is living. Fundamentally, of course, these two aspects of the individual's existence are inseparable; it is merely that the emphasis has changed. And with this change we have, in The Mill on the Floss, what is to become a far more typical theme for George Eliot—the heroine seeking a social ethic in a complex and changing society.

This change of emphasis results in a narrowing of the worlds of the novels, for we no longer feel that the characters are confronting and being punished by an impersonal and universal Nemesis; and, secondly, it results in an increasing complexity, for the society which is now the individual's chief concern is in transition. As the small, self-contained communities become less isolated, connected by commerce and industry with the larger community of the country as a whole, the simple and traditional relationships between the individual, the family and the parish become increasingly complex and contradictory. As George Eliot shows in Middlemarch, 'fresh threads'(xi) are continually being formed between the different elements in society, and the individual himself has to decide where his chief loyalties lie. It is the suddenness and destructiveness of these changes in society which make almost impossible, for someone like Maggie Tulliver, a smooth transition from the small community of the family to the larger community of a rapidly changing St Ogg's.

George Eliot begins to envisage society more and more as an ~~organism~~ organism, developing in size and complexity according to its own laws. Like any organism, it is composed of different parts which are complementary and mutually dependent, and the organic unity of the whole depends upon a correct working of the individual parts. The nature of the individual is influenced by the organism of which he is a member, and only in this organism can he achieve full expression of himself. Clearly, such a complex living structure and its development cannot be described by means of mechanistic analogies, and after Adam Bede we find George Eliot using images of natural growth to describe the societies of the novels. St Ogg's is compared to 'a millennial tree', whilst the relations of Tito and Romola to Florence are compared to a tree where "each single

bud with its fruit is dependent on the primary circulation of the sap"(xxi). Society is seen as ^dliving entity which becomes an agent in the novels, confusing and complicating the actions of the individuals, but giving these actions depth and significance. The organic connection between the individual and society as a whole is insisted on by means of analogy. There was a suggestion of this in Adam Bede where Arthur's crime and punishment is related ^{to} the 'convulsive retribution' in contemporary European politics. In the novels after Adam Bede, analogy is constantly at work connecting individual behaviour with the health or sickness of a society, and showing generally how similar laws are at work in microcosm and ~~microcosm~~ macrocosm.

For an understanding of these later novels, it is necessary to examine in more detail George Eliot's views on the social organism. In a review of 1856, she interprets and illustrates with obvious approval Riehl's account of 'the natural history of...social classes' in Germany. The whole article is an interesting commentary on the novels of this period, and we should note especially the stress George Eliot places on his account of the gradual living growth of societies:

He sees in European society incarnate history, and any attempt to disengage it from its historical elements must, he believes, be simply destructive of social vitality. What has grown up historically can only die out historically, by the gradual operation of necessary laws. The external conditions which society has inherited from the past are but the manifestation of inherited internal conditions in the human beings who compose it; the internal conditions and the external are related to each other as the organism and its medium, and development can take place only by the gradual consentaneous development of both.^I

The crucial factor in this historical process is the relationship between the internal and external conditions, for it is out of this that society evolves. George Eliot here makes no attempt to explain how

the 'development' becomes 'consentaneous'. How is a new direction given to the growth of society? A few pages later she does attempt to explain, again in terms of natural growth, how a new development can eventually cause a break with the past:

The nature of European men has its roots intertwined with the past, and can only be developed by allowing those roots to remain undisturbed while the process of development is going on, until that perfect ripeness of the seed of which carries with it a life independent of the root.²

Clearly, no violent change is considered possible; this is Burke-like in its insistence on non-interference with the natural growth of the social organism. The internal and external conditions are moving together by an undefined process of mutual adjustment. We have an early expression of this belief in the structure of 'Janet's Repentance', the most ambitious of the Scenes of Clerical Life, where the inner conditions of the heroine and the external condition of Milby society are simultaneously reformed by the Rev. Tryan. Although the relationship between inner and outer is a simplified one, George Eliot does manage to convey some idea of essential correspondence ~~and~~ mutual dependence.

George Eliot has still, however, not accounted for the driving force behind this development. If society is dependent upon 'the consentaneous development' of inner and outer conditions, how is this consent achieved? She had given an answer to this question two months previously, in March 1856, in a brief but important review of a new edition of Sophocles' Antigone.³ She sees the play as a symbol of the historical process. Rejecting the "very superficial criticism which interprets the character of Creon as that of a hypocritical tyrant, and regards Antigone as ~~the~~ a blameless victim," she examines the play as an "antagonism between valid claims":

...the struggle between Antigone and Creon represents that struggle between elemental tendencies and established ~~existing~~ laws by which the outer life of man is gradually brought into harmony with his inward needs. Until this harmony is perfected, we shall never be able to attain a great right without also doing a wrong. Reformers, martyrs, revolutionists, are never fighting against evil only; they are also placing themselves in opposition to a good--to a valid principle which cannot be infringed without harm....Wherever the strength of a man's intellect, or moral ~~was~~ sense, or affection brings him into opposition with the rules which society has sanctioned, there is renewed the conflict between Antigone and Creon; such a man must not only dare to be right, he must also dare to be wrong--to shake faith, to wound friendship perhaps, to hem in his own powers. Like Antigone, he may fall a victim to the struggle, and yet he can never earn the name of a blameless martyr any more than the society--the Creon he has defied, can be branded as a hypocritical tyrant.

George Eliot has taken Hegel's own favourite example⁴ and used it to define with authority the dialectic by which society develops. The stress is placed now not upon the harmonious and simultaneous development of the internal and the external conditions of society, but upon the conflict which precedes such a harmony. This dialectic can be compared with the dialectic of the self. Just as in the dialectic of the individual an illusory world-view was found incapable of accounting⁷ for the obtrusive prose reality of the world, so the external conditions of society, its 'established laws', are not sufficiently comprehensive to allow expression to the internal conditions, 'the elemental tendencies', of the individual. The antinomies which result from this are the central themes of George Eliot's next three novels--The Mill on the Floss, Silas Marner, and Romola. In these three novels, whether George Eliot is dealing with the smallest human community, the family, or the largest, the state or the universal

Catholic Church, we find the individual at odds with the accepted laws of the organism of which he is a member. And the tension at the centre of each of these novels is created by the balancing of valid yet antagonistic claims. In these novels, particularly in The Mill on the Floss and Romola, there is no easy adaptation followed by the onward march of society. George Eliot balances the claims of the individual and the society so finely that there is a tension, an anguish, at the centre of these novels (although not convincingly worked out in Romola) which she does not achieve again. We are made more aware here of the negative side of the dialectical process than 'the consentaneous development' previously stressed.

Whatever the loss incurred in the process, George Eliot is convinced that, as society evolves, 'the outer life of man' and 'his inward needs' are coming closer together. This is because the dialectic process leaves in its train a deposit of institutions and organisations which confirms on the public plane the efforts of the 'sacred rebels' such as Savonarola and Antigone. George Eliot sees this deposit as 'an external Reason' which supports 'the multitude' and prevents it rolling back 'even to a superstition that carries cruelty in its train.' These are the terms she uses in 1865, in her review of Lecky's history of rationalism, to describe the product of the dialectic. This 'external Reason' is:

the sum of conditions resulting from the laws of material growth, from the changes produced by great historical ~~changes~~ collisions shattering the structures of ages and making new highways for events and ideas, and from the activities of higher minds no longer existing merely as opinions and teaching, but as institutions and organisations with which the interests, the affections, and the habits of the multitude are inextricably interwoven.⁵

This description is more disillusioned than the earlier ones of

society's natural growth. By 1865, George Eliot is more aware of the conflict and destruction inherent in the process of development, and this is reflected particularly in Felix Holt. Developing 'institutions and organisations' are not envisaged as leading the advance of societies; following in the rear, they have a negative, defensive function of consolidation to perform, preventing the multitude from rolling back into barbarism. It is the same in private life. Lapses in duty are checked--as Romola's removal of her betrothal ring is checked--by "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"(xxxvi). George Eliot's vivid awareness of the necessity for this 'external identity' both for the individual and society not only makes any kind of progressive Jacobinism repugnant to her, but also makes her suspicious at times of any form of political innovation. She becomes obsessed by the difficulty of drawing a clear dividing-line between obedience and rebellion. "The question where the duty of obedience ends, and the duty of resistance begins," she says in Romola, "could in no case be an easy one"(lv). The more she considers the problem, the closer she seems to come to Burke's point of view, whose words she is clearly echoing here: "The speculative line of demarcation, where obedience ought to end, and resistance must begin," says Burke, "is faint, obscure, and not easily definable.... Governments must be abused and deranged indeed, before it can be thought of; and the prospect of the future must be as bad as the experience of the past."⁶

George Eliot's conservatism is, like Burke's, one aspect of her awareness of the growing complexity and integration of society. The new threads of connection in society form networks and webs with which it is dangerous to meddle. Previously, communities were connected in loose confederations, now, due to industry and commerce, they are merging into one large organism. Treby Magna in Felix Holt, for example, ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~

"gradually passed from being simply a respectable market-town—the heart of a great rural district, where the trade was only such as had close relations with the local landed interest—and took on the more complex life brought by mines and manufactures, which belong more directly to the great circulating system of the nation than to the local system to which they have been superadded"(iii). Two out of several possible reactions to this transformation are of particular importance to an understanding of the novels. The individual, now becoming aware of the parochialism of the traditional communities which are in process of disintegration, may seek freedom in the larger, more universal sphere of art, beauty and knowledge—the products of past cultures which are being opened up to him. Alternatively, being more sensitive to the destruction and suffering caused by this evolution of society, he may seek explanation and consolation in religion. These two reactions, opposed in many ways—the one emphasising the beauty and pleasures of this world, the other emphasising this world's suffering and the importance of another, spiritual world—are embodied, balanced, and assessed with increasing emphasis in several of the novels. In The Mill on the Floss in particular, George Eliot shows how these two attitudes emerging naturally from the insecurity of an evolving society, are in continual conflict.

It is not surprising that in order to describe these complex forces at work, the nineteenth century writer turned ~~to~~ as in the description of Treby just quoted, to the evolutionary ideas current in the natural sciences. In 1852, Herbert Spencer had published his two famous articles—'The Development Hypothesis,' containing the germ of his whole synthetic philosophy, and 'A Theory of Population' where for the first time the development of species is linked with the survival of the

fittest.⁷ Spencer extended the biological scheme of evolution to society, considering the adaptation of human character to the conditions of life, inner to outer, to be fundamental to all progress. After this came The Origin of Species in 1859, and then the social Darwinists. George Eliot was, of course, fully aware of this context of ideas. We have already seen her comparing the relationship between the internal and external conditions of society to that between the organism and its medium. In his life of Goethe in 1855, we can find G. H. Lewes explaining the relationship between character and circumstance in similar terms: "Character is to outward Circumstance what the organism is to the outward world: living in ~~xxx~~ it, but not specially determined by it. A wondrous variety of vegetable and animal organisms live and flourish under circumstances which furnish the means of living, but do not determine the specific forms of each organism....Every biologist knows that Circumstance has a modifying influence; but he also knows that those modifications are only possible within certain limits."⁸ These ideas give an impression of scientific authority to the dialectic of a developing society, which we have already discussed.

George Eliot is most dependent upon these ideas in The Mill on the Floss where the 'survival of the fittest' in 'the struggle for existence' is clearly embodied in the action, as well as being hinted at in imagery and symbolism. As she describes in fictional terms the forces of evolution in society, George Eliot seems to become primarily conscious of their inherent destruction and suffering. She would have agreed with Nietzsche when he said: "Over the whole of English Darwinism there hovers something of the odour of humble people in need and in straits."⁹ The picture of humanity in The Mill on the Floss is fully

in accord with this pessimism, symbolised as it is by the ruined villages on the banks of the Rhone, which tell "how the swift river once rose, like an angry, destroying god, sweeping down the feeble generations...."

The optimism of the panoramic view of social evolution is at odds with George Eliot's detailed, fictional realisation.

It is within this changing, evolving social context, that the basic rhythm of the individual's development is now presented. The simple, and clearly defined triadic movement of this rhythm upon which Adam Bede was constructed has now been made more complex by becoming involved with the dialectic of the social organism. In Adam Bede, where the social like the universal order was unchanging, the direction of the individual's dialectic was clear; but now, Maggie's illusions and disenchantments, for example, which reveal the inadequacy of her view of life, are inseparable from the destruction of the traditional way of life at the Mill. Maggie and Romola and Dorothea are not merely trying to come to terms with an accepted social order; without any clear idea of their objective, they are hoping to discover in the process of their own development a more comprehensive ethic, which will help them to understand the apparently disintegrating societies in which they live. The glimpses they catch of such an ethic are mere fleeting possibilities, not solutions. Together with this comes a complicating of the problem of suffering. In Adam Bede, George Eliot showed a strict equation of crime and punishment; now we have a similar equation at the level of society for the corporate personality of the social organism can sin and be punished. But between these two equations contradictions can arise. Dr Kenn is aware of this at the end of The Mill on the Floss when he places Maggie's lapse in the context of a corrupt society and feels unable to advise her or to apportion blame. Suffering is now no

clear proof of sin as it was before; the disease in the social organism might be caused by someone else. This is another aspect of the way in which George Eliot's shift from seeing the individual primarily sub specie aeternitatis to seeing him as essentially a part of the social organism complicates the novels. The laws of consequence are still in control, but the rigid apportioning of punishment is more difficult than it was in Adam Bede.

Finally, in what direction should the social organism be evolving? What values do the momentary visions of humanity, which the characters experience, embody? Adam Bede becomes aware of the world-wide community of suffering, just as Dorothea catches a glimpse in the dawn of the wholeness of life and of labouring humanity. These are the ultimate values of the novels, but their future embodiment is left vague. In The Mill on the Floss and Daniel Deronda, George Eliot is more specific about the characteristics of a healthy social organism. Maggie finally rediscovers in the family of the Dodsons and Tullivers something resembling the social ethic for which she has been seeking, whilst in the presentation of the Jews in Daniel Deronda we have the most explicit account of the nature of an organic community. It is not surprising that here, and in one of her final essays, George Eliot should come at the end of her life to acknowledge the dependence of her conception of the social organism on the Jewish doctrine of the individual in the community.

George Eliot sees in the Jews an image of the ideal organic society, and in ~~the final~~ the Impressions of Theophrastus Such she discusses this image. The best social organism as far as humanity is concerned is the biggest and the most closely integrated; one in which there is given most satisfactory expression to the relation of

part to part and of part to whole. George Eliot is convinced in this ^{'The Modern} essay, [^] 'Hep! Hep! Hep!', that "The tendency of things is towards the quicker or slower fusion of races. It is impossible to arrest this tendency....," but care must be taken not to disrupt the processes of organic development. Every effort must be made "to moderate its course so as to hinder it from degrading the moral status of societies by a too rapid effacement of those national traditions and customs which are the language of the national genius--the deep suckers of healthy sentiment." At the present stage of history, "A common humanity is not yet enough to feed the rich blood of various activity which makes a complete man"; nationality is the most important manifestation of an organic unity and the Jews provide the best example of this, with "a feeling of race, a sense of corporate existence, unique in its intensity." In order to preserve this 'national consciousness', to enjoy "the satisfaction of a great feeling that animated the collective body as with one soul," the Jews have had to insist upon 'a sense of separateness' and "to identify faithfulness to its national traditions with the highest social and religious blessings." This is, for George Eliot, the clearest image of the direction in which the dialectic of society is developing. The individual is seen both as an individual responsible for his actions, and as an integral part of the social organism. Mordecai explains in Daniel Deronda ^{how} the Shemah, the Hebrew confession of the divine unity, "has given a binding theory to the human race": "Now, in complete unity the part possesses the whole as the whole possesses every part: and in this way human life is tending toward the image of the Supreme Unity..."(lxi). This is the organic unity which George Eliot's characters catch glimpses of throughout the novels and to which she attempts to give some embodiment, with varying success--least successfully in Romola, fleetingly in Middlemarch, convincingly ^{but briefly} in the Cohen family, and brilliantly in the Dodsons.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Riehl, pp. 68-9.
- 2 Riehl, p. 70.
- 3 'The Antigone and Its Moral,' The Leader, 29 March 1856, p. 306.
- 4 See, for example, Hegel's The Philosophy of Fine Art, trans.
F. P. B. Osmaston, 1920, IV, 318, 324.
- 5 Lecky, p. 46.
- 6 Reflections on the Revolution in France, World's Classics edn., 1907,
pp. 32-3.
- 7 'The Development Hypothesis,' The Leader, 20 March 1852, pp.
'A Theory of Population,' Westminster Review, 57(1852), 468-501.
- 8 The Life and Works of Goethe, Everyman edn., 1908, p. 19.
- 9 Quoted by R. Hofstadter, Social Darwinism in American Thought,
1860-1915, 1945, p. 25.

THE MILL ON THE FLOSS

(1)

Society develops by means of the conflict between its established laws and the elemental human tendencies which are not fully embodied in those laws. This process is continually at work throughout the social organism. In The Mill on the Floss, George Eliot presents one of the most familiar, most inevitable, and most basic manifestations of this process—the child's developing estrangement from its parents' values and beliefs. For the first three books of the novel, we participate with the children in the world of the Dodsons and Tullivers; in the fourth book, George Eliot shifts her point of view and assesses the significance of the children's reaction against this world in terms reminiscent of the Antigone review.

I share with you this sense of oppressive narrowness; but it is necessary that we should feel it, if we care to understand how it acted on the lives of Tom and Maggie—how it has acted on young natures in many generations, that in the onward tendency of human things have risen above the mental level of the generation before them, to which they have been nevertheless tied by the strongest fibres of their hearts. The suffering, whether of martyr or victim, which belongs to every historical advance of mankind, is represented in this way in every town and by hundreds of obscure hearths. (IV,i)

The movement of the child away from the family is a paradigm of the dialectic which is at work in 'every historical advance of mankind.' The claims of each side are shown to be valid, and yet the conflict is inevitable.^I

In the childhood world of the Mill, George Eliot presents vividly and sympathetically both the security and the latent conflict. Here we have, in all its simplicity, an image of the social ethic for which all of George Eliot's heroines are seeking. The children love one another instinctively without any adult reservations:

We learn to restrain ourselves as we get older. We keep apart when we have quarrelled, express ourselves in wellbred phrases, and in this way preserve a dignified alienation, showing much firmness on one side, and swallowing much grief on the other. We no longer approximate in our behaviour to the mere impulsiveness of the lower animals, but conduct ourselves in every respect like members of a highly civilised society. Maggie and Tom were still very much like young animals, and so she could rub her cheek against his and kiss his ear in a random, sobbing way. (I, v)

There is a complete identification with one's environment, "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 own personality"(II, i). The essential security of this world is symbolised by the noise of the Mill which makes for Maggie "a little world apart from her outside everyday life"(I, iv): "The rush of the water and the booming of the mill bring a dreamy deafness, which seems to heighten the peacefulness of the scene. They are like a great curtain of sound, shutting one out from the world beyond"(I, i). Although Tom and Maggie cannot remain in this world, although they must inevitably rise "above the mental level of the generation before them," George Eliot insists again and again on the formative and enduring influence of these years. The phases of the dialectic are not distinct and exclusive:

...is not the striving after something better and better in our surroundings the grand characteristic that distinguishes man from brute...? But heaven knows where that striving might lead us, if our affections had not a trick of twining round

those old inferior things, if the loves and sanctities of our life had no deep immovable roots in memory. (II, i)

George Eliot makes us feel the importance of these 'roots' in the first three books of the novel by insisting on the independent reality of the children's world, demanding that we suspend our disbelief in its importance: "Surely if we could recall that early bitterness, and the dim guesses, the strangely perspectiveless conception of life that gave the bitterness its intensity, we should not pooh-pooh the griefs of our children"(I, vii). We share this 'perspectiveless conception of life' and are made to feel its intensity. It becomes as real as the ritualistic approach to life (perspectiveless in its own way) of the parents and relatives, and George Eliot achieves some startling effects by the juxtaposition of the two. For example, during the Dodson bonnet ritual, we see Maggie's alert but baffled intelligence grappling with the established customs of the family:

Maggie, looking on attentively, felt that there was some painful mystery about her aunt's bonnet which she was considered too young to understand, indignantly conscious, all the while, that she could have understood that, as well as everything else, if she had been taken into confidence. (I, ix)

It is in the children's opposition to these rituals that we have the seeds of the later conflict.

The connection between these early signs and the later struggles is of the utmost importance. George Eliot's main concern in this novel is to show the process of development at work in the family at the Mill.² This is the reason why The Mill on the Floss has the simplest plot of all the novels; a complex plot would have distracted attention from the all-important progression of the phases of development. In place of the plot, George Eliot uses a technique of foreshadowing as an organising

principle. The childhood half of the novel is linked directly to the second half by its pre-enactment of later crucial events. This structural device is successful because the children's world is as vividly real as the later, more adult world; we feel there is nothing merely ingenious in the correspondences between these two worlds. For example, Maggie's pushing Lucy into the mud, her flight to the gypsies and subsequent return home, are a clear prophecy of her relationship with Stephen Guest. Or if we compare Maggie's childhood emotions after wilfully cutting off her hair with her later emotions on awakening to the full realisation of her guilt in her affair with Stephen, we see George Eliot echoing phrase with phrase, moral trait with moral trait. In the first incident, Maggie feels 'that bitter sense of the irrevocable' which is explained by the fact she "rushed to her deeds with passionate impulse, and saw not only their consequences, but what would have happened if they had not been done..."(I, vii); whilst, after waking in her flight with Stephen, she realises that the "irrevocable wrong that must blot her life had been committed," and sees her guilt fully "now that the consequences of such a fall had come before the outward act was complete"(VI, xiv). In this way, George Eliot binds together the childhood world of the first three books and the later tragic developments.³ The incidents foreshadowing and foreshadowed are each shown to be important in their own right in two equally real worlds.

The reaction against the established customs of the adult family world is shown to be inevitable and essential for the development of the children. The suffering caused by this reaction is part of the tragedy of "that unwept, hidden sort, that goes on from generation to generation, and leaves no record"(III, i); but if not as heroic as the conflict between Antigone and Creon, it is as essential a manifestation

of the ~~process~~ ^{process} by which the social organism develops. And George Eliot is anxious to generalise the significance of the children's rebellion:

The suffering, whether of martyr or victim, which belongs to every historical advance of mankind is represented in this way in every town and by hundreds of obscure hearths. And 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 suggest a vast sum of conditions. It is surely the same with the observation of human life. (IV, i)

In order to suggest this 'unity which shall bind the smallest things with the greatest,' George Eliot uses two series of images. On the one hand, she elevates her characters and their suffering by means of classical comparisons, which are used half seriously, half ironically; on the other hand, she relegates them to the level of animal and insect by means of comparisons from natural science. At one moment, the Tullivers are seen as an 'ill-fated house' with Mr Tulliver having 'a destiny as well as Oedipus'(I, xiii); at another, they are seen as part of "a gross sum of obscure vitality that will be swept into the same oblivion with the generations of ants and beavers"(IV, i), and Mr Tulliver is compared with "certain animals to which tenacity of position is a law of life"(III, i). The chapter-heading 'Mrs Tulliver's Teraphim, or Household Gods' is soon followed by the heading 'How a Hen Takes to Stratagem.' Tom and Maggie can be seen in terms of 'young animals'(I, i) as well as in terms of Hector and Hecuba (V, ii). This ambivalent use of imagery, which is a noticeable feature of the novel, generalises the nature of the struggle which ^{we} are witnessing by showing the dialectic simultaneously at work in the minutiae of natural science as well as amongst the cosmic figures of Greek drama.

The 'old-fashioned family life on the banks of the Floss' (IV, i) is poised somewhere between.

Of the two, the images from natural science are the more insistent, and, as can be seen from these examples, they emphasise the difficulties and suffering inherent in the dialectic. The more one examines this series of images, the more it seems likely that George Eliot found support and analogy for her own evolutionary views in Darwin's researches;⁵ and we know that she was reading The Origin of Species at the time of writing The Mill on the Floss.⁴ More than any of George Eliot's other novels, this is an account of 'the struggle for existence', and the difficulties of the children's natural evolution from the restrictions of the family is envisaged in terms of heredity. In the early chapters of the novel, the relatives are constantly trying to decide whether Tom and Maggie are Dodsons or Tullivers. Tom is predominantly a Dodson, Maggie a Tulliver, but they each combine both elements—and the two elements tend to be mutually frustrating. The result is that as they move away from the security of the family neither of them can embrace fully either creed. George Eliot expresses this difficulty in terms of 'natural selection'; after Mrs Tulliver has identified Tom as a Dodson because "he's wonderful for liking a deal o' salt in his broth," Mr Tulliver comments:

'That's the worst on't wi' the crossing o' breeds: you can never justly calculate what'll come on't. The little un takes after my side, now; she's twice as 'cute as Tom—too 'cute for a woman, I'm afraid,' continued Mr Tulliver, turning his head dubiously first on one side and then on the other. 'It's no mischief ~~any~~ much while she's a little un, but an over 'cute woman's no better nor a long-tailed sheep: she'll fetch none the bigger price for that.' (I, ii)

Immediately after this, George Eliot refers ironically to Maggie as 'this small mistake of nature'; she is neither Dodson nor Tulliver. With this in mind, Luke's comment to Maggie on the dead lop-eared rabbits

strikes an ominous note: "'Things out o' natur niver thrive: God A'mighty doesn't like 'em. He made the rabbits' ears to lie back, an it's nothin' but contrairiness to make 'em hing down like a mastiff dog's'"(I, iv). Tom and Maggie are similar unnatural hybrids with little chance of survival. Maggie combines the Dodson rectitude with the Tullivers' passionate nature, and the two are shown to be irreconcilable; whilst Tom combines the negative elements in each, reinforcing his father's stubborn pride with a limited form of the Dodson rectitude, and so developing "a nature in which family feeling had lost the character of clanship in taking on a double dye of personal pride"(VII, iii). Maggie's dilemma can be presented dramatically as an oscillation between the two halves of her character, whereas Tom's degeneration is a gradual, uneventful, self-inflicted dehumanisation.

The alienation of the children from the home is accelerated by education. Mr Tulliver wants Tom to be the equal of the lawyers, and so he is sent as a pupil to the Rev. Stelling. George Eliot portrays bitterly the way in which Tom's practical nature is undermined by "the abstractions hideously symbolised to him in the pages of the Eton Grammar"(II, i). Not only does George Eliot ridicule the wrong-headed methods of education which are completely divorced from reality, but, more fundamentally, she attacks the false values they embody which have been taken over from a corrupt society—a society which feels itself able to look down complacently upon the Dodsons and Tullivers of this world: "Tom was too clear-sighted not to beware that Mr Stelling's standard of things was quite different, was certainly something higher in the eyes of the world than that of the people he had been living amongst, and that brought in contact with it, he, Tom Tulliver, appeared uncouth and stupid"(II, i). But George Eliot reveals with finality the bogus

nature of these standards by contrasting them with the living values of the Mill. As the half-yearly holiday approaches, Tom abandons all abstract systems of numeration, "and that he might make himself the surer about the flight of the days that were carrying him homeward, he stuck twenty-one sticks deep in a corner of the garden...and pulled one up every day with a great wrench." The return home is moving and finally dismissive of the education Tom is fleeing from:

But it was worth purchasing, even at the heavy price of the Latin Grammar—the happiness of seeing the bright light in the parlour at home...the happiness of passing from the cold air to the warmth and the kisses and the smiles of that familiar hearth, where the pattern of the rug and the grate and the fire-irons were 'first ideas' that it was no more possible to criticise than the solidity and extension of matter. (II, i)

The scientific image conveys the strength and immediacy of a living social ethic in which emotion and knowledge are ideally fused, and which is being undermined by the abstract, theoretical education which Tom is being given. This education is seen as another aspect of the process of destruction and transformation caused by commerce and industry; Mr Tulliver needs an 'educated' Tom skilled in law to protect him against the encroachments of his business rivals.

Tom's return home, however, can only be a temporary escape. Owing to his inherited characteristics and to his education which "had left a deposit of vague fragmentary, ineffectual notions"(II, vii), his nature after the bankruptcy becomes embittered. His narrow pride demands that he meet his father's debts, and so, accepting the materialistic standards of St Ogg's, he represses the natural, affectionate side of his character and becomes successful in commerce: "A character at unity with itself—that performs what it intends, subdues every counteracting

impulse, and has no visions beyond the distinctly possible--is strong by its very negations"(V, ii).

Maggie's education is also inadequate, unable to help her as she inevitably grows away from the family and moves out from the smaller community into the larger social organism. Having rejected her parents' rituals, she has nothing to guide her; she has been supplied "...with much futile information about Saxon and other kings of doubtful example, but unhappily quite without that knowledge of the irreversible laws within and without her, which, governing the habits, becomes morality, and developing the feelings of submission and dependence, becomes religion....(IV, iii) Here, we can see another aspect of George Eliot's attack on education: if it does not provide some knowledge of these laws, "the hard-won treasures of thought, which generations of painful toil have laid up for the race of man"(IV, iii), then the child's movement away from home will be erratic and fatal. The educational system which is an irresponsible severing of the child from its past is also itself prepared to ignore the essential knowledge of the past; Mr Stelling "would by-and-by edit a Greek play, and invent several new readings"(II, i).

The break with the childhood world is caused prematurely and abruptly by the bankruptcy and the death of Mr Tulliver. It is this which finally makes impossible the children's gradual growing away from their earlier life. Maggie tells Philip Wakem, "It is like death. I must part with everything I cared for when I was a child"(V, i). As well as being the occasion of the break with the past, Mr Tulliver's struggle with, and defeat by, the 'puzzling world'(I, vii) is a preparatory definition of Maggie's own struggle. After losing possession of the Mill to Wakem who desires to cause him 'the most deadly mortification'(III, vii), Mr Tulliver falls into 'a sort of living death'(III, vi). His refusal to submit, and his desire to remain at the Mill are in equal conflict.

He emerges from this death of 'mortification' when the emotions rooted in the past (awakened by his sister Moss, or by the banging of the old family chest) are uppermost; he relapses with the return of his angry desire for predominance. He finally compromises by continuing to live at the Mill under Wakem, but he is unable any longer to face the real world and seeks consolation from the past:

But the strongest influence of all was the love of the old premises, where he had run about when he was a boy, just as Tom had done after him. The Tullivers had lived on this spot for generations, and he had sat listening on a low stool on winter evenings while his father talked of the old half-timbered mill that had been there before the last great floods, which damaged it so that his grandfather pulled it down and built the new one.... (III, ix)

The picture of Mr Tulliver torn between the present reality and the past, where his roots remain, is a moving one. He finally acknowledges that he is "a tree as is broke" (III, ix).

(ii)

With Mr Tulliver's acknowledged defeat and his curse on Wakem, book three and our immersion in the childhood world ends. Before we examine the children's later struggles, it is important that we should understand the use George Eliot is making of the picture of St Ogg's society as a whole. We have already seen her insisting that the evolution of the children away from their parents is a paradigm of 'every historical advance of mankind'—a dependence upon the past and yet an inevitable movement away from it. St Ogg's too has its roots firmly in the past:

"It is one of those old, old towns which impress one as a continuation and outgrowth of nature, as much as the nests of the bower-birds or the winding galleries of the white ant--a town which carries the traces of its long growth and history like a millennial tree..."(I, xii). The images of natural growth show society as an organism developing in accordance with its own laws. George Eliot then traces the history of the town back through the Normans to its origin, to the "remnant of the original chapel dedicated to St Ogg, the patron saint of the ancient town"—and then to the legend of St Ogg himself. This celebrates Ogg's instinctive helping of the disguised Virgin in distress during the floods, and the blessing she gives him: "'thou art blessed in that thou didst not question and wrangle with the heart's need, but was smitten with pity, and didst straightway relieve the same'"(I, xii). This image of an ideal social ethic is the seed from which the tree of St Ogg's society has sprung. But the town is complacently and dangerously neglecting the primal experience of its origin:

The mind of St Ogg's did not look extensively before or after. It inherited a long past without thinking of it, and had no eyes for the spirits that walked the streets. Since the centuries when St Ogg with his boat and the Virgin Mother at the prow had been seen on the wide water so many memories had been left behind, and had gradually vanished like the receding hilltops. And the present time was like the level plain where men lose their belief in volcanoes and earthquakes, thinking tomorrow will be as yesterday, and the giant forces that used to shake the earth are for ever laid to sleep. The days were gone when people could be greatly wrought upon by their faith, still less change it....Protestantism sat at ease, unmindful of schisms, careless of proselytism....Public spirit was not held in high esteem at St Ogg's.... (I, xii)

The decline of public spirit and the ignoring of the forces of Nemesis--

the rejection, in fact, of both dimensions of George Eliot's moral universe—are caused by the town's inability to keep alive the values inherent in its origins. The image of an ideal social ethic from which the town ^{has} sprung corresponds on the personal plane with 'the primitive fellowship of kindred' (II, ii) at the basis of the lives of Tom and Maggie. In their childhood, they experienced a vital, if idiosyncratic, ethic which, whatever its faults, stressed the bonds uniting kindred. Even if they inevitably evolve away from this life, it is essential, says George Eliot, that they retain its emotional and moral roots. But, like St Ogg's, they fatally neglect the experience of their origin; Tom denies it permanently, Maggie neglects it momentarily at the climax of her dilemma. The forces of Nemesis come to punish the town and the children simultaneously in the floods at the end of the novel.

As she moves out from the security of the childhood world, we see Maggie attempting to make out "a faith for herself without the aid of established authority and appointed guides" (IV, iii), but the family bankruptcy, the fatal "crossin' of breeds," inadequate education, and ^{the} changes taking place in society, all make it impossible for her to find a satisfactory solution to the confused world in which she lives. In order to place the children's situation in perspective, George Eliot at the beginning of book four withdraws us from our close involvement in life at the Mill, which we now examine from a distance. This sudden distancing of the point of view, just as Maggie herself is withdrawing from the family bonds, is extremely effective. All the main elements of the novel are latent in the vividly presented childhood world; now from a distance, we observe the inevitable course of the dialectic, which ~~was~~ we have experienced in its preparatory stages. To effect this change, George Eliot halts the narrative and

makes a lengthy contrast between the ruins on the Rhine and those on the Rhone. These ruins, already partially examined as an image of disenchantment,⁶ are used to symbolise two different ways of life:

Journeying down the Rhone on a summer's day, you have perhaps felt the sunshine made dreary by those ruined villages which stud the banks in certain parts of its course, telling how the swift river once rose, like an angry, destroying god, sweeping down the feeble generations whose breath is in their nostrils, and making their dwellings a desolation. Strange contrast, you may have thought, between the effect produced on us by these dismal remnants of commonplace houses, which in their best days were but the sign of a sordid life, belonging in all its details to our own vulgar era, and the effect produced by those ruins on the castled Rhine, which have crumbled and mellowed into such harmony with the green and rocky steeps that they seem to have a natural fitness, like the mountain pine...as if they had been raised by an earth-born race, who had inherited from their mighty parent a sublime instinct of form. And that was a day of romance! (IV, i)

This contrast enables us to place the life at the Mill, to see how it is quite insulated from this other nobler, wider, more romantic form of life. In each sphere of life society is evolving and suffering; Tom and Maggie's struggles are part of the ~~same~~ same process as 'the grand historic life of humanity' (IV, i) represented by the Rhine castles. But though part of the same dialectic, the contrasting ruins emphasise different aspects of it. The Rhine ruins recall "a time of colour, when the sunlight fell on glancing steel and floating banners...of living religious art and religious enthusiasm," whilst the ruins on the Rhone represent the sordid prosaicness of the greater part of ^{modern} life.

This division is the premise from which arose the distinction in Adam Bede between two opposing aesthetics and their corresponding schools of painting--the Italian school expressing 'the divine beauty

of form' by means of madonnas and angels, and the Dutch school with its "faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence, which has been the fate of so many more among my fellow-mortals than a life of pomp or of absolute indigence, of tragic suffering or of world-stirring actions"(xvii). The second is the more important for George Eliot because it is describing the greater part of life, and extending our sympathies prop^otionately. And in her desire to ~~betook~~ ^{refute} the artistic conventions which ignore this prosaic side of life, George Eliot in some respects turns The Mill on the Floss into an anti-romance which questions astringently, in the working out of its plot and by literary reference, the values upon which such romantic literary conventions are based.⁷ We saw her doing the same in Adam Bede, but the difference is that now George Eliot is more bitterly aware of the wider social consequences of these aesthetic attitudes:

...good society, floated on gossamer wings of light irony, is of very expensive production, requiring nothing less than a wide and arduous national life condensed in unfragrant deafening factories, cramping itself in mines, sweating at furnaces, grinding, hammering, weaving under more or less oppression of carbonic acid; or else spread over sheepwalks, and scattered in lonely houses and huts on the/clayey or chalky corn-lands, where the rainy days look dreary. This wide national life is based entirely on emphasis--the emphasis of want, which urges it into all the activities necessary for the maintenance of good society and light irony. (IV, iii)

Under such circumstances, the need becomes urgent for an 'ekstasis or outside standing-ground'--some scheme of things in which the individual's life is ^{significant} ~~important~~ and his suffering explicable, "something, clearly, that lies outside personal desires, that includes resignation for ourselves, and active love for what is not ourselves"(IV, iii). The Dodsons have fulfilled this need by their own ritualistic way of life, their 'variation of Protestantism unknown to Bossuet'(IV, i). "Their theory of life had its

core of soundness," and we are given an admirable account, balanced between sympathy and irony, of the "religion of the Dodsons" which "consisted in revering whatever was customary and respectable." It is a theory of life, which, however bizarre, provides a comprehensive guide to conduct.⁸

By means of the double image of ruins, George Eliot has originated an antithesis between two different views of life, which, with various shifts in emphasis, persists through the novels. The one emphasising, in the face of suffering and want, the individual's obedience to and conduct within a comprehensive and universal scheme of things; the other, aware of 'the divine beauty of form,' emphasising the variety of life and the necessity for the individual to enjoy as many aspects of it as possible. This conflict between these two equally valid ways of looking at life re-appears most clearly in Middlemarch in the arguments between Dorothea and Ladislaw,⁹ and in discussing that novel we shall attempt to elucidate the antithesis by reference to Arnold's distinction between Hebraism and Hellenism. Even in this early novel we have an anticipation of Arnold's famous contrast in the 'natural antipathy of temperament'(II, v) of Tom and Philip when they meet as children. Philip, skilful in the arts, says, "I'm very fond of Greek history, and everything about the Greeks,"(II, iii) and goes on to talk about The Odyssey and Ulysses, whilst Tom can only draw his references from the Bible: "Is there anything like ~~David~~ David, and Goliath, and Samson in the Greek history?" "Those are the only bits I like in the history of the Jews"(II, iii). As the novel develops, the contrast becomes more marked with Philip defending art and literature, 'the beautiful and good,' and Tom becoming so obsessed with righteousness and conduct that finally Maggie exclaims, "You are nothing but a Pharisee. You thank God for nothing but your own virtues..."(V, v). The contrast between the ruins on the Rhine and Rhone which introduces this distinction

culminates in the astonishing symbol of Rome in Middlemarch. Rome represents the heroic life of the past, but also the sordid grovelling existence of the present which cannot be ignored. Ladislav is impressed by the former, Dorothea by the latter.

Maggie inherits this characteristic Dodson attitude to life with its rigid sense of duty and loyalty, but she is also a Tulliver, and George Eliot briefly adds to the account of the Dodsons' theory of life the remark that "The same sort of traditional belief ran in the Tulliver veins, but it was carried in richer blood, having elements of generous imprudence, warm affection, and hot-tempered rashness." This richer blood enables Maggie to appreciate and desire the wider, more inspiring life symbolised in the Rhine ruins; and as she moves out of the enclosed, predominantly Dodson world of her childhood, this other life comes within reach.^{IO} Yet she is frightened that this side of her character will sweep aside her loyalty and obedience to the family. Therefore, at first, in book four, rejecting the possibility of a compromise, she embraces a rigid asceticism. The Dodson side of her character is in charge and so she seeks, and in Thomas à Kempis finds, a code of conduct.^{II} She seizes in particular upon his admonition "Forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy much inward peace", and, for the moment, this desire for an all-embracing, religious guide to conduct is satisfied:

...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 her stand out of herself, and looking at her own life as an insignificant part of a divinely-guided whole. (IV, iii)

This submission of self is questioned and attacked throughout book five by the re-appearance of Philip Wakem. With his sketching and painting, his singing and reading, he represents that half of life which Maggie has rejected. The conflict between the world of beauty and art, and the world of asceticism

is suggested at the beginning of the book when Maggie catches sight of Philip: "She wondered if he remembered how he used to like her eyes. With that thought Maggie glanced towards the square looking-glass which was condemned to hang with its face towards the wall..."(V, i). The whole of the fifth book develops this conflict in their relationship. Maggie's rejection of self issues in a kind of Calvinism: "Our life is determined for us; and it makes the mind very free when we give up wishing, and only think of bearing what is laid upon us, and doing what is given us to do". Philip opposes this with an assertion of the self in full enjoyment of life: "It seems to me we can never give up longing and wishing while we are thoroughly alive. There are certain things we feel to be beautiful and good, and we must hunger after them"(V, i).

Philip is a clear example of the way in which for George Eliot art and morality are, in a very literal sense, inseparable. His dissatisfaction with life appears to spring from his artistic temperament: "I'm cursed with susceptibility in every direction, and effective faculty in none. I care for painting and music; I care for classic literature, and mediaeval literature, and modern literature; I flutter all ways, and fly in none"(V, iii). Without this faculty, he is merely a passive victim at the mercy of his susceptibilities. But we quickly realize that his failure as an artist is a symptom of a moral flaw, his selfishness. If, as George Eliot insists, "Art...is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot,"^{I2} then the artist must first have known these sympathies which his work is going to embody and mediate. Philip has not experienced these sympathies because he is alienated from mankind by his selfishness, which has been accentuated by his deformity, his unused artistic sensibility, and his lack of family ties. George Eliot brings all these aspects of Philip's situation neatly into focus by

identifying him with Philoctetes in one of the childrens' conversations:

[Tom] listened with great interest to a new story of Philip's about a man who had a very bad wound in his foot, and cried out so dreadfully with the pain that his friends could bear with him no longer, but put him ashore on a desert island, with nothing but some wonderful poisoned arrows to kill animals for food. (II, vi)

Superficially, Philip's charges against Maggie's "narrow, self-delusive fanaticism," against her attempt "to find a mode of renunciation that will be an escape from pain"(V, iii) seem convincing; and yet, "there was a deeper consciousness that, for any immediate application it had to her conduct, it was no better than falsity"(V, iii). Philip is indirectly urging his own claims upon her by belittling the 'petty family obstacles to her freedom,' and George Eliot leaves us in no doubt as to the rightness of Maggie's decision to reject Philip's claims: "And it was in this way that Philip justified his subtle efforts to overcome Maggie's true prompting against a concealment that would introduce doubleness into her own mind, and might cause new misery to those who had the primary natural claim on her"(V, iii). Philip is, in fact, egoistically seeking Maggie's love as the only thing, besides an artistic faculty, which "could make life worth the purchase-money of pain." At the end of the novel, the regenerated Philip acknowledges in his letter the selfish nature of his passion. Now, having lost Maggie, his love is purified of selfishness and it is he who has come to know the full meaning of renunciation: "'The new life I have found in caring for your joy and sorrow more than for what is directly my own, has transformed the spirit of rebellious murmuring into that willing endurance which is the birth of strong sympathy'"(VII, iii). And there is a final hint that what he calls "'this gift of transferred life'" may be used by the new Philip as an artistic faculty, as a 'new power'. The artist,

in order to fulfil his ^{true} role, must have the ability to accept another individual's 'equivalent centre of self.'

The course of Maggie and Philip's relationship is defined by means of tree images and symbols. Maggie is linked by her beauty with the trees of the Red Deeps; "she seems to have a sort of kinship with the grand Scotch firs"(V, i), and later she appears to Philip like 'a tall Hamadryad'(V, iii). In the apparent security of her asceticism, she draws hopeful analogies from the trees: "She was calmly enjoying the fresh air while she looked up at the old fir-trees, and thought that those broken ends of branches were the records of past storms, which had only made the red stems soar higher"(V, iii).¹³ But Maggie's disenchantments are not yet completed, and her optimism is questioned by the sudden intrusion of Philip: "But while her eyes were still turned upward she became conscious of a moving shadow cast by the evening sun...." Now, the 'past storms' reappear more fiercely. Condemning her asceticism, Philip is appalled "that a mind like hers should be withering in its very youth, like a young forest tree for want of light and space it was formed to flourish in"(V, i). And at the crucial moment of their ~~debating of the~~ debating of the conflicting claims of love and family loyalty, the tree symbol reappears ominously when Philip says, "'Don't look away from me to that cloven tree; it is a bad omen'"(V, iv). The next chapter, 'The Cloven Tree,' explained the meaning of this reference. Tom confronts Maggie and Philip, condemns their liaison, and, as he drags Maggie away, we have the ultimately unresolvable conflict enacted: "Tom seized Maggie's right wrist as he spoke, and she put out her left hand. Philip clasped it an instant, with one eager look, and then hurried away"(V, v). George Eliot is approaching closer and closer to an exact balancing of the valid yet conflicting claims of the dialectic. The cloven tree image prophesies,

as in the case of Mr Tulliver, the final and fatal equilibrium.

Philip, defending the 'beautiful and good,' is not a convincing character. As in the case of Ladislav, it is difficult to decide what George Eliot's attitude is to his precocious dilettantism, with its anxious catalogue of painting and music, of 'classic literature, and mediaeval literature, and modern literature.' This is clearly meant to be at the opposite extreme ~~from~~ to Maggie's self-imposed asceticism, but it is difficult to treat seriously as an approach to life. With the characterisation of Philip in mind, it is possible to suggest a reason for George Eliot's uncertainty of touch in portraying the artists and Hellenists in her novels. The Hebraists can be depicted in great detail because their beliefs about life issue in deeds and in codes of conduct. As Arnold says, they "set doing above knowing"; and this is why George Eliot is so brilliantly successful in presenting the Dodsons and their theory of life. She presents them through their customs and rituals. (It is noticeable that she is not as detailed in presenting the less ritualistic Tullivers.)

On the other hand, the Hellenists—Philip, Ladislav, and the early Deronda—set knowing above doing. They represent a state of being rather than a code of conduct, and ~~as~~ this is difficult to externalise convincingly. It would be too improbable to make them all genuine creative artists, and so, to the reader, they appear passive, dilettantish, and irresponsible.

But even if George Eliot has difficulty in controlling our response to the later Philip, the clash between his way of looking at life and Maggie's is real and dramatic, because each of them is arguing from a position which has been defined from their childhood. The similar debate in Middlemarch between Dorothea and Ladislav appears academic and impersonal compared with the anguish of this conflict. In The Mill on the Floss, George Eliot is not searching after a clear juxtaposition of moral principles.

She accepts in their entirety the details of the protagonists situations and conducts the argument from there. The facts of heredity and upbringing are inescapable; as she says in her 'Notes on the Spanish Gypsy', commenting on the symbol of the Annunciation:

I saw it might be taken as a symbol of the part which is played in the general human lot by hereditary conditions in the largest sense, and of the fact that what we call duty is entirely made up of such conditions; for even in cases of just antagonism to the narrow view of hereditary claims, the whole background of the particular struggle is made up of our inherited nature. 14

This points to the basic strength of The Mill on the Floss, and provides a justification for the concentration upon the childhood world in the first three books. In Maggie's clashes with Philip and Stephen, we never feel that George Eliot is preparing neatly balanced, complementary attitudes for later inclusion in The Impressions of Theophrastus Such. She never tries to jettison the confusing details of the characters' total predicaments which are so destructive of philosophical clarity. As Maggie's dilemma continues, we are led back deeper and deeper into the childhood of the protagonists in our attempts to understand and assess. This is the reason why the antithesis of the two world-views, which we have designated Hebraism and Hellenism, never emerges into a clear statement. The antithesis is inextricably enmeshed with, it is an aspect of, the central theme of the evolution of the child away from the home by which it has been formed. This is not a weakness in the novel; it means that significance and vitality are given to a theoretical, and artificial distinction.

Because of his own lack of natural ties, Philip could not understand Maggie's motives for resistance; Stephen Guest similarly attacks and attempts to belittle her family claims. The Guests are members of the

recently evolved commercial aristocracy, and part of the corrupt society of St Ogg's which has forgotten its ties with the past. Their name is sufficient to suggest their lack of roots, and there are several contrasts between them and the long-established Tullivers. "Mr Tulliver's father and grandfather had been carrying on Dorlcote Mill long before the oil-mill of that firm had been so much as thought of" (VI, vii), observes Mrs Tulliver. This economic rivalry is another aspect of the conflict inherent in an evolving society. Stephen, "whose diamond ring, attar of roses, and air of nonchalant leisure, at twelve o'clock in the day, are the graceful and odoriferous result of the largest oil-mill and the most extensive wharf in St Ogg's" (VI, i), represents the materialistic values and, by his interest in Buckland's Bridgewater Treatise (VI, ii), the intellectual pretensions of this new stratum of society. And so he inevitably attacks Maggie's deep-rooted, hereditary ties. But this renewal of the conflict is more intense than previously, for Maggie is more fully involved through her love for Stephen, even though Philip later diagnoses it as "that partial, divided action of our natures" (VII, iii) — in other words, as the reflex from her willed asceticism. The issues at first appear more clear cut; Maggie has to choose between the rejection of Stephen and the betrayal of Lucy, Philip, and Tom. Stephen like Philip, sees the family claims as 'unnatural' and 'mistaken ties that were made in blindness' (VI, xi); in contrast, their love, which "is come upon us without our seeking", is 'natural'. The dialectic here has become centred in the ambiguity of the word 'natural'; and, in the chapter 'Borne Along by the Tide', there is a vivid realisation of this effortless naturalness of their love which is yet at the same time the rending of "the ties that had given meaning to duty" (VI, xiv). Here, the slide into illusion through the seeming avoidance of commitment is enacted in the boating incident in which there is a

complete fusion of vehicle and tenor. The suppression of self imperceptibly becomes the abandonment of self; the religious ekstasis is followed by the ekstasis of the opiate.¹⁵

Maggie felt that she was being led down the garden among the roses...--and all by this stronger presence that seemed to bear her along without any act of her own will, like the added self which comes with the sudden exalting influence of a strong tonic; and she felt nothing else. Memory was excluded. (VI, xiii)

Stephen, like Philip, is only able to look at their love in isolation. Maggie alone is able to set their love in a wider context, and declare that "the real tie lies in the feelings and expectations we have raised in other minds" (VI, xi). She, unlike them, has experienced a corporate existence, and can refer back to its simple but essential ethic for guidance.

Even during the flight, Maggie reasserts her duty "to those who had the primary natural claim on her" in opposition to Stephen's 'natural law', but as she sees the suffering she is causing him, the distinction between love and duty becomes less and less clear: "This yielding to the idea of Stephen's suffering was more fatal than the other yielding, because it was less distinguishable from that sense of other's claims which was the moral basis of her resistance" (VI, xiii). At this climax--and the remarkable ease and authority with which George Eliot leads up to it has not been sufficiently recognised--we have another moment of stasis in the dialectic. After the see-sawing of conflicting claims, she has here achieved a balance in which we are aware of their equal validity--and at the point of balance the meanings of the opposed claims begin to shift and slide into one another. Duty becomes love, and love duty. This conflict is finally resolved by the dream of consequences from which Maggie awakes

after the night on the Dutch boat with Stephen. In this dream, we have the culmination of Maggie's rediscovery and revaluation of the values inherent in her childhood:

She was in a boat on the wide water with Stephen, and in the gathering darkness something like a star appeared, that grew and grew till they saw it came nearer and nearer, till they saw the Virgin was Lucy and the boatman was Philip—no, not Philip, but her brother, who rowed past without looking at her; and she rose to stretch out her arms and call to him, and their own boat turned over with the movement, and they began to sink, till with one spasm of dread she seemed to awake, and find she was a child again in the parlour at evening twilight, and Tom was not really angry. (VI, xiv)

The legend of the origin of St Ogg's, the image of the social ethic which it has come to neglect, is here fused with the image of the corresponding ethic at the centre of Maggie's childhood. She, like St Ogg's, has betrayed this ethic, and the betrayal is translated into the terms of the legend so enabling her to see her sin in the larger context of the social macrocosm. There is only one escape from the dread of sinking with Stephen and that is to return, ^{as the dream suggests,} through her relationship with Philip, through her disagreements with Tom, to the simple and fundamental values of her childhood, which she is only now able to assess. She can now see her mistakes clearly and analyse her behaviour. Narrow asceticism had been her only course for her contradictory nature had made true renunciation impossible. But now, even though she has sinned momentarily, she has been saved by her dream of consequences ("the consequences of such a fall had come before the outward act was completed", VI, xiv); secure now in her rediscovery of the past, she is able to understand the meaning of true renunciation, "that sad, patient, living strength which holds the clue of life", and attempt to practise it. To do so she must return home, and this return is the culmination of the series which

includes Maggie's flight from the gypsies, Tom's return from school, and Mr Tulliver's escape into his past: "Home--where her mother and brother were, Philip, Lucy, the scene of her very cares and trials--was the haven towards which her mind tended, the sanct^{uary}~~ary~~ where sacred relics lay, where she would be rescued from more falling"(VI, xiv). The movement away from the home has been checked, and with it the dialectic. The corrupt society of St Ogg's will reject Maggie. This is not "that perfect ripeness of the seed which carries with it a life independent of the root," but a return for rescue.

(iii)

As the moral debates have been developing, George Eliot has implicitly referred us back to Maggie's formative years for an understanding of her rejection of Philip and Stephen. These debates can only be assessed in the context of the whole novel, so that an outsider like Dr Kenn is unable to pass judgment:

The great problem of the shifting relation between passion and duty is clear to no man who is capable of apprehending it; the question whether the moment has come in which a man has fallen below the possibility of a renunciation that will carry any efficacy, and must accept the sway of a passion against which he had struggled as a trespass, is one for which we have no master-key that will fit all cases.... moral judgments must remain false and hollow, unless they are checked and enlightened by a perpetual reference to the special circumstances that mark the individual lot. (VII, iii)

We, however, are in possession of these 'special circumstances' for we have seen Maggie's development. And as she gradually discovers that her

duty is a product of those formative years, so we begin to reassess the cosmos of the Dodsons and Tullivers and find there an ethic far superior to the ones held by Stephen, Philip, or St Ogg's. When this process of discovery and revaluation is complete, the only course open to Maggie is to return to the Mill.

Together with Maggie we are made to see through the 'oppressive narrowness' of the childhood world, against which she and Tom reacted, to its essential core of soundness. There, in the traditional family life of the Dodsons and Tullivers, we discover an image of the larger organic unity towards which society should be striving. Dorothea Brooke's vision in the dawn of the unity of mankind embodies the same meaning, but that points outside the novel to an ideal. There is nothing visionary in the image of social unity in The ^{Mill} ~~Mill~~ on the Floss where George Eliot has realised the same values in a limited form within the novel itself. The values are limited because the image is completely real and recognisable. The supreme achievement of the novel is, without doubt, the way in which both Maggie and the reader are led back to those living values by a process of gradual rediscovery after they have been temporarily rejected.

We saw, in ^{the} ~~the~~ previous chapter, how George Eliot considered the corporate existence of the Jews the closest embodiment of an ideal social¹⁶ ethic. We can assess the value of the customs and rituals of the Dodsons and Tullivers most easily if we bear in mind this ideal--even if at times the Dodsons appear as a caricature of this ideal, it is a caricature of far more value than any other form of life at St Ogg's. The vital force strengthening the Jews is "the satisfaction of a great feeling that animated the collective body as with one soul." The Dodsons approximate to this feeling in their own peculiar way: "And it is remarkable that while no individual Dodson was satisfied with

any other individual Dodson, each was satisfied, not only with him or her self, but with the Dodsons collectively"(I, vi). As George Eliot's essay goes on to define more closely this sense of corporate existence of the Jews, we come to realise that in the novel her generalisations are becoming actual and concrete in the Dodson ethic. In the Bible, says George Eliot, we find "the strongly characterised portraiture of a people educated from an earlier or later period to a sense of separateness unique in its intensity, a people taught ~~as~~ by many concurrent influences to identify faithfulness to ~~the~~ national traditions with the highest social and religious blessings." The separateness of the Dodsons and Tullivers is that of 'kin'; based upon 'the fundamental fact of blood,'^(I, xiii) their traditions are various—"such as obedience to parents, faithfulness to kindred, industry, rigid honesty, thrift, the thorough scouring of wooden and copper utensils, the hoarding of coins likely to disappear from the currency"(IV, i). Just as the Jews were concerned with "preserving the specific national character against a demoralising fusion with that of foreigners whose religion and ritual were idolatrous and often obscene," so the Dodsons are convinced of the rightness of their unique traditions: "In short, there was in this family a peculiar tradition as to what was the right thing in household management and social demeanour, and the only bitter circumstance attending this superiority was a powerful inability to approve the condiments or the conduct of families ungoverned by the Dodson tradition!"(I, vi). The only difference is that the Dodson cosmos is a more impure, because more exclusive, form of the corporate existence embodied in the Jews.

George Eliot's essay was an attempt to correct "the usual level of thinking in polite society concerning the Jews," by showing that they symbolise an essential aspect of human life--the subjugation of the self to the good of the family, society, or race. A similar correction or

reassessment has taken place in the novel, and now we are in a position to understand Dr Kenn's advice to Maggie when she seeks his help after her return home:

"Your prompting to go to your nearest friends, to remain where all the ties of your life have been formed, is a true prompting, to which the Church in its original constitution and discipline responds, opening its arms to the penitent, watching over its children to the last, never abandoning them until they are hopelessly reprobate. And the Church ought to represent the feeling of the community, so that every parish should be a family knit together by Christian brotherhood under a spiritual father. But the ideas of discipline and Christianity fraternity are entirely relaxed; they can hardly be said to exist in the public mind; they hardly survive except in the partial, contradictory form they have taken in the narrow communities of schismatics.... At present everything seems tending towards the relaxation of ties--towards the substitution of wayward choice for the adherence to obligation, which has its roots in the past. (VII, ii)

This ideal picture of a living social ethic, from which the penitent would naturally obtain help, provides a context of values which makes the development of the novel clear. The natural development from the ethos of the family into that of the community is made impossible by the corrupt nature of St Ogg's. Development is no longer organic, and in the resulting confusion, Maggie has to go back into the past to rediscover the meaning of duty in one of "the narrow communities of schismatics". This return is for Maggie a revaluation of the world of the Dodsons and Tullivers, and the discovery that its 'core of soundness' is an embodiment of these same "ideas of discipline and Christian fraternity". This discovery is quickly corroborated in the next chapter when Aunt Glegg, the most zealous upholder of this schism, receiving the penitent Maggie back into the family, translates Dr Kenn's statement into the Dodson terminology:

If you were not to stand by your 'kin' as long as there was a shred of honour attributable to them, pray what were you to stand by? Lightly to admit conduct in one of your own family that would force you to alter your will had never been the way of the Dodsons; and though Mrs Glegg had always augured ill of Maggie's future at a time when other people were perhaps less clear-sighted, yet fair play was a jewel, and it was not for her own friends to help to rob the girl of her fair name, and to cast her out from the family shelter to the scorn of the outer world, until she had become unequivocally a family disgrace...it was a cause in which her hereditary rectitude and personal strength of character found a common channel with her fundamental ideas of clanship.... (VII, iii)

We can now see through 'the partial and contradictory form' which the ideal social ethic has taken here, to its essential goodness. The family of the Dodsons and Tullivers is the only repository of living social values in the novel.

As this reassessment develops, George Eliot castigates more and more fiercely the polite society of St Ogg's which dares to condemn Maggie without being able to understand her dilemma. This is the society whose nearest approach to 'Christian fraternity' is a charity bazaar, from which the Dodsons and Tullivers are excluded. In the ironical description of this social gathering, George Eliot ~~always~~ suggests the sacrilege of the ancient hall of St Ogg's, built at a time when the original ethic was still vital, being used for this purpose: "In fact, the perfect fitness of this ancient building for an admirable modern purpose, that made charity truly elegant, and led through vanity up to the supply of a deficit, was so striking that hardly a person entered the room without exchanging the remark more than once" (VI, ix). This desecration of a past society by its corrupt modern descendants is a close anticipation of Sir Hugo Mallinger's conversion of the Abbey in Daniel Deronda into a modern residence, with the chapel forming a convenient stable.

St Ogg's has lost sight completely of the legend of its patron saint: Maggie for one fatal moment ignored the duties created by her past. Both have to be punished, and their punishment is simultaneous in the flood. Its scourging function is hinted at early in the novel when the children are talking about the floods of the past and Tom confides to Bob Jakin that he means to "make a boat with a wooden house on top of it, like Noak's ark" (I, vi). As the heavy rains come at the end of the novel, St Ogg's at last begins to recall its past: "the old men had shaken their heads and talked of sixty years ago, when the same sort of weather happening about the equinox, brought on the great floods, which swept the bridge away, and reduced the town to great misery" (VII, v).

When ~~the~~ ^{the} flood comes, Maggie's conflict is still unresolved. The return home was a true prompting, a true rediscovery, but she was turned from the Mill by Tom and condemned by St Ogg's. Simultaneously with her decision to leave St Ogg's finally comes Stephen's letter describing his misery, and she begins to question her rejection of him. The "shifting relation between passion and duty" becomes more and more obscured. The "partial and contradictory form" of the social ethic she has rediscovered can only provide a temporary escape. We are meant to see here at the end that there is no solution, that the dialectic is in equilibrium, and that the equilibrium results ultimately from the mutually frustrating halves of Maggie's character. All that she can look forward to is a perpetual re-enactment of the same struggle. The flood is a punishment and an assertion that no development is possible. The final re-enactment of the legend of St Ogg's at the very end of the novel is a re-enactment in a limited and 'schismatic' form—a sister seeks to rescue her brother from the flood. It can only be 'schismatic' because the traditional organic community has been destroyed by commerce and industry, symbolised in the huge, floating

fragments of 'wooden machinery' which kill Tom and Maggie.¹⁷

On the final ^{page} ~~paragraph~~ of the novel, George Eliot uses again symbols of natural growth to describe the organic development of society. But now, they are very different from the optimistic, and rather facile, earlier analogies. The final emphasis is all upon the ~~su~~ suffering and destruction inherent in the dialectic of evolution; the picture has darkened and tragedy seems unavoidable.

Nature repairs her ravages, but not all. The uprooted trees are not rooted again; the parted hills are left scarred; if there is new growth, the trees are not the same as the old, and the hills underneath their green vesture bear the marks of the past rending. To the eyes that have dwelt on the past there is no thorough repair.

FOOTNOTES

1 There is an anticipation of this central theme in Adam Bede: "Family likeness has often a deep sadness in it. Nature, that great tragic dramatist, knits us together by bone and muscle, and divides us by the subtler web of our ~~heart-strings~~ brains; blends yearning and repulsion; and ties us by our heart-strings to the beings that jar us at every moment. We hear a voice with the very cadence of our own uttering the thoughts we despise..."(iv).

2 D. H. Lawrence is dealing with the same theme and has to cope with the same problem in The Rainbow, the novel in which he seems most directly influenced by George Eliot.

3 The first half of the novel is full of prophecies, particularly of the last event of Maggie's life. For example, immediately after the rabbit incident described below, Maggie goes home with Luke to examine his "remarkable series of pictures representing the Prodigal Son in the costume of Sir Charles Grandison." She is linked with the Prodigal Son—"the indefinable weight the dead rabbits had left on her mind caused her to feel more than usual pity for the career of this weak young man,"—and her brief exchange with Luke sketches the final tragic equilibrium:

"I'm very glad his father took him back again--aren't you, Luke?"she said. "For he was very sorry, you know, and wouldn't do wrong again."

"Eh, miss," said Luke, "he'd be no great shakes, I doubt, let's feyther do what he would for him."

That was a painful thought to Maggie, and she wished much that the subsequent history of the young man had not been left a blank." (I, iv)

Maggie's earlier explanation to Mr Riley of one of the illustrations in her copy of Defoe's The History of the Devil again looks ahead to the final events of the novel and the impossibility of finding any solution to Maggie's dilemma:

"Oh, I'll tell you what that means. It's a dreadful picture, isn't it? But I can't help looking at it. That old woman in the water's a witch; they've put her in to find out whether she's a withh or no, and if she swims she's a witch, and if she's drowned--and killed, you know--she's innocent, and not a witch, but only a poor, silly old woman. But what good would it do her then, you know, when she was drowned? Only, I suppose, she'd go to heaven, and God would make it up to her." (I, iii)

4

In a letter from G. H. Lewes to John Blackwood on 6 September 1859, we learn that "The first volume of Maggie is ended or nearly, but he [i.e. George Eliot] is going back to insert fresh details and passages" (Letters, III, 146). The novel was finished on 21 March 1860 (Letters, III, 278).

On 25 November 1859, George Eliot wrote to Charles Bray: "We are reading Darwin's Book on Species, just come out, after long expectation. It is an elaborate exposition of the evidence in favour of the Development Theory, and so makes an epoch" (Letters, III, 214). Gordon S. Haight adds in a footnote: "In her Journal, 23 November, GE wrote: 'We began Darwin's work on 'The Origin of Species' tonight. It seems not ~~at~~ to be well written: though full of interesting matter, it is not impressive, for want of luminous and orderly presentation.'"

On the Origin of Species was published on 24 November 1859; the trade sale was on 22 November 1859.

5

One cannot state dogmatically that George Eliot borrowed image and example from the Origin, for the novel is full of animal metaphors and similes. But in the context of the central theme of The Mill on the Floss, the following, accumulative echoes are significant:

- (i) The lop-eared rabbits which are used as a symbol of Maggie's unnatural mixture of traits ("Things out o' natur nãver thrive....") are briefly included in Darwin's generalisation on variation under domestication: "Not a single domestic animal can be named which has not in some country drooping ears; and the view suggested by some authors, that the drooping is due to the disuse of the muscles of the ear, from the animals not being much alarmed by danger, seems probable." (On the Origin of Species, A Reprint of the First Edition, 1950, pp. 9-10)
- (ii) Compare George Eliot's comment on Mrs Pullet: "From the sorrow of a Hottentot to that of a woman in large Buckram sleeves, with several bracelets on each arm, an architectural bonnet, and delicate ribbon strings—what a long series of gradations!" (I, vii), with Darwin's: "It is, no doubt, extremely difficult even to conjecture by what gradations many structures have been perfected, more especially among broken and failing groups of organic beings; but we see so many strange gradations in nature...that we ought to be extremely cautious in saying that any organ or instinct, or any whole being, could not have arrived at its present state by many graduated steps" (Origin, pp. 389-390).

- (iii) Mr Tulliver's lack of religious beliefs is described with the aid of the following analogy: "Certain seeds which are required to find a nidus for themselves under unfavourable circumstances have been supplied by nature with an apparatus of hooks, so that they will get hold on very unreceptive surfaces. The spiritual seed which had been scattered over Mr. Tulliver had apparently been destitute of any corresponding provision, and had slipped off to the winds again, from a total absence of hooks"(IV, ii). The analogy may have been suggested by the following from Darwin: "Many remarkable little facts could be given with respect to the inhabitants of remote islands. For instance, in certain islands not tenanted by mammals, some of the endemic plants have beautifully hooked seeds; yet few relations are more striking than the adaptation of hooked seeds for transportal by the wool and fur of quadrupeds. This case presents no difficulty in my view, for a hooked seed might be transported to an island by some other means; and the plant then becoming slightly modified, but still retaining its hooked seeds, would form an endemic species, having as useless an appendage as any rudimentary organ"(Origin, p. 332).

In order to appreciate the full impact of these echoes in the novel, we must set them alongside such references to the plant and animal world as the following:

"[Tom] was one of those lads that grow everywhere in England, and, at twelve or thirteen years of age, look as much alike as goslings...a physiognomy in which it seems impossible to discern anything but the generic character of boyhood—as different as possible from poor Maggie's phiz, which Nature seemed to have moulded and coloured with the utmost decided intentions. But that same Nature has the deep cunning which hides itself under the appearance of ppenness."(I, v)

"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."(I, v)

"but Maggie, gifted with that superior power of misery which distinguishes the human being, and places him at a proud distance from the most melancholy chimpanzee, sat still on her bough, and gave herself up to the keen sense of unmerited reproach."(I, vi)

"There are certain animals to which tenacity of position is a law of life—they can never flourish again, after a single wrench; and there are certain human beings to whom predominance is a law of life—they can only sustain humiliation so long as they can refuse to believe in it, and, in their own conception, predominate still."(III, i)

6 See above, pp. 36-7.

7 See Alexander Welsh, 'George Eliot and the Romance,' Nineteenth Century Fiction, 14 (1959), 241-254.

8 This extreme desire for comprehensiveness is epitomised in one of Mr Glegg's hobbies: "Mr Glegg on his side, too, had a double source of mental occupation, which gave every promise of being inexhaustible. On the one hand, he surprised himself by his discoveries in natural history, finding that his piece of garden-ground contained wonderful caterpillars, slugs, and insects, which, so far as he had heard, had never before attracted human observation; and he noticed remarkable coincidences between these zoological phenomena and the great events of that time,—as, for example, that before the burning of York Minster there had been mysterious serpentine marks on the leaves of the rose-trees, together with an unusual prevalence of slugs, which he had been puzzled to know the meaning of, until it flashed upon him with this melancholy conflagration"(I, xii).

9 Middlemarch, chapters xxii, and xxxix.

10 In The Rainbow, Lawrence, presenting the evolution of a family through three generations, finds an inherent conflict not between the two sides of the Brangwen family, but between the male and female attitudes to life: "But the woman wanted another form of life than this, something that was not blood-intimacy. Her house faced out from the ~~village~~ farm-buildings and fields, looked out to the road and the village with Church and Hall and the world beyond. She stood to see the far-off world of cities and governments and the active scope of man, the magic land to her, where secrets were made known and desires fulfilled. She faced outwards to where men moved dominant and creative, having turned their back on the pulsing heat of creation, and with this behind them, were set out to discover what was beyond, to enlarge their own scope and range and freedom; whereas the Brangwen men faced inwards to the teeming life of creation, which poured unresolved into their veins"(i).

11 Maggie's use of Thomas a Kempis has been anticipated in Aunt Glegg's less orthodox use of Baxter's Saints' Everlasting Rest: "It was the book she was accustomed to lay open before on special occasions—on wet Sunday mornings, or when she ^{heard} of a death in the family, or when,

as in this case, her quarrel with Mr. Glegg had been set an octave higher than usual"(I, xii).

I2

Riehl, p. 54.

I3

These repeated tree images (in particular, this one and the 'millennial tree' of St Ogg's) call to mind Darwin's famous comparison of 'The affinities of all the beings of the same class' to a great tree, at the end of the fourth chapter of the Origin.

I4

J. W. Cross, George Eliot's Life as Related in Her Letters and Journals, 1885, III, 43.

I5

Compare the following description of the two forms of ekstasis: "Some have an emphatic belief in alcohol, and seek their ekstasis or outside standing-ground in gin; but the rest require something that good society calls 'enthusiasm', something that will ~~give~~ present motives in an entire absence of high prizes, something that will give patience and feed human love when the limbs ache with weariness and human looks are hard upon us..."(IV, iii).

I6

In 'The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!', Impressions of Theophrastus Such.

I7

See Bernard J. Paris, 'Towards a Revaluation of George Eliot: The Mill on the Floss,' Nineteenth Century Fiction, II (1956), 30-31.

SILAS MARNER

(i)

Silas Marner is a less complex novel than The Mill on the Floss, largely because the central character's development does not take place in a society which is at a moment of crucial change. We have a contrast in the novel, in the manner of Adam Bede, between two communities-- the narrow, fanatical religious sect at Lantern Yard, and the materialistic, easy-going village society of Raveloe. The novel shows how Silas Marner becoming disillusioned with the injustice and inhumanity of the first, retreats into a self-imposed isolation, and then gradually becomes integrated into the second community. This is an examination of the organic 'tissue' of the two communities, and more particularly of the types of religion through which this tissue manifests itself. The simplicity and economy, with which this examination is carried out, effectively conceals the subversive and explosive nature of George Eliot's conclusions.

What is wrong with Lantern Yard can be clearly seen by reference to George Eliot's biting attack on the Evangelical preacher, Dr Cumming. She castigates him, in her review of 1855, for attempting to divert the individual's natural sympathy for his fellow human beings into a worship of God which is divorced from any^{human} reference: "He insists on good works as the sign of justifying faith, as labours to be achieved to the glory of God, but he rarely represents them as the spontaneous, necessary outflow of a soul filled with Divine love."^I This extraneous, ~~subversive~~^{willed} motive destroys the essential goodness of the sympathetic action:

Benevolence and justice are strong only in proportion as they are directly and inevitably called into activity by their proper

objects: pity is strong only because we are strongly impressed by suffering; and only in proportion as it is compassion that speaks through the eyes when we soothe, and moves the arm when we succour, is a deed strictly benevolent. If the soothing or the succour be given because another being wishes or approves it, the deed ceases to be one of benevolence, and becomes one of deference, of ~~the~~ obedience, of self-interest, or vanity.

This sounds like Fielding. As George Eliot continues, we realise it is a nineteenth century Fielding who has translated Feuerbach:

The idea of God is really moral in its influence—it really cherishes all that is best and loveliest in man—only when God is contemplated as sympathising with the pure elements of human feeling, as possessing infinitely all those attributes which we recognise to be moral in humanity....The idea of a God who not only sympathises with all we feel and endure for our fellow-men, but who will pour new life into our too languid love, and give firmness to our vacillating purpose, is an extension and multiplication of the effects produced by human sympathy....²

"The idea of God," says George Eliot in 1874, "so far as it has been a high spiritual influence, is the ideal of a goodness entirely human (i.e. an exaltation of the human)"(Letters, VI, 98). Dr Cumming's God, like the God of Lantern Yard, is the very opposite of this.

In the first chapter of the novel, Silas's life is shown to be "filled with the movement, the mental activity, and the close fellowship which in that day as in this marked the life of an artisan early incorporated in a narrow religious sect." Lantern Yard is a tight, self-contained community, but it is ~~not~~ not bound together by human sympathy. Silas becomes the centre of interest only after his first, mysterious cataleptic fit takes place during a prayer-meeting. The reaction of the sect is to reject immediately any human, natural explanation: "To have sought a medical explanation for this phenomenon would have been held by Silas himself, as well as by his minister and fellow members, a wilful self-exclusion from the spiritual significance that might lie therein"(i).

This reaction, says George Eliot in her review, is characteristic:

And it is commonly seen that, in proportion as religious sects believe themselves to be guided by direct inspiration rather than by a spontaneous exertion of their faculties, their sense of truthfulness is misty and confused...nay, they regard as a symptom of sinful scepticism an inquiry into the evidence for a story which they think unquestionably tends to the glory of God, and in retailing such stories, new particulars, further tending to ~~the~~ His glory, are 'borne in' upon their minds.³

Very soon this constant search at Lantern Yard for supernatural explanation and justification becomes more vicious. Silas's 'sense of mystery', artificially stimulated, gets out of hand and begins to "spread itself over the proper pathway of inquiry and knowledge"(i). He decides that the humane application of his knowledge of medicinal herbs is wrong, "believing that herbs could have no efficacy without prayer, and that prayer might suffice without herbs." Instead of being "the ideal of a goodness entirely human," the idea of God at Lantern Yard has become positively anti-human.

The events which shatter Silas's view of the world and lead up to his excommunication, underline the weakness of the links holding such a community together. Obsessed with the desire for "assurance of salvation", the members fall into spiritual pride and jealousy. Their God like Dr Cumming's is "a God who, instead of adding His solar force to swell the tide of those impulses that tend to give humanity a common life in which the good of one is the good of all, commands us to check those ~~sympathetic~~ impulses, lest they should prevent us from thinking of His glory."⁴ William Dane, jealous of both Silas's notoriety and his betrothal to Sarah, first suggests that Silas's fit "looked more like a visitation of Satan than a proof of divine favour," and then makes it appear that Silas has stolen the sick deacon's money. The sect refers the question of Silas's guilt not to factual evidence for and against him, but to "praying and drawing lots".

Silas too relies "on his own innocence being certified by immediate divine interference"(i). When the lots declare him guilty, he blasphemes against the God of Lantern Yard: "There is no just God that governs the earth righteously, but a God of lies, that bears witness against the innocent." The belief in this God has dehumanised the Lantern Yard community, and destroyed Silas's faith in God and man: "Poor Marner went out with that despair in his soul—that shaken trust in God and man which is little short of madness to a loving nature." The idea of God, instead of being an ideal expression of human sympathy, has been turned against such sympathy with the result that, for Silas, both have been destroyed.

This opening account of Silas's loss of faith should make clear George Eliot's methods, in particular, the nature of the relationship between the supernatural interpretation of events and the psychology of the characters. The novel is concerned fundamentally, says George Eliot in a letter to John Blackwood, with "the remedial influences of pure, natural human relations"(Letters, III, 382). It is not a supernatural fairy-tale. Religion is used as the quintessential expression of the nature of the human relationships in a community, and the supernatural framework serves as a gloss upon the more fundamental structure based on the psychology of the characters. George Eliot has achieved a remarkable fusion of the two through her presentation of "that simple untaught state of mind in which the form of religion and the feeling have never been severed by an act of reflection"(i). Yet it is clear, if we observe plot and character carefully, that there is a constant demythologising at work helping us to differentiate between vehicle and tenor. For example, in this opening incident, Silas's blasphemy is merely the expression of his loss of faith in Dane and his fellow human beings. Faith in a just God is, on the other hand, an expression of one's belief in and love for one's fellows. Silas's faith in God collapsed so easily because it was not securely based on affection and dependence upon others. If it had been, then he would not have immediately rejected his

fellow men. As Dolly Winthrop states later: "And if you could but ha' gone on trusting, Master Marner, you wouldn't ha' run away from your fellow-creatures and been so lone"(xvi). He would also have understood the significance of the cataleptic fits. They are neither the marks of ~~the~~ divine favour nor visitations of the devil, but a symbolic expression of the individual's helplessness and need of human sympathy.

(ii)

Silas flees to Raveloe and isolation. The change from Lantern Yard to Raveloe with its "orchards looking lazy with neglected plenty," and its "purple-faced farmers"(ii), is like the transition from Stoniton to Hayslope in Adam Bede. The moral geography is very similar. The danger at Stoniton and Lantern Yard is that essentially human relationships will be jeopardised by excessive and perverted otherworldliness. There is no suggestion of this at Raveloe, for here it seemed to Silas "that the Power he had vainly ~~tried~~ trusted in among the streets and at the prayer-meetings was very far away from this land in which he had taken refuge, where men lived in careless abundance, knowing and needing nothing of that trust which for him had been turned to bitterness"(ii). The danger here, as it was at Hayslope, is straightfroward egoism and materialism, and this is exemplified in the presentation of Godfr^ey Cass.

Godfrey, at the opening of the novel, is becoming more and more disillusioned and embittered under the strain of his secret marriage with the barmaid, Molly Farren. He is trying to escape from this particular marriage bond, just as Silas in isolation is seeking to escape from all human ties: "He had made ties for himself which robbed him of all wholesome motive and were a constant exasperation"(iii). When Silas's trust

in man was shaken, he rejected God as maleficent; Godfrey similarly refuses to accept the natural laws of an ordered universe, seeking to escape from the consequences of his own actions by relying on chance: "Favourable Chance is the God of all men who follow their own devices instead of obeying a law they believe in....The evil principle deprecated in that religion is the orderly sequence by which the seed brings forth a crop after its kind"(ix). Like Godfrey, Silas "hated the thought of the past"(ii), and both seek in complete disillusionment to sever themselves from it.

Beneath this parallel degeneration of character George Eliot does begin to discriminate. She seems to be trying to determine the razor edge between salvation and damnation. Both men are subjected to bitterness and despair,⁵ yet Silas retains the possibility of complete regeneration whilst Godfrey does not. The parallelism of the two threads of narrative demands that we find the crucial difference. Immediately on the shock of his wrongful conviction, Silas's "affection seemed to have died under the bruise that had fallen on its keenest nerves"(ii), but George Eliot is at pains to recount the incident of the earthenware pot, "which showed that the sap of affection was not all gone"(ii). This is the quality which is isolated in Silas's degeneration as the basis upon which his later regeneration can be built. His affection preserves him: "In his truthful, simple soul not even the growing greed and worship of gold could beget any vice directly injurious to others"(v). So that even at the nadir of his desolation when his gold has been stolen there is still hope. Indeed, the utter disillusionment of Silas at this stage in the novel is a preparation for regeneration, for now he has nothing to lean on, he realises his dependence on others:

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 good will. (x)

It has taken fifteen years of isolation and disenchantment to bring home to ~~him~~ ^{Silas} the full significance of his cataleptic fits. Now comes the second test, the crucial catalepsy, and the result is dependent upon the affection he has managed to retain through his period of isolation: "He was arrested, as he had been already since his loss, by the invisible wand of catalepsy, and stood like a graven image, with wide but sightless eyes, holding open his door, powerless to resist either the good or evil that might enter there"(xii).

Simultaneously we are witnessing the parallel degeneration of Godfrey's character. His essentially kinly nature becomes increasingly embittered and desperate, but there is a crucial difference between him and Silas. Godfrey's attempt to escape the consequences of his actions leads to positive wrongdoing, because his affection has been destroyed:

The yoke a man creates for himself by wrongdoing will breed hate in the kindest 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. (iii)

The gradual corrosion of Godfrey's character has already been anticipated in the presentation of Arthur Donnithorne, and it is worked out in greater detail in Tito Melema in George Eliot's next novel. Here, there is an effective balance struck between the too obvious irony of the former and the too explicit dismemberment of the latter presentation. There is both sympathy and an incisive analysis of moral cowardice. We share Godfrey's feelings, for example, towards his brother Dunstan whilst being aware that the latter is a warning and anticipation of where Godfrey's escapism will lead. But up to the sudden appearance of his wife and child during the New Year's Eve party at the Red House, Godfrey has committed no crime "directly injurious to others".

The two themes come together most decisively on the arrival of Godfrey's wife and child. The crucial difference between the two men is now seen in its full significance. At this point in the novel, the 'moral tradition' each man has been making for himself results in a decisive action. Eppie comes to Silas whilst he is in his cataleptic fit. When he discovers her, he immediately thinks of his past life of love and affection which he has rejected along with the religion of Lantern Yard:

The thoughts were strange to him now, like old friendships impossible 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.... (xii)

The 'message' the child brings is the all-importance of natural human affections, and Silas can receive it because his affection has survived the fifteen years of isolation. It is significant that the "quiverings of tenderness" come first, before "the presentiment of some Power" which again must be seen as an expression of them. Then follows Silas's desire to keep the child, "It's come to me: I've a right to keep it", and George Eliot emphasises the instinctive nature of this love: "The proposition to take the child from him had come to Silas quite unexpectedly and his speech, uttered under a strong sudden impulse, was almost like a revelation to himself. A minute before he had no distinct intention about the child"(xiii). When the decisive moment comes, one's response is instinctive and expressive of one's whole 'moral tradition'. The survival of Silas's affection which has preserved his character from evil now controls his actions at this point in the novel.

Godfrey's 'moral tradition' has been preparing him for quite a different response at this decisive point in the novel. When Silas brings the child into the middle of the New Year's Eve party, his habit of prevarication

and escapism culminates in the desire for his wife's death: "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 to a man whose happiness hangs on duplicity"(xiii). Then immediately afterwards, he denies his own daughter. Thus at this central point in the novel the subtle discrimination between the two characters is suddenly seen in its full significance. It is no longer a question of potential damnation and salvation; after this point of decision^(on New Year's Eve), Godfrey's and Silas's two ways diverge increasingly. Through his love for Eppie, Silas regains his faith and becomes fully integrated into the Raveloe community, whilst Godfrey, despite his longed for marriage to Nancy Lammeter, is about to begin his long penance.

This division of the novel into the histories of the two men's characters is an extremely important innovation in George Eliot's writing, and, from the start, we can see the technique used confidently, not as a means of blatant contrast and comparison, but as a delicately probing instrument, encouraging the reader to make the discriminations in character and action upon which the meaning of the novel depends.

We return to the characters after a break of sixteen years. Now we see what Silas's inviolate affection has grown into--a sense of community, a faith, and a consciousness of the unity of his life. All these have returned to him, but now they are more secure because he realises they are based upon his affection, his love for Eppie

By seeking what was needful for Eppie, by sharing the effect that everything produced on her, he had himself come to appropriate the forms of custom and belief which were the mould of Raveloe life; and as, with reawakening sensibilities, memory also reawakened, 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. (xvi)

The full meaning of this re-commitment to life is defined by means of the image of a web. This image is used invariably by George Eliot for the purpose of describing the tangled complexities of life.⁶ But in this novel, there are two distinct uses of the one image and these might be suggested by the following description of Silas seeking refuge in his weaving:

In this strange world, made a hopeless riddle to him, he might if he had had less intense nature, have sat 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. (ii)

On his flight from Lantern Yard, Silas had rejected the complex riddle of life and in his weaving he reiterates this rejection by creating his own neat web, his own pattern which he can understand: "He seemed to weave, like a spider, from pure impulse, without reflection. Every man's work, pursued steadily, tends in this way to become an end in itself, and so to bridge over the loveless chasms of his life"(ii).

But outside the neat pattern of this man-made web, which is Silas's opiate, is the confused life of the significantly named Raveloe, "from which for fifteen years he had stood aloof as from a strange thing, wherewith he could have no communion"(xiv). And George Eliot emphasises the difference between "the slow growth of sameness in Silas's brownish web"(iii) and the life outside his cottage, "breathed on variously by the multitudinous currents, from the minds of heaven to the thoughts of men, which are for ever moving and crossing each other with incalculable results"(iii). The 'narrow religious sect' of Lantern Yard, ~~on the other hand~~, was united in its attempt to impose an oversimplified interpretation upon this complexity, and this was the basic cause of Silas's rejection of his fellow men, and his refusal to grapple any further with life's complexity. These are the two webs—and Eppie comes to unite them. Her sudden appearance in Silas's cottage, as we have seen, "stirred fibres that had never been moved in

Raveloe--old quiverings of tenderness--old impressions of awe at the presentiment of some Power preiding over his life"(xii). His religious feelings are reawakened but in a very different form from the beliefs of Lantern Yard. Now they are a means of giving a full expression to his natural human feelings which have survived the fifteen years of isolation; through these he becomes fully integrated into the Raveloe community. The Raveloe idea of God is, in the words of George Eliot's review, "an extension and multiplication of the effects produced by human sympathy," or in Dolly Winthrop's words: "And if a bit o' trouble comes, I feel as I can put up wi' it, for I've looked for help ~~ix~~ i' the right quarter, and gev myself up to Them as we must all give ourselves up to at the last; and if we'n done our part, it isn't to be believed as Them as are above us 'ull be worse nor we are, and come short o' Their'n"⁴¹(x). Now Silas's weaving becomes unimportant and "the child created fresh and fresh links between his life and the lives from which he had hitherto shrunk continually into narrower isolation"(xv). Even though, as George Eliot repeats, "the little child had come to link him once more with the whole world"(xv), it does not mean that has unravelled the tangled web of life. It means that because he has rediscovered his love for man he can now accept this complex web of life without escaping from its complexities by means of an oversimplified, non-human explanation. The contrast with Lantern Yard is clear.

In this second half of the novel, however, the emphasis is upon Godfrey who was about to begin his deprivation as Silas's ended. The meaning of the time-scheme lies in this comparison. Silas rejected his fellow men and was isolated for fifteen years; Godfrey rejected his child and has been childless for the fifteen years of his marriage. Up to the arrival of Eppie, we had a subtly discriminated parallel presentation of the two men. Now we look at their relationship differently: the time span of the novel consists of their two periods of suffering placed end to end, and by ~~the~~

means of the gap of sixteen years in the narrative, we move directly from Silas's regeneration to Godfrey's.

Godfrey's punishment has been brought about by an adept use of his wife's character. In the first half of the novel, her strict rectitude had been one of the reasons for Godfrey's subterfuge. Now, ironically, it is this same sense of rectitude which is used after marriage to punish him for this concealment and its consequences. Godfrey has married his moral opposite: "the spirit of rectitude and the sense of responsibility for the effect of her conduct on others, which were strong elements in Nancy's character, had made it a habit with her to scrutinise her past feelings and actions with self-questioning solicitude"(xvii). She is no worshipper of Chance, and rigidly accepts the principle of "the orderly sequence by which the seed brings forth a crop after its kind." This is the reason she has refused for fifteen years to agree to Godfrey's suggestion that they adopt a child: "To adopt a child because children of your own had been denied you was to try to choose your lot in spite of Providence"(xvii). Under the influence of Nancy, he has come to see his childlessness as retribution, but he has been saved from despair by his growing love for his wife—"his natural kindness had outlived that blighting time of cruel wish"(xvii). It is this affection which finally saves Godfrey and provides us with a second example of "the remedial influences of pure, natural human relations."

Godfrey's regeneration is brought about by the discovery of his brother's skeleton and Silas's gold when the ~~stone~~ pit is drained. He finally rejects his duplicity and escapism, and makes a full confession to his wife: "Everything comes to light, Nancy, sooner or later. When God Almighty wills it, our secrets are found out. I've lived with a secret on my mind, but I'll keep it from you no longer"(xviii). This incident provides a good example of the demythologising technique used throughout the novel. At first sight, the sudden discovery of Dunstan seems a

supernatural interference, or at any rate part of the so-called "fairy-tale atmosphere" of the novel,⁷ leading conveniently to Godfrey's confession and ultimate regeneration. But if we observe the details of the plot carefully, we see that beneath the sudden discovery there is a significant chain of causation. Godfrey has obtained some land from Mr Osgood to make into a dairy for Nancy so that she will be too occupied to brood over her childlessness. The draining of this land causes the emptying of the Stone-pits which leads to the discovery. In other words, just as Silas was saved by the survival of his affection, so it is Godfrey's love and concern for his wife which initiates the chain of events leading to his final reform.

(iii)

Having shown that sympathy and affection must form the organic tissue of any healthy ~~social~~ social organism, George Eliot at the end of the novel suddenly challenges the universal validity of these bonds of affection by placing them in opposition to the claims of legal parenthood. This is another treatment of the 'antagonism of valid claims' similar to the struggle between Maggie and Stephen Guest at the end of The Mill on the Floss, and although the debate is not so finely poised, George Eliot's exposition of the symbolic conflict in the Antigone is again directly relevant: "Wherever the strength of a man's intellect, or moral sense of affection brings him into opposition with the rules which society has sanctioned, there is renewed the conflict between Antigone and Creon...." There is no general solution to such problems; all one can do is to make subtler and subtler discriminations and even then a solution may be impossible. In this sphere of moral judgment, the casuists, says George Eliot in The Mill on the Floss, are to be preferred to the 'men of maxims':

The casuists have become a by-word of reproach; but their perverted spirit of minute discriminations was the shadow of a truth to which eyes ~~and~~ and hearts are too often fatally sealed--the truth that moral/judgments must remain false and hollow, unless they are checked and enlightened by a perpetual reference to the special circumstances that mark the individual lot.(VII, ii)

By the end of the novel, we are in a position to understand the moral judgment George Eliot makes, thanks to the subtle discriminations that have been made in the parallel presentation of Silas's and Godfrey's characters.

When, at the end of the novel, Godfrey and Nancy go to visit Silas in order to claim ~~a~~ Eppie as their own daughter, the stage is set for the final moral debate between the claims of legal ownership and the claims of ~~a~~ affection. Unlike Maggie, who is destroyed by a too vivid sympathy with each side of the conflict, the ~~contstants~~^e in this debate are convinced of the validity of their own claims. Godfrey and Nancy claim Eppie legally now that Godfrey has come to realise where his duty lies; and Nancy's "unalterable little code"~~af~~(xvii) of conduct and her sense of rectitude are a very real embodiment of the "established laws" of society which are here seeking to deprive Silas of his daughter--"her code allowed no question that a father by blood must have a claim above that of any foster-father"(xix). Neither of them can appreciate the nature of the relationship between Silas and Eppie, and George Eliot suggests perhaps the reason for this in the fact that they have both been deprived of a mother's influence from an early age. Silas, on the other hand, ~~is~~ fully aware now of the strength and meaning of affection, contests their claim "with an accent of bitterness that had been silent in him since the memorable day when his youthful hope had perished"(xix). The acrimony of the debate, the refusal to/acknowledge the other's claims, indicates that neither the regeneration of Godfrey nor Silas is complete.

George Eliot has not brought us to this confrontation of opposing claims without preparation. The nature of the problem has been given a preliminary definition in chapter six, in the conversation taking place in the kitchen of the 'Rainbow' as the robbed Silas approached for help earlier in the novel. This conversation has been universally praised for its humour and realism but its relationship to the central theme has been ignored. For example, after having praised the 'unity and rapidity of movement' of the shorter tales, the critic of the Edinburgh Review in 1866 adds, "yet the celebrated public-house conversation in Silas Marner has scarcely any connection with the principal story."⁸ In fact, it is a discussion by analogy of the main issues involved in the climax of the novel.

The conversation begins with an argument between the aggressive farrier and the mild butcher over the ownership of a cow. The butcher refuses to commit himself, merely commenting on its "lovely carkiss" to the annoyance of the increasingly emphatic farrier. They are looking at the cow from quite different points of view and the pacific landlord ends the argument by pointing out its irreconcilable nature: "come, come," said the landlord; "let the cow alone. The truth lies atween you; you're both right and both wrong, as I allays say." The antagonism of valid claims' receives further definition when the conversation next turns to the choir. Mr Tookey defends his singing with "if you'll bring me any proof as I'm in the wrong, I'm not the man to say I won't alter. But there's people set up their own ears for a standard, and expect the whole choir to follow 'em. There may be two opinions, I hope." Mr Macey agrees, rephrasing it as "There's allays two opinions: there's the 'pinion a man has of himsen, and there's the 'pinion other folk have on him"; and the landlord adds his refrain, "You're both right and you're both wrong, as I say."

The talk switches next to Mr Lammeter and his wedding as witnessed by the parish-clerk, Mr Macey. The vicar, "what wi' age and wi' taking a drop

o' summat warm when the service come of a cold morning," became confused:

"...when he come to put the questions, he put 'em by the rule o' contrary, like, and he says, 'Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded ~~husband~~ wife?' says he; and then he says, 'Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded husband?' says he. But the partic'larest thing of all is, as nobody took any notice of it but me, and they answered straight off 'yes', like as if it had been me saying 'Amen' i' the right place, without listening to what went before."

And as Macey continues, the ~~moral~~ crux of the novel receives an increasingly detailed statement:

"...why, I was all of a tremble: it was as if I'd been a coat pulled by the two tails, like; for I couldn't stop the parson—I couldn't take upon me to do that; and yet @ said to myself, I says, 'Suppose they shouldn't be fast married, cause the words are contrairy?' and my head went working like a mill, for I was allays uncommon for turning things over and seeing all round 'em; and I says to myself, 'Is't the meanin' or the words as makes folk fast i' wedlock?' For the parson meant right, and the bride and bridegroom meant right. But then, when I come to think on it, meanin' goes hut a little way i' most things...."

The conflict between "the meanin' or the words" reappears for us at the climax of the novel, and it is ironical that the strict Nancy who supports Godfrey's legal claim should be the product of the irregular marriage described here. Thus the conversation of the rustics has dealt in turn with the irreconcilable nature of the claims, the reason for the antagonism, and finally with the problem of the legal validity or invalidity of human relationships. This provides a context for the final dialectic, without ^{providing} any anticipatory synthesis.

The discussion at the 'Rainbow' was broken off by the arrival of Silas who, deprived of his gold, was at the nadir of his despair. Now at this climax of the novel, in chapter nineteen, the main themes of this lengthy conversation of the rustics are recalled. It is significant that Silas is referring back to this moment of desolation and to the loss of his gold as the Casses arrive for the final debate, and their attempt to get

possession of Eppie. Godfrey and Nancy first say they would like to adopt Eppie and 'make a lady of her'. When Eppie rejects this offer, Godfrey asserts his legal claim: "'But I've a claim on you, Eppie--the strongest of all claims. It's my duty, Marner, to own Eppie as my child, and provide for her. She's my own child; her mother was my wife. I've a natural claim on her that must stand before every other.'" Again, as in The Mill on the Floss, the validity of the conflicting claims centres on the ambiguity of the word 'natural'. Silas rejects Godfrey's interpretation of the word: "'...then, sir, why didn't you say so sixteen year ago, and claim her before I'd come to love her...? God gave her to me because you turned your back upon her, and He looks upon her as mine. You've no right to her. When a man turned a blessing from his door, it falls to them as take it in.'" At this impasse, the final decision is left to Eppie, and already in the name given her by Silas there is an anticipation of her verdict. Eppie is a shortened form of Hephzibah, and Silas with his "'It's a Bible name'" (xiv) directs us to Isaiah's address to Jerusalem: "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land ~~land~~ shall be married."⁹ These words applied to Eppie, now they are a reassurance to Silas that his intuitive sympathy for Eppie will not be betrayed. The arrival of the Casses at the cottage has broken in upon Silas's discussion of this very point with Eppie:

"It takes no hold of me now," he said ponderingly--"the money doesn't. I wonder if it ^{ever} could again--I doubt it might if I lost you, Eppie. I might come to think I was forsaken again, and lose the feeling that God was good to me."

At that moment there was a knocking at the door; and Eppie was obliged to rise without answering Silas.

Her reply comes at the climax of the debate between Silas and Godfrey which has helped to crystallise her attitude. In the oblique discussion on ownership and legality in the 'Rainbow' no final solution was reached, and indeed

the whole conversation was interrupted by the sudden arrival of the desolate Silas seeking help. Now, sixteen years later, when the same problems are raised, Eppie can provide a solution, and she is able to do so because of her relationship with Silas during these sixteen years. These years of dependence and affection are the all-important factor. Godfrey is trying to go back sixteen years to the moment when he rejected Eppie, and carry on from there. But the growing dependence of Silas upon her love has come to overlay and cancel Godfrey's claim. She says, "I can't feel as I've got any father but one," and her answer is essentially the same as Maggie's final rejection of Stephen Guest at the climax of The Mill on the Floss: "Faithfulness and constancy mean something else besides doing what is easiest and pleasantest to ourselves. They mean renouncing whatever is opposed to the reliance others have in us-- whatever would cause misery to those whom the course of our lives has made dependent on us." On these grounds, Maggie rejected the 'elemental tendencies' of her love for Stephen in favour of the 'established laws' of her relationship with her family. And it is on exactly these same grounds that Eppie does the opposite; she rejects the 'established ~~laws~~ laws' of legal ownership and chooses to live with Silas who is dependent upon her. In these two novels the same conflict is resolved in opposite directions but on the same grounds. This is what George Eliot means when she says that "moral judgments must remain false and hollow, unless they are checked and enlightened by a perpetual reference ~~to~~ to the special circumstances that mark the individual lot."

Eppie's rejection finally brings home to Godfrey the inescapable consequences of his actions. He accepts the fact that she dislikes him and resolves to do what he "can for her in the state of life she chooses"(xx). He grasps now the crucial truism that when he denied Eppie he not only ignored her claims but he also ~~has~~ allowed other claims to be made on her. Silas's increasing claims invalidate his own purely legal parenthood. As

Godfrey himself vividly expresses it: "While I've been putting off and putting off, the trees have been growing: it's too late now." This is the last obstacle to Godfrey's regeneration which had begun with his love for Nancy; he now appreciates this love fully and accepts his childlessness with resignation.

In the final chapter of the novel, we see that Silas has a final lesson to learn. He too seeks to return into his past, to Lantern Yard, to see if he can find an explanation of his wrongful conviction for robbery thirty-one years ago. He also discovers it is too late, for Lantern Yard has disappeared. This makes Silas realise that his faith does not require a rational explanation of the drawing of the lots. It is now securely based on affection: "Since the time the child was sent to me and I've come to love her as myself, I've had light enough to trusten by; and now she says she'll never leave me, I think I shall trusten till I die." (xxi). The discrepancy between Silas's religious faith and his love for his fellow human beings which existed most drastically at Lantern Yard finally disappears. The rediscovery of his faith is shown here to be a final expression of his affection which has throughout remained inviolable.

The institutions and established beliefs of a society are an expression of its true nature. "The external conditions which society has inherited from the past," says George Eliot, "are but the ¹⁰manifestation~~s~~ of inherited conditions in the human beings who compose it." This direct correlation of internal and external is especially true of traditional organic communities which are developing slowly and where custom accordingly plays a major part in determining the individual's belief. In Silas Marner, George Eliot shows how the religious belief in particular of such a community is an essential expression of the quality of human relationships which form its organic tissue. "All the attributes of the

divine nature are...attributes of the human nature,"^{II} says Feuerbach. This is the revolutionary presupposition upon which Silas Marner is constructed.

Such a belief is an immense advantage to the novelist. It means that in writing of Hayslope, the Dodsons, and Raveloe, George Eliot can take over in their entirety the beliefs, customs and symbols through which these communities express their basic natures, and, having assessed for the reader their genuine human content by a skilful process of demythologising, can then use them to express her own meaning. The success of this method depends, first, on the ability of the author to convey, what George Eliot calls in the novel, "that simple untaught state of mind in which the form and and feeling have never been severed by an act of reflection"(i), and, secondly, on an unobtrusive technique^h by means of which the reader will be encouraged to dissociate the two and judge the form by the amount of genuine human feeling it embodied. If this can be done, and George Eliot carries it out successfully in each of her first three novels, then the novelist has at his disposal an integrated scheme of symbol and imagery, which is accepted intuitively by the characters andⁱⁿ which ~~is~~ there is no embarrassing discord between vehicle and tenor.

Silas Marner is the last occasion on which^{George Eliot} takes over the rooted, instinctively accepted structure of symbol and belief of a traditional community, and uses it with subtle reorientation and economy to express her own meaning. Already by the time of Romola, the characters, now much more sophisticated and living in a period of disintegration and uncertainty, are continually examining and questioning their world and its meaning. The form and feeling of belief have become divorced so that George Eliot has~~xxx~~ to create her own and re-define traditional symbols. In Romola we see her beginning to do this painstakingly and self-consciously. This is the important dividing-line explaining the marked difference of atmosphere and the difference of achievement between the earlier and later novels.

FOOTNOTES

- I 'Evangelical Teaching: Dr Cumming,' Westminster Review, 64 (October 1855), 439. Hereafter cited as Cumming.
- 2 Cumming, pp. 460-1.
- 3 Cumming, p. 442.
- 4 Cumming, p. 461.
- 5 It is difficult to accept Jerome Thales' theory, in The Novels of George Eliot (New York, 1959), that the thematic parallel brings out "the contrast in tonality between the two stories" (p. 66). This contrast, he says, "is proper enough since one is a fairy tale and the other a piece done in George Eliot's usual disenchanted realism"; the first acknowledges "the truth of aspiration" in life, the second "the truth of experience" (p. 67). Even if it were accepted that George Eliot could think of and depict life on two levels in this way, the interpretation ignores the fifteen years of Silas's very real bitterness and isolation.
- 6 As, for example, in the following quotation from Middlemarch:
"I at least have so much to do in unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevances called the universe" (xv).
- 7 Barbara Hardy undervalues the novel in this way when she says:
"The crossing of rewards and punishments in the incident of the gold coins and the golden hair, and the coincidence of two thefts, leaves us with the gentle irony of a fairy-tale, rather than with the elaborate contrast of two fully-analysed human destinies", The Novels of George Eliot, p. 84.
- 8 Edinburgh Review, 124 (1866), 438.
- 9 Isaiah, lxii, 4.
- 10 Riehl, p. 69.
- 11 Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, translated from by Marian Evans from the 2nd German ed., 1854, ch. I, par. ii.

ROMOLA

(i)

George Eliot began writing Romola in 1862 and finished it in August 1863. In May 1864, she saw Titian's Annunciation in Venice and was prompted to make her first attempt at The Spanish Gypsy.¹ It is about this time that the antithesis between Hebraism (or Christianity) and Hellenism, which we have already noticed briefly in The Mill on the Floss, starts to play an increasingly important part in the novels. This antithesis seems to have become common currency in the nineteenth century through the writings of Heine, even if he did derive it, as has been suggested, from Hess and Ludwig Börne.² It is in her essay on Heine in 1856 that George Eliot makes one of her first statements on these contrasting ways of looking at life: "There was a radical opposition of nature between him and Börne: to use his own distinction, Heine is a Hellene—sensuous, realistic, exquisitely alive to the beautiful; while Börne was a Nazarene—ascetic, spiritualistic, despising the pure artist as destitute of earnestness."³ Arnold, too, ~~in his essay on Heine~~ in his essay on Heine, written seven years later in 1863, underlines the importance of this concept, but unlike George Eliot he suggests that Heine combines the two extremes: "Heine has excellently pointed out how in the sixteenth century there was a double renaissance,—a Hellenic renaissance and a Hebrew renaissance,—and how both have been great powers ever since. He himself had in him both the spirit of Greece and the spirit of Judaea; both these spirits reach the infinite, which is the true goal of all poetry and all art,—the Greek spirit by beauty, the Hebrew spirit by sublimity." Shortly afterwards, Arnold's awareness of the usefulness

of this contrast was to lead to Culture and Anarchy, where, as Lionel Trilling says, "Like buckets in a well, Arnold found, Hebraism and Hellenism have been passing each other through the ages, the decline of one bringing the rise of the other," and where "He unravels the Hebraic and Hellenic concepts to their last strands of implication and with them weaves a philosophy of history."⁴

There is another essay of Arnold's in which he begins to develop this famous antithesis, and which if less well known is more directly relevant to our understanding of Romola. This is his "Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment", which first appeared in April 1864 in the Cornhill Magazine, eight months after the final part of Romola appeared in the same periodical. In this essay, Arnold wants to give a "distinct sense of the real difference in spirit and sentiment between paganism and Christianity." He takes Theocritus's fifteenth idyll⁵ in praise of Adonis as representing the first: "this Greek hymn to Adonis adapts itself exactly to the tone and temper of a gay pleasure-loving multitude ...people who seem never made to be serious, never made to be sick or sorry." Arnold quickly passes to the shortcomings of this attitude to life: "but by the very intensity and unremittingness of its appeal to the senses and the understanding, by its stimulating a single side of us too absolutely, ends by fatiguing and revolting us; ends by leaving us with a sense of confinement, of oppression—with a desire for an utter change, for clouds, storms, effusion, and relief." In contrast, Arnold turns to St Francis's "Canticle of the Sun", "in the beginning of the thirteenth century, when the clouds and storms had come," and shows how Christianity does not attempt to avoid or discount the inherent suffering of the world. As Arnold develops this idea, one is reminded vividly of the contrast between the ruins on the Rhine and Rhone in The Mill on the Floss: "And when one thinks," he continues, "what human life is for the vast majority of mankind, how little of a feast for the senses it can possibly be, one

understands the charm for them of a refuge offered in the heart and imagination." Theocritus's hymn "takes the world by its outward, sensible side; the second by its inward, symbolical side. The first admits as much of the world as is pleasure-giving; the second admits the whole world rough and smooth, painful and pleasure-giving, all alike, but all transfigured by the power of a spiritual emotion, all brought under a law of supersensual love, having its seat in the soul."

Having made this distinction broadly, Arnold now attempts to be more specific as he relates it to modern life. The forces of this antithesis entered contemporary life most clearly, says Arnold, through the Renaissance and the Reformation: "The Renaissance is, in part, a return towards the pagan spirit...a return towards the life of the sense and the understanding. The Reformation, on the other hand, is the very opposite of this; in Luther there is nothing Greek or pagan....The Reformation...was a reaction of the moral and spiritual sense against the carnal and pagan sense; it was a religious revival like St Francis's, but this time against the Church of Rome, not within her; for the carnal and pagan sense had now, in the government of the Church of Rome herself, its prime representative." The terms used here need very little modification for them to be applied aptly to the conflict in Florence as it is presented in Romola.

Both in this novel and in The Spanish Gypsy, George Eliot goes back to the end of the fifteenth century to find a dramatic and clear-cut confrontation of Hebraism and Hellenism on a grand historic scale, against the background of which her personal drama will gain in significance and stature. At the same time, she is obviously intent on investigating the origins of this antithesis which she feels to be an important factor in any understanding of nineteenth century society. And it must be emphasised how widespread was the contemporary awareness and acceptance of the antithesis of Hebraism and Hellenism as a means by which the cultures of the West could be evaluated. One could point to Pater's The Renaissance (1873), and in

particular to his essay on Winckelmann which first appeared in the Westminster Review in 1867, as a further example of this cultural assessment. Having shown how Winckelmann, rejecting "mystic and monastic reverie", "reproduces for us the earlier sentiment of the Renaissance", Pater asks a question which is fundamental to any valuation of Hebraism and Hellenism: "Which is better?—to lay open a new sense, to initiate a new organ for the human spirit, or to cultivate many types of perfection up to a point which leaves us still beyond the range of their transforming power? Savonarola is one type of success; Winckelmann is another; criticism can reject neither, because each is true to itself." Pater then begins to develop the antithesis in his own terms as a crucial instrument of his art criticism, explaining by its means the two worlds of Greek and Christian art: "the thoughts of the Greeks about themselves, and their relation to the world generally, were ever in the happiest readiness to be transformed into objects for the senses. In this lies the main distinction between Greek art and the mystical art of the Christian middle age, which is always struggling to express thoughts beyond itself." We see Pater achieving finer aesthetic discriminations by increasingly subtle juxtapositions of these ~~two~~ two elements within the same period and sometimes within the same work of art—the Hellenic remaining satisfied with the sensuous embodiment of reality, the Christian using sensuous reality merely as a symbol or allegory to direct the attention to something which art cannot fully express. Like George Eliot, Pater finds one of the most intriguing minglings of these two strands at the end of the fifteenth century in Italy, and in ~~particular~~ particular in the life of Pico della Mirandola: "This picturesque union of contrasts, belonging ^{properly} to the art of the close of the fifteenth century, pervades, in Pico della Mirandola, an actual person, and that is why the figure of Pico is so attractive." His essay on this Renaissance artist is an interesting gloss upon George Eliot's extensive use of symbols of painting, sculpture and architecture

in Romola.

The Spanish Gypsy also opens with a description of the conflicting forces at the end of the fifteenth century, when Europe was torn between the need to safeguard its religion and the desire to enjoy its aesthetic rediscoveries. On the one hand, the Christian West is on the defensive against Islam; the 'eager monks'

Who watch in dreams and dream the while they watch,
See Christ grow paler in the baleful light,
Crying again the cry of the forsaken.

On the other hand, the West experiences the exhilaration of the Renaissance:

But other futures stir the world's great heart.
The West now enters on the heritage
Won from the tombs of mighty ancestors,
The seeds, the gold, the gems, the silent harps
That lay deep buried with the memories
Of old renown.

As George Eliot juxtaposes these two extremes in her undistinguished verse, it is difficult to accept the fact that here is the origin of her most brilliant fictional realisation of this antithesis in Dorothea's visit to Rome:

The maimed form
Of calmly-joyous beauty, marble-limbed,
Yet breathing with the thought that shaped its lips,
Looks mild reproach from out its opened grave
At creeds of terror; and the vine-wreathed god
Fronts the pierced Image with the crown of thorns.

As we shall see in a moment, Romola opens with a similarly extreme formulation of the antithesis, in which George Eliot is acutely aware of the inherent weakness of each attitude--Hebraism leading to other worldliness, Hellenism to materialism and the corruption of the sense. This is the donnée of the novel, and it is within this context that George Eliot now places the heroine's search for a social ethic, for some middle

position which will avoid either extreme. In order to make this contrast real and significant however, George Eliot as a novelist requires something more than the reiterations of an Arnold or the soothing rhythms of a Pater. She must make the contrast real in the psychology of the characters and in the tensions of the society she is describing.

(ii)

In the Proem to Romola, George Eliot sketches the "strange web of belief and unbelief" of an imaginary Florentine at the end of the fifteenth century. She emphasises two strands in his thought:

For the human soul is hospitable, and will entertain conflicting sentiments and contradictory opinions with much impartiality. It was his pride besides, that he was duly tinctured with the learning of his age...he, too, in his prime, had been eager for the most correct manuscripts, and had paid many florins for antique vases and for disinterred busts of the ancient immortals....But he had not, for all that, neglected to hang up a waxen image or double of himself under the protection of the Madonna Annunciata, or to do penance for his sins in large gifts to the shrines of saints whose lives had not been modelled on the study of the classics....

The first is the Renaissance love of art and learning, the second is the acknowledgement of the supernatural and the importance of conduct. This is a more detailed and historical account of the conflict Maggie Tulliver experienced between her interest in Philip Wakem's artistic activities and her obedience to the teachings of Thomas à Kempis. In The Mill on the Floss, this conflict was an expression of the more fundamental conflict between Maggie's contradictory duties; by the time of Romola, George Eliot clearly feels the need to develop the distinction more explicitly. In Florence, during the few years of Savonarola's influence, Hebraism and

Hellenism appear as world forces in fierce contest. The Renaissance corruption of Italy, which has spread to the Church itself, is violently opposed by the "Hebrew prophet", Savonarola. It is a world-shaking conflict and yet it is acted out within the "narrow scene of corporate action" of the walled city of Florence, which (George Eliot must have thought) could be dramatically and intimately presented within the compass of a novel. Romola opens on the death of Lorenzo de Medici as the antithesis is being sharpened "in the unrest of a new growth," when "the human conscience...was filling the air with strange prophecies and presentiments."

The first of the three books of the novel develops this contrast in terms of character. Romola has led a sheltered life with her Stoic father, and like Maggie of whom one had "a sense of opposing elements, of which a fierce collision is imminent," she manifests an uneasy equilibrium: "the doubtful attractiveness of Romola's face, in which pride and passion seemed to be quivering in the balance with native refinement and intelligence..."(v). She is placed, with this conflict in her nature unresolved, between the two contrasting attitudes to life which we have described and which are represented here by Tito and Dino, her brother. Tito, "of Greek stock planted in Italian soil"(iii), embodies the Hellenistic attitude. Telling Bardo of his extensive travels in Greece, he says, "I have rested in the groves of Helicon, and tasted of the fountain Hippocrene"(vi), and Nello, the barber, assumes that he, like Poliziano, "talks of the gods awaking from their long sleep and making the woods and streams vital once more"(iii). On his first sightseeing tour of Florence, George Eliot uses Giotto's campanile and Ghiberti's Baptistery doors to define his position. The campanile is the symbol of the otherworldly; as it "led the eyes upward, high into the clear air of this April morning, it seemed a prophetic symbol, telling that human life must somehow and some time shape itself into

accord with that pure aspiring beauty"(iii). Tito's Hellenism makes him denigrate this aspect of Florence: "your buildings smack too much of Christian barbarism for my taste. I have a shuddering sense of what there is inside—hideous smoked Madonnas; fleshless saints in mosaic...." In contrast, he approves of the naturalistic figures of Ghiberti: "these heads in high relief speak of a human mind within them, instead of looking like an index to perpetual ~~spasms~~ spasms and colic"(iii).⁶ Tito's Hellenism is further depicted through his scholarship, his singing and lute playing, and his physical beauty. Through his physical beauty George Eliot seems to be trying to express the amorality of Tito's character. It is an empty, insignificant beauty which has no relationship to character; as Piero di Cosimo realises when he says on requesting Tito to act as his model for a picture of Sinén, "I say not this young man is a traitor: I mean, he has a face that would make him the more perfect traitor if he had the heart of one, which is saying neither more nor less than that he has a beautiful face, informed with rich young blood, that will be nourished enough by food, and keep its colour without much help from virtue"(iv). This appearance expresses the static Hellenistic attitude to life of one who attempts to avoid all difficulty and suffering, and who consequently cannot in George Eliot's world develop morally. George Eliot sees in the moral dimension of Hellenism a deadness and blankness: "Was it that Tito's face attracted or repelled according to the mental attitude of the observer? Was it a cypher with more than one key? The strong, unmistakable expression in his whole air and person was a negative one, and it was perfectly veracious; it declared the absence of any uneasy claim, any restless vanity, ~~ambition~~"(x). Pater too, speaking of Greek sculpture in his essay on Winckelmann, emphasises the refusal of the Hellenic to grapple with everyday realities and their disenchantments: "The eyes are wide and directionless, not fixing anything

with their gaze, not ~~revealing~~ riveting the brain to any special external object, the brows without hair....Fresh, unperplexed, it is the image of a man as he springs from the sleep of nature, his white light taking no colour from any one-sided experience. He is characterless, so far as character involves subjection to the accidental influences of life." ⁷George Eliot instinctively identifies such an approach to life with latent moral weakness. Philip Wakem who had similar tastes tried to belittle Maggie's family duties; Tito has deserted his imprisoned foster-father, and throughout the novel is shown to have a complete "absence of traditional attachments"(lvii). Tito is a more extreme example of this attitude than Philip for he acknowledges no moral law--not even the Greek "awe of the Divine Nemesis"(xi)--but their attitudes to family and social duties ~~is~~ are fundamentally the same. This for George Eliot is the moral dimension of Hellenism.

At the opposite extreme is Romola's ascetic brother, Dino. He is linked with Tito because he too has forsaken his father--but his motive is to fulfil his religious mission, "the higher life"(xl) of a Franciscan monk. He embodies the Hebraic emphasis upon the spiritual side of life, and he is condemned by his father for turning "away his eyes from the clear lights of reason and philosophy," and for prostrating "himself under the influences of a dim mysticism which eludes all rules of human duty as it eludes all argument"(xii). This extreme is shown to be as essentially unsympathetic to other human beings as was Tito's state of mind. Dino, like the members of Lantern Yard, attempts to see everything sub specie aeternitatis: "I must live with my fellow-beings only as human souls related to the eternal unseen life"(xv). He comes to Florence both to bring a message to Tito from Baldassare and to warn Romola by means of a vision he has experienced against marrying "the Great Tempter". Dino's vision is a nightmare version of the Hellenic from the point of view of the Hebraic:

"And at last you came to a stony place where there was no water, and no trees or herbage; but instead of water, I saw written parchment unrolling itself everywhere, and instead of trees and herbage I saw men of bronze and marble springing up and crowding round you....And the bronze and marble figures seemed to mock thee and hold out cups of water, and when thou didst grasp them and put them to my father's lips, they turned to parchments. And the bronze and marble figures seemed to turn into demons and snatch my father's body from thee, and the parchments shrivelled up, and blood ran everywhere...." (xv)

Ironically, Dino's visionary approach to life prevents him from seeing the obvious connection between his two messages. Romola is "too keenly ~~aware~~ alive to the constant relations of things" to be influenced by Dino's "grovelling superstition"(xv), and so he dies without having made his warning effective. George Eliot's comment shows the limitations of this extreme:

The prevision that Fra Luca's words had imparted to Romola had been such as comes from the shadowy region where human souls seek wisdom apart from the human sympathies which are the very life and substance of our ~~vision~~ wisdom; the revelation that might have come from the simple questions of filial and brotherly affection had been carried into irrevocable silence. (xv)

Romola is poised between these opposing attitudes to life and she has to decide between believing Dino's warning against marriage or accepting Tito's love and beauty. What is most significant, in this development of the contrast we first saw in The Mill on the Floss, is the extreme nature of the opposition. Dino and Tito condemn each other violently. They do not represent recognisable states of mind, or mental characteristics; they are rather opposed ideologies with no common ground--except that they are both violating human ties and affections. Tito and Dino inhabit different worlds, and although George Eliot attempts to bridge the gap between by means of Romola's divided nature, the opposition has been made too diametrically for such a double sympathy to be convincing.⁸ The

contrasting symbols used to describe this double sympathy of Romola are careful extensions of the two ideologies. She receives from Tito a painted casket representing "the triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne," and from Dino a crucifix. These two ~~symbols~~ ^{objects} are the basis of an extremely complex network of symbols which spreads through the novel.⁹ These symbols never become more than a shorthand for the explicitly made contrasts and comparisons between different roles and philosophies. ~~xxxxxxvaxk~~. They never become naturalised in the consciousnesses of the characters nor the life of the community, but are used as counters to confirm or anticipate developments in the action.

Romola, at the end of the first book, has to choose between Tito and Dino, and their contrasting attitudes to life both of which she has to some extent come to understand:

Strange, bewildering transition from those pale images of sorrow and death to this bright youthfulness, as of a sun-god who knew nothing of night! What thought could reconcile that worn anguish in her brother's face--that straining after something invisible--with this satisfied strength and beauty, and make it intelligible that they belonged to the same world? Or was there never any reconciling of them, but only a blind worship of clashing deities, first in ~~xxx~~ mad joy and then in wailing? (xvii)¹⁰

At this point in the novel, Romola chooses Tito's love, the deity of joy, and on the day of their betrothal the crucifix is hidden inside the casket. But the masked procession of Time with its "sheeted dead", which they meet when returning from the betrothal reminds Romola again of her brother's warning, and that the crucifix "is only hidden" (xx). Later she is to accept the world of suffering and disenchantment in which the self is unimportant. Thus the contrast of Hebraism and Hellenism has here been absorbed into the basic rhythm, by which character develops, ^{in order to} ~~expressing~~ the phases of illusion and disenchantment. Neither phase, of course,

is a final solution. Some sort of synthesis, something resembling Arnold's 'imaginative reason', must be achieved, and Romola, in the significant role of 'Madonna Antigone'^{II}, begins to do this in the plague-stricken village at the end of the novel.

Tito is not only used as a contrast to the minor character Dino. He is, with Romola and Savonarola, one of the main characters of the novel, and George Eliot juxtaposes his gradual degeneration alongside Romola's gradual development of character for the purpose of moral definition. Tito degenerates with occasional hesitations from cheerful irresponsibility into conscious crime on account of his refusal to face the consequences of his actions. This carefully analysed degeneration is plotted with meticulous care against the progress^{of Romola's} struggles in such a way that we are led to see each character in terms of the other's potentialities. There is a crisis of decision for both characters in each book of the novel, and it is then they are brought together for moral discriminations to be made. In the first book, Tito is faced by a moral dilemma, which, like Romola's, is caused by Dino's arrival in Florence. His problem is whether to help Baldassara or to ignore the request for help which Dino has brought. Like Romola, he receives a warning; in the chapter 'A Florentine Joke', the charlatan doctor's routing from the market-place which breaks into the suspense of Tito's dilemma is prophetic of his final fate. Nello's mock advice to the doctor is a warning to the preoccupied Tito:

"Let me tell you—for you are a stranger—this is a city where every man had need carry a large nail ready to fasten off the wheel of Fortune when his side happens to be uppermost. Already there are stories—mere fables doubtless—beginning to be buzzed about concerning you, that make me wish I could hear of your being well on your way to Arezzo." (xvi)

But Tito, like Romola, ignores the warning, hoping he will escape detection, and continue to live happily in Florence with Romola as his wife: "What, looked at closely, was the end of all life, but to extract

the utmost sum of pleasure?"(xi). Romola similarly chose Tito's love and the deity of joy as the way out of her dilemma. But the intertwining of themes, as well as helping us to see the common element in the development of the two characters, leads to discriminations. The essential difference is in their moral response to their dilemmas. Tito explains away his obligations without showing any "recognition of a moral law restraining desire"(xi), and this is epitomised in his mock marriage ceremony with Tessa which is described by the charlatan trader as "the cheapest matrimony ever offered, and dissolved by special bull beforehand at every man's own will and pleasure"(xiv). Whereas Romola, although her actions are close to Tito's, feels the need for such a moral law when faced by the clashing deities of joy and sorrow:

Romola for the first time felt this questioning need like a sudden uneasy dizziness and want of something to grasp; it was an experience hardly longer than a sigh, for the eager theorising of ages is compressed, as in a seed, in the momentary want of a single mind. (xvii)

By this means George Eliot isolated the essential discrepancy between the characters. It is this discrepancy which explains the contrast between the 'moral traditions' which are here being initiated: the one leads to wrongdoing and death, the other to regeneration. But they have ~~enough~~ enough in common to make us realise that George Eliot is examining Romola's actions more critically than may at first appear.

(iii)

George Eliot opens book two after a gap of two years by placing this individual drama in the context of the wider historical struggle where the same forces are arrayed. Romola's dilemma is now to be seen in the

perspective of the whole social organism:

Since that Easter a great change had come over the prospects of Florence; and as in a tree that bears a myriad of blossoms, each single bud with its fruit is dependent on the primary circulation of the sap, so the fortunes of Tito and Romola were dependent on certain grand political and social conditions which made an epoch in the history of Italy. (xxi)

The essential conflict in the social macrocosm is a repetition of that between Tito and Dino. On the one hand, Florence is in the grip of a decadent Hellenism:

Altogether this world, with its partitioned empire and its roomy universal Church, seemed to be a handsome establishment for the few who were lucky or wise enough to reap the advantages of human folly: a world in which lust and obscenity, lying and treachery, oppression and murder, were pleasant, useful, and when properly managed, not dangerous. And as a sort of fringe or adornment to the substantial delights of tyranny, avarice, and lasciviousness, there was the patronage of polite learning and the fine arts....

Even the Church has been infected by this moral decadence:

The Church, it was said, had never been so disgraced in its head, had never shown so few signs of renovating, vital belief in its lower members; nevertheless it was much more prosperous than in some days. The heavens were fair and smiling above; and below there were no signs of earthquake. (xxi)

This is a more highly coloured version of the decadent society of St Ogg's where similarly "the present time was like the level plain where men lose their belief in volcanoes and earthquakes." But here in Florence there is not only a Dr Kenn to diagnose the sickness, there is a Savonarola to oppose it actively. He is giving utterance to "certain moral emotions" of the time, which are in opposition to Florentine decadence, and George Eliot emphasises the Hebraic aspects of his inspiration. He believed "that he had a mission like that of the Hebrew prophets, and that the Florentines

amongst whom his message was delivered were in some sense a second chosen people"(xxi). Like "the prophets of old", he sees the French army which is about to arrive in Florence as "that new deluge which was to purify the earth from iniquity"(xxi). Like Dino, he condemns with fanaticism the pagan, worldly values of Florence, rejecting them in favour of his ascetic, spiritual ideals.

George Eliot has generalised Romola's personal dilemma into an account of the opposing forces in Florence. By means of analogy, she develops effectively the interdependence of the microcosm and macrocosm in the social organism. For example, the relationship between Tito and the decadent side of Florentine life is revealing. He epitomises in his philosophy of life and his personal relations the corrupt social and political life of the city. He arrives in the midst of the confusion caused by Lorenzo de Medici's death, which has inaugurated Florentine degeneration. By means of his scholarship, he gets a footing in this corrupt society and immediately begins to exploit it to his own advantage. The 'moral tradition' of a society is here juxtaposed with that of an individual: "Our lives make a moral tradition for our individual selves, as the life of mankind at large makes a moral tradition for the race"(xxxix). Florence is a 'nest of wolves' which has 'forsaken the covenant'(xxiv), whilst Tito has treacherously rejected his father. Both are ignoring their duties and ties. It is Savonarola's task to warn Florence of the scourge to come and in doing so he is also warning Tito whose attitude is the essence of Florentine corruption. George Eliot asserts this relation of individual and society by visiting a simultaneous punishment upon them. Savonarola sees the French army as the scourge of Florence, and with it comes Baldassare intent upon revenging himself on Tito. And Baldassare hearing by chance Savonarola preaching in the Duomo, applies his general warning -- "The day of vengeance is at hand" -- to his ^{own} personal mission:

In that great sob of the multitude Baldassare's had mingled. Among all the human beings present, there was perhaps not one whose frame vibrated more strongly than his to the tones and words of the preacher: But it had vibrated like a harp of which all the strings had been wrenched away except one. That threat of a fiery inexorable vengeance--of a future into which the hated sinner might be pursued and held by the avenger in an eternal grapple.... (xxiv)

Both Florence and Tito manage to resist the scourge for a time, but it finally strikes at the end of the novel in 'A Masque of the Furies, Called Riot'(lxvi), when they are punished simultaneously--Florence scourges itself, and Baldassare kills Tito.

George Eliot, unfortunately, does not restrict herself to analogy to convey the relationship between 'the blossoms' and the 'primary circulation of the sap' of the tree of Florentine society. Through the personal contact of both Romola and Tito with Savonarola, there is a direct interaction of private life and world politics, and this confuses the implied organic relationship of part to whole, limiting the suggestiveness of analogy. The relationship of these characters with Savonarola is too unique for it to represent any fundamental feature in the structure of society. The events in which they are directly involved are too world-shattering in themselves to be representative and symbolic.

It is in this second book of the novel that Romola becomes involved with Savonarola, and the personal and historical become intertwined. By the beginning of the book her disillusionment with Tito is already well advanced, and life with him finally becomes impossible when she discovers he has sold ^{the library of her father} ~~the library of her father~~ against his dying wish. She decides to leave both Tito and Florence, and in the two chapters 'Ariadne Discrowns Herself' and 'The Tabernacle Unlocked', George Eliot manipulates her symbols to make quite clear the significance of this flight. Of the 'clashing duties' of her dilemma, the one of joy has proved false, and

so now she prepares to embrace the deity of sorrow. Romola's awareness of the change is expressed through the contrast between her wedding-dress and the rough Franciscan garb she is using as a disguise, and between the 'lying screen' of the Ariadne casket and the crucifix concealed within it. But her rejection of Tito and his world is not easy; as she is removing her betrothal ring, Romola experiences her second moral dilemma.

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. (xxxvi)

This is a more complex dilemma than the first. It is a conflict between "the law of her affections" ~~and~~ which tells her that she has no further obligations to Tito, and the duty of "human bonds" which is not dependent upon affection. It is a repetition of the clash at the climax of Silas Marner. The law of Romola's affections wins: "Her mind had never yet bowed to any obligation apart from personal love and reverence; she had no keen sense of any other human relations, and all she had to obey now was the instinct to sever herself from the man she loved no longer" (xxvii). Her farewell letter to Tito—"Tito, my love for you is dead; and therefore, so far as I was yours, I too am dead" (xxxvii)—repeats her father's error of believing human ties can be broken at will, when he said, "My son is dead" (xii). She sets out from Florence, taking with her Dino's crucifix and rejecting the tabernacle, rejecting now "the gods of beauty and joy, whose worship she had forsaken for ever," and embracing the previously rejected "images of sorrow."

George Eliot is here re-examining the conclusions she reached in Silas Marner. The values of social, religious and personal ties were in that novel shown to be commensurate with the amount of natural affection

they embodied. Now, in this novel, Romola has gone one stage further and generalised this essential common denominator into the "law of her affections", and in accordance with this law she rejects her marriage bond. But this ^{is} inadequate as a ~~xxxx~~ social ethic. The life-blood of the social organism may be human affection, but George ^{Eliot} is aware that it must have a system of social forms and customs through which to circulate, and this system cannot be abandoned at will. Society, like the individual, has "an inexorable external identity" which is "not to be shaken by our wavering consciousness"(xxxvi).

Two chapters (xxxviii and xxxix) are now inserted parenthetically into Romola's flight in order to present Tito's relationship with Baldassare. The reappearance of the parallel theme of Tito's degeneration at this point in the novel reinforces the criticism of Romola's actions. Baldassare seeks to get his revenge at the supper in the Rucellai Gardens, where we see Tito applying to politics the lessons he has learnt from his personal relationships: "His position as an alien, his indifference to the ideas or prejudices of the men amongst whom he moved, were suddenly transformed into advantages"(xxxix). Baldassare appears and denounces Tito who immediately and instinctively proceeds to outwit him, controlled at this crisis by the moral tradition he has created for himself: "He had never yet done an act of murderous cruelty....but at that moment he would have been capable of treading the breath from a smiling child for the sake of his own safety". The parenthesis ends with Tito successful, feeling "well satisfied with the world" both from the point of view of his personal and public chicanery.

The insertion of this incident at the moment of Romola's flight makes us compare the actions of the two characters. Both have abandoned their ties when they have become irksome, and basically, although Tito's crime is the more heinous, their actions spring from the same motive. Later in the novel, Romola comes to understand this comparison:

...the light abandonment of ties, whether inherited or voluntary, because they had ceased to be pleasant, was the uprooting of social and personal virtue. What else had Tito's crime towards Baldassare been but that abandonment working itself put to the most hideous extreme of falsity and ingratitude?
(lvi)

This comment is implicit in the structure which makes us assess Romola's conduct critically. The parenthesis has provided us with the logical outcome of her present course of action.

The crucial discrepancy between her conduct and Tito's which prevents such an outcome is brought ^{home out} decisively when the narrative of Romola's flight continues. She ~~appears~~ acknowledges Savonarola's reprimand and the moral law to which he appeals, and returns to Florence. Savonarola brings home to her the realisation that the "gods of beauty and joy", and their particular manifestation in the treachery of Tito and the decadence of Florence, cannot be combated by flight and rejection. Romola, like Maggie, has misunderstood the true meaning of renunciation. Although she says she is "going away to hardship", Savonarola insists that she is seeking her "own will". By means of the crucifix she is carrying, he explains the true meaning of renunciation. The crucifix represents the true deity of sorrow: "Confess your life to that image, my daughter; make your sorrow an offering: and when the fire of Divine charity burns within you, and you behold the need of your fellow-men by the light of that flame, you will not call your offering great" (xl). The personal disenchantment of her marriage with Tito must be used to extend her sympathy with the whole of society and mankind; and by this means, Savonarola attempts to involve her in the wider struggle in which he is engaged--"Make your marriage-sorrow an offering...to the great work by which sin and sorrow are being made to cease." As in Adam Bede and The Mill on the Floss, George Eliot uses the Crucifixion as the symbol of the perfect fusion of love and suffering, and of the extension of love through suffering. Romola returns to Tito and replaces the crucifix within the casket.

(iv)

At the beginning of book three we find Romola two years later enjoying "an enthusiasm of sympathy with the general life"(xlii) as she assists a Florence threatened by famine and the French. The Hebraic influence of Savonarola on her, as of Thomas à Kempis on Maggie, has given Romola a "new consciousness of the great drama of human existence in which her life was a part"(xliv). But although Savonarola satisfies her "moral needs which all the previous culture and experience of life had left hungering"(xliv), her dependence upon him is shown to be insecure. She has difficulty in keeping "alive that flame of unselfish emotion, by which a life of sadness might still be a life of active love," because she has not herself experienced such an emotion directly. Her mistrust of Savonarola's visions is momentarily quelled by his excommunication, but all her doubts and confusions return when she discovers Tito's mistress. This is George Eliot's next moral permutation: does the "degrading servitude" of her marriage bond still remain binding even when it is preventing the fulfilment of her wider obligations to Florence? She approaches the dilemma now fully aware, thanks to Savonarola, of the "sanctity attached to all close relations"(lvi): "She was thrown back again on the conflict between the demands of an outward law, which she recognised as a widely-ramifying obligation, and the demands of inner moral facts which were becoming more and more peremptory." Through Romola's two previous dilemmas George Eliot has been approaching a closer balancing of her conflicting loyalties. Now, as she achieves an equilibrium, we are ~~xxx~~ reminded vividly of the words of the Antigone review, especially when Romola finds support for the rejection of her marriage bonds in these words:

The law was sacred. Yes, but rebellion might be sacred too. It flashed upon her mind that the problem before her was essentially the same as that which had lain before Savonarola--

the problem where the sacredness of ~~rebellion~~ ^{obedience} ended, and where the sacredness of rebellion began. To her, as to him, there had come one of those moments in life when the soul must dare to act on its own warrant.... (lvi)

This is George Eliot's most explicit expression in her novels of the dialectic symbolised in the struggle between Antigone and Creon, "that struggle between elemental tendencies and established laws." The dialectic is at work simultaneously on the plane of world politics and the plane of private relationships. In the previous chapter, Savonarola used the same terms to describe his relationship with the Pope:

The question where the duty of obedience ends, and the duty of resistance begins, could in no case be an easy one; but it was made overwhelmingly difficult by the belief that the Church was ...a living organism, instinct with Divine power to bless and to curse. (lv)

In this public manifestation of the dialectic by which society develops, George Eliot is seeking to recreate some of the grandeur of her archetypal situation.

Romola and Savonarola are shown in parallel situations and they both decide to rebel against the "established laws"--Romola against her marriage bonds, Savonarola against his obedience to the Pope. (Tito, incidentally, opposes both the domestic and the political rebellion.) But these two situations are not only presented in parallel, they also interact, and this is where the moral problems proliferate and become ~~prx~~ paradoxical. The paradox is that Savonarola, on the public plane of action the excommunicated rebel, represents for Romola the established laws of marriage and social duty; it was he who insisted on the inescapability of her bonds. He finally becomes discredited when he rejects her plea for her godfather's life on the grounds of the "common good"(lix). By denouncing him, she is ironically emulating his own action in the political sphere:

"Father, you yourself declare that there comes a moment when the soul must have no guide but the voice within it, to tell whether

the consecrated thing has sacred virtue. And therefore I must speak." (lix)

Both Romola and Savonarola are forced into an unjust position because of their rebellion which is seeking to remedy injustice. Savonarola cannot afford to be lenient to Bernardo because of his desperate position in his fight against the Pope; Romola, in rebellion against her marriage ties with an unfaithful husband, has now no sympathy with Savonarola's "grand view of human duties"(liii), and values only the bonds of immediate personal affection: "It was inevitable that she should judge the Frate unfairly on a question of individual suffering, at which she looked with the eyes of personal tenderness, and he with the eyes of theoretic conviction"(lxi). This is a moral stalemate. So long as George Eliot emphasised the parallel courses of the sacred rebel theme in world politics and personal relations, we ~~XXXX~~ were encouraged to see each theme in terms of the other, in terms of a different level of the social organism. But when the two characters come into direct conflict it is no longer possible to do this. Romola sees Bernardo as her godfather, Savonarola sees him as a hostile Florentine politician, and each acts accordingly. There is no reconciling of Bernardo's two roles or the moral codes by which he is judged. George Eliot's mingling of these two spheres of life shows the limited validity of the concept of the social organism. The individual is not simply an organic part of a collective consciousness. Society as a whole has no collective consciousness like other organisms. Each person is an individual centre of consciousness with a relationship both to society as a whole and to his fellow human beings.¹² And these two roles may come into conflict--as in the case of Bernardo--and have to be judged by quite different standards. Romola's loyalty to her godfather and Savonarola's duty to Florence and the world represent opposed but universally accepted moral principles. Neither is wrong, nor is there any possibility of formulating a third principle which will embrace and resolve the contradiction.

George Eliot closes the incident with the suggestion that both attitudes of mind may need modifying. The lameness of her conclusion indicates the moral cul-de-sac she has reached:

And if such energetic belief, pursuing a grand and remote end, is given often in danger of becoming a demon-worship, in which the votary lets his own son and daughter pass through the fire with a readiness that hardly looks like sacrifice; tender fellow-feeling for the nearest has its dangers too, and is apt to be timid and sceptical towards the larger aims without which life cannot rise into religion. (lxi)

At its simplest, the idea of the social organism means that conduct is governed by one's understanding of one's place in the whole. In Romola, the nature of this oversimplification is revealed. One can have a relationship with society as a whole--this is Savonarola's "grand and remote end"--and one can also have a personal relationship with other individuals--this is Romola's "feeling for the nearest". Both are legitimate expressions of the relationship between the individual and society, and yet they can be in direct conflict.

A moral impasse was reached at the climax of The Mill on the Floss, but in that case it was the conflict between personal love and personal duty--not a conflict between the moral codes of two different spheres of society. This earlier impasse arose out of Maggie's character and to understand it we were referred back to the details of her nature and upbringing, to the irreducible particulars of the childhood world. Far from questioning the concept of the social organism, George Eliot appealed to this concept for a solution. But in Romola, the moral dilemma does not arise out of the characters, nor does it lead us back to an examination of the particular situations from which it arose. Instead it leads us out of Florence to the plague-stricken village, to what George Eliot calls the "romantic and symbolical elements" (Letters, IV, 104). The development of Romola's three moral dilemmas is a development towards abstraction. George Eliot seems to be striving towards

a more and more exact balancing of opposing moral principles. As she does so she becomes impatient of the particulars of character and situation which obscure the generality of her statements. The details of the novel out of which the problems should arise, and by means of which they should be dramatised, are merely used to conduct us from one moral permutation to a more baffling one.

Although this impasse in Romola is an arid one, it is clear from the pains she has taken to achieve a delicate equilibrium, that it is a very important one for George Eliot. And in Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda she takes exactly the same problem, internalises the conflict between private and public duty in the minds of her titular reforming heroes, develops a new structure to cope with this presentation, and seeks to fuse these two concepts of duty. But in doing this she is acknowledging the inadequacy of her previous conception of the social organism.

Any such fusion is impossible here. The narrative continues with Romola again preparing to flee from Florence for she has now lost all faith in Savonarola. She drifts out to sea, hoping "she might be gliding into death"(lxi), and believing she has broken all her ties: "She was alone now: she had freed herself from that burden of choice which presses with heavier and heavier weight when claims have loosed their guiding hold"(lxi). Like Maggie, Romola allows herself momentarily to escape from the dialectic which has become too difficult and painful, and drifts freed even from the "burden of choice". George Eliot leaves Romola drifting at sea for six chapters whilst she elaborates on Tito's machinations against Savonarola, and finally describes the way in which he becomes caught up in his own trickery and has to flee, like Romola, by committing himself to the waters of the Arno. The parenthetical insertion again suggests the essential momentary similarity of the two actions: both Romola and Tito refuse to acknowledge any tie as binding.

The parallelism again leads on ^{to} the essential discrepancy between the

two characters. As she is drifting away in the boat, Romola sleeps: "Presently she felt that she was in the grave, but not resting there: she was touching the hands of the beloved dead beside her, and trying to wake them"(lxi). The moral tradition Tito has created for himself makes his imaginary death quite different. Having been carried by the river to apparent safety, he regains consciousness feeling Baldassare's fingers round his throat:

Tito knew him; but he did not know whether it was life or death that had brought him into the presence of his injured father. It might be death—and death might mean this chill gloom with the face of the hideous past hanging over him for ever. (lxvii)

Because of her love for her father and godfather, "the beloved dead," Romola, unlike Tito ("Life was still before him") is not afraid of death even though she is completely disillusioned. She has some "memories of self-conquest and perfect faithfulness." And it is this love and these memories which preserve her. Tito has no such memories so that his past appears in the person of his betrayed father who kills him. George Eliot has reduced both characters to desperate situations so that once again we can be made aware of the razor's edge between salvation and damnation. The parenthesis closes with Tito's death and the narrative switches back to Romola who we see awakening from her imaginary death; the boat "instead of bringing her to death...had been the gently lulling cradle of a new life"(lxviii). At this point we can see how Savonarola's prophecy of divine judgment on Florence can be applied more relevantly to Tito and Romola, to the representatives of the two opposite moral traditions at work in the city:

On a September morning, when men's ears were ringing with the news that the French army had entered Italy, he had preached in the Cathedral of Florence from the text, 'Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth.' He believed it was by supreme guidance that he had reached just so far in his exposition of Genesis the previous Lent; and he believed the

'flood of water'—emblem at once of avenging wrath and purifying mercy—to be the divinely-indicated symbol of the French army. (xxi)

The 'flood of water' is not the French army, but it becomes the 'emblem of avenging wrath' in Tito's floating down the Arno to the waiting Baldasare, and of 'purifying mercy' in Romola's drifting to a 'new life.' Savonarola's divine and general prophecy has been given psychological validity in the private relationships of Tito and Romola. The flood of Savonarola's prophecy is very similar to that in The Mill on the Floss which, as well as coming to resolve Maggie's conflict, also comes to punish a materialistic St Ogg's. George Eliot uses the flood as the most natural means of punishing and redirecting both the social organism and the individual whose growth has become corrupted. But the comparison with The Mill on the Floss reveals the weakness of the device in this novel. In the earlier novel, the symbol is effective because the river is a real and integral part of the life of the Tulliver family, and its final significance has been carefully and subtly prepared for. In comparison, the use of water to punish and reward in Romola appears accidental and arbitrary. And secondly, the earlier use of the flood is much more complex than the neat antithesis of reward and punishment engineered in Romola. By an anguished paradox, Maggie rediscovers her basic kinship with Tom as the flood comes, and yet in doing so tacitly acknowledges that she is unable to develop away from the ties of the family into society at large. By the side of this, the contrast between the climaxes of Tito's and Romola's moral traditions appears oversimplified and contrived.

The 'new life' to which Romola has drifted is, ironically, the plague-stricken village, and regeneration has to be won by her own efforts in the role of 'Madonna Antigone'. Just as Silas Marner's inviolable affection saves him at his moment of complete disenchantment, so here Romola's instinctive response to suffering—again it is "the cry of a little child in distress that no one came to help"—re-establishes on a more secure basis

the ties with her fellow human beings which she had rejected in bitterness. It has required this disintegration of all her particular ~~maxims~~ beliefs and ties for Romola to discover in her moment of instinctive self-knowledge this fundamental human relationship:

The experience was like a new baptism to Romola. In Florence the simpler relations of the human being to his fellow-men had been complicated for her with all the special ties of marriage, the State, and religious discipleship; and when these had disappointed her trust, the shock seemed to have shaken her aloof from life and stunned her sympathy. (lxix)

The child in distress instinctively arouses feelings of a simple human nature which are more fundamental than the relationships prescribed by the conflicting creeds of Florence. As George Eliot says in the Proem, "the little children are still the symbol of the eternal marriage between love and duty." This must be the explanation of Piero di Cosimo's symbolic picture:

The sketch Nello pointed to represented three masks--one a drunken laughing Satyr, another a sorrowing Magdalen, and the third, which lay between them, the rigid, cold face of a Stoic: the masks rested obliquely on the lap of a little child.... (iii)

This static, symbolic presentation of Florentine creeds early in the novel anticipates Romola's final discovery of ^{the} lowest common denominator ^{essential to} ~~of~~ any creed. The Satyr and the Magdalen represent the antithesis of Hellenism and Hebraism, whilst the Stoic is poised between representing a withdrawal from either form of life. The child symbolises the 'simpler relations' with their complete fusion of love and duty. This discovery does not solve all of Romola's problem; Florence still seems (as life did to Silas) "a web of inconsistencies"(lxx). But now she has a means ~~of~~ by which she can assess the validity of the "special ties" to which she owes allegiance in Florence.

And yet this final flight of Romola, which George Eliot acknowledges to be 'romantic' and 'symbolic', shelves the real moral problem. One cannot live in a society merely by observing these 'simpler relations';

the more complex 'special ties' have to be managed. This is an escape into the absolute value of face-to-face relationships after George Eliot had seemed to be grappling with the individual's complex role in society, as she attempted to in the less ambitious Silas Marner when Silas's claim on Eppie was disputed by the claims of her legal parents. The clearest indication of her failure in Romola is in George Eliot's refusal to locate her heroine's discovery of this fundamental human relationship in Florence, in the society she has been trying to recreate. This is the fundamental weakness of the novel. There never emerges from the novel any picture of corporate living which can substantiate or question the moral conclusions reached by the characters. As a result of this, the world-forces at work in Savonarola's historic fight cannot be given any intimate, domestic expression in the everyday Florentine life. The imaginary Florentine of the Proem was merely a hint at the everyday implications of this struggle. Because of this lack of any sense of community in the novel, Romola's problems cannot be approached as are the similar problems in The Mill on the Floss and Silas Marner; namely, by a 'casuistical' examination of them in relation to personal and social ties. Florence cannot stand such an examination; it is merely a ~~rich~~ colourful and slightly bogus backcloth against which George Eliot describes the variety of Florentine philosophies as carefully as the variety of Florentine dress. ¹³

(v)

After her 'new baptism', whilst she is still in the village she has helped to save, Romola attempts to understand and assess the dialectic, the sacred rebellion in which she has been involved. At first, she condemns her flight: "the grounds on which Savonarola had once taken her back were

truer, deeper than the grounds she had had for her second flight." But as she re-lives the conflict, there comes the "reaction against such self-reproach," and she realises that flight ~~is~~ had been the only way of escaping from the "false duties" of her marriage which had become impossible. In fact, there is no solution. The more one tries to understand and balance the opposing ~~is~~ yet equally valid claims between the "outward law" and the "inner moral facts", the more impossible a decision becomes:

All minds, except such as are delivered from doubt by dulness of sensibility, must be subject to this recurring conflict where the many-twisted conditions of life have forbidden the fulfilment of a bond. For in strictness there is no replacing of relations: the presence of the new does not nullify the failure and breach of the old. (lxix)

But even if it is impossible to resolve this contradiction between obedience and rebellion, Romola's experience in the stricken village has established for her the reality of suffering as something more fundamental than either: "If everything else is doubtful, this suffering that I can help is certain; if the glory of the cross is an illusion, the sorrow is only the truer" (lxix). Having made this revaluation, she returns to Florence now in a position to interpret the final events of Savonarola's life.

Here, at the end of the novel, the private and public themes again come together. Throughout the novel we have seen the opposite moral traditions of Tito and Romola developing side by side. By means of this parallel treatment, George Eliot has been forming her moral definitions. She expects us now to use these definitions to estimate Savonarola's conflict with the Pope.

George Eliot acknowledges that Savonarola's character is 'spotted' (xxv), and the only way in which we can understand him is to attempt to recreate his severe inner struggles: "The mysteries of human character have seldom been presented in a way more fitted to check the judgments of facile knowingness than in Girolamo Savonarola..." (xxv). We, however, have been

provided with an instrument to enable us to understand and judge, and the final question which the novel seeks to answer is: can the main events of his life and death be explained more satisfactorily in terms of Tito's or Romola's moral tradition?

In his striving for power he sometimes bears a close resemblance to Tito. When his participation in politics begins, the desires of his "power-loving soul" and his religious beliefs are fused: "his imperious need of ascendancy had burned indiscernibly in the strong flame of his zeal for God and man" (xxv). But in order to keep this power, Savonarola has to involve himself in Florentine political machinations, and as he does so his two motives become more clearly distinguishable:

...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 own insight. (xxv)

The response of the characters to Savonarola's bears witness to the mixed nature of his motives. Romola, although annoyed by the "tones of exasperation" in his sermons, is powerfully influenced; Baldassare gains inspiration for revenge from these same tones of exasperation; whilst Tito, recognising a certain kinship, explains Savonarola's actions in terms of self-interest: "And what motive could any man really have, except his own interest?... fanatics who believed in the coming Scourge and Renovation might see their own interest in a future palm-branch and white robe..." (lvii). There is some truth in Tito's diagnosis, for as the situation becomes more desperate Savonarola becomes more committed to his public persona in order to retain political control. But the comparison with Tito does not explain his inner struggle, the extent of his own realisation that he is compromising his ultimate aims. Tito underwent no such protracted struggle; having adopted self-interest as his creed, he quickly disposed of all claims and

responsibilities. It is this struggle which George Eliot insists we must try to understand: "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"(lix). We can only understand it by seeing it in terms of Romola's dilemma.

Both Savonarola's and Romola's conflicts are manifestations of the same dialectic in which we have the incompatibility of 'outward law' and 'inner moral facts'. It is because both of them realise the strength of the claims they are rejecting—Romola the 'sanctity of all close relations,' Savonarola the 'divine organism' of the Church—that they both prevaricate. Like Romola, Savonarola is not only a force of rebellion in the dialectic; he too enacts in his moral dilemma the clash of the valid claims:

The conflict was one that could not end, and in the effort at prayerful pleading the uneasy mind laved its smart continually in thoughts of the greatness of that task which there was no man else to fulfil if he~~x~~ forsook it. It was not a thing of every day that a man should be inspired with the vision and the daring that made a sacred rebel. (lxiv)

This essential similarity, once established, gives substance and significance to the final enigmatic events of Savonarola's life. In reporting sketchily these events, George Eliot sticks closely to the few historical facts; she tells us of his capture, "his want of constancy under torture, and his retraction of his prophetic claims"(lxxi), and of ~~his~~ the printed version of his confession. But these cryptic details become meaningful in the novel for we recognise the manifestations of an inner doubt and confusion; we recognise the recurring conflict of the sacred rebel similar to the one we have just witnessed in Romola herself. The faith which has come to Romola "out of the very depths of ...despair" convinces her that Savonarola's previous influence on her had been for the good. His final doubts and confession are understandable in a sacred rebel aware of the the dialectic of valid principles in which he has been involved.

At this point in the narrative, two sentences, deleted in the manuscript of the novel, make clear the relationship between the private and public theme. Romola tries to understand the significance of Savonarola's death by equating her own history with his:

And perhaps this confession, even when it described a doubleness that was conscious and deliberate, really implied no more than that wavering of belief concerning his own impressions and motives which most human beings who have not a stupid inflexibility of self-confidence must be liable to under a marked change of external condition. [Romola remembered how she herself had been subject to continual fluctuations in surveying her own impulses and conduct in the years she had lived through with Tito. Often, if some one had condemned her, that condemnation would have turned the scale, and she would have said, "I was driven more by pride and anger than by anything better."]¹⁴ In a life where the experience was so tumultuously mixed as it must have been in the Frate's....(lxx)

With the deletion of these two sentences, George Eliot leaves implicit in the structure the final connection between the two characters. But this connection is acknowledged when it is to Romola, who has emerged from the dialectic, that George Eliot allots the task of clarifying and assessing the conduct of Savonarola who is still involved in it. It is on the basis of this reassessment that George Eliot is able finally to explain Savonarola's resignation, his vacillations, his faith out of despair, and to proclaim him a martyr—"yet", as the Antigone review says, "he can never earn the name of blameless martyr any more than the society—the Creon he has defied—can be branded as hypocritical tyrant." George Eliot's faith in the organic nature of society has led her to make an historical reassessment of Savonarola's career and death; the enigmas and dilemmas of Savonarola's macrocosmic struggle must be explained in terms of the private drama of Romola. George Eliot ends the novel on this note of confidence, ignoring the doubts which arose and were given expression in the moral stalemate of the opposition of Romola and Savonarola over Bernardo. But it is the problem of this stalemate and its resolution which provides the central theme of ~~the~~ two of the last three novels.

FOOTNOTES

1

Miriam Allott in a recent article ("George Eliot in the 1860's," Victorian Studies, 5 (1961), 93-108) dates this particular visit to Venice in June 1860. This seems to ignore strong evidence to the contrary. George Eliot visited Venice three times, in June 1860, May 1864, and June 1880. At the beginning of her "Notes on The Spanish Gypsy and Tragedy in general," which Cross includes in his Life, George Eliot says: "But in this my second visit to the Scuola di San Rocco, this small picture of Titian's, pointed out to me for the first time, brought a new train of thought." (Cross, III, 42). There seems little reason to doubt that the 'second visit to the Scuola di San Rocco' took place on her second visit to Venice in May 1864. On her first visit to Venice in 1860, George Eliot did visit the Scuola di San Rocco, and she comments in her journal on the paintings there but makes no reference to Titian's Annunciation, only to an Annunciation of Tintoretti's which she describes in detail (Cross, II, 242-3). Finally, it is on her return to London after the 1864 visit that she begins immediately reading Spanish history in preparation for writing The Spanish Gypsy.

2

Lionel Trilling, Matthew Arnold, (London, 1939), p. 256.

3

"German Wit: Heinrich Heine," Westminster Review, 65 (1856), 19.

4

Trilling, p. 256.

5

In a letter to Oscar Browning in June 1867, George Eliot ^{probably} defends Arnold's translation of Theocritus in this particular essay: "Apropos of the passage which poor Mr. Arnold is accused of mistranslating I have not his article at hand to refer to, but these parenthetical words are of disputable and disputed ~~origin~~ meaning. You see, I have a fellow feeling for writers, who may be taxed unfairly, etc" (Letters, IV, 368).

6

George Eliot was fully aware of this aesthetic manifestation of the Hebraism-Hellenism contrast, much earlier than Romola. In her review of Adolf Stahr's Torso, "The Art of the Ancients," which appeared in The Leader for 17 March 1855, she speaks of the 'Oeginetan sculptures' in these terms: "The remarkable point in these sculptures is the high degree of truthfulness and beauty in the limbs, and the uniformity and utter unmeaningness of the faces. This inequality Stahr regards as the remains of the earlier hieratic influence, the tendency of which was to keep up traditional and conventional forms; but perhaps he is

nearer the true reason when he says, that on comparing the Oeginetan sculptures with the works of the early Italian masters, Giotto and Pietro Perugino, we observe a striking difference between them in this respect: the early Italian masters were animated by the spiritualistic ~~idea~~ idea that the body was but an unruly dwelling for the immortal soul, and hence they threw all their power into the face, where the soul might be said to look out from its tabernacle; whereas in the conception of the Greeks, a fine body was the primary condition of a fine mind—first the body, and then the soul by and through the body, was the order of their ideas. Hence, in Greek art, the expression of the face would naturally be the last in the order of development" (p. 258, GE's italics).

George Eliot refers twice to Winckelmann in the course of this review, on one occasion rather deprecatingly on account of his refusal to acknowledge the important connection between Hellenic and oriental art (p. 257)

7

Compare Hardy's description of Clym Yeobright's appearance in The Return of the Native (1878):

In Clym Yeobright's face could be dimly seen the typical countenance of the future. Should there be a classic period of art hereafter, its Pheidias may produce such faces.... People already feel that a man who lives without disturbing a curve of feature, or setting a mark of mental concern anywhere upon himself, is too far removed from modern perceptiveness to be a modern type. Physically beautiful men--the glory of the race when it was young--are almost an anachronism now; and we may wonder whether, at some time or other, physically beautiful women may not be an anachronism likewise.

The truth seems to be that a long line of disillusionive centuries has permanently displaced the Hellenic idea of life, or whatever it may be called; what their Aeschylus imagined our nursery children feel (Bk III, ch 1)

8

Romola's vacillations between these extremes of worldliness and other-worldliness, of Hellenism and Hebraism, of rebellion against and obedience to Savonarola, are caricatured in the character of Monna Brigida, whom Bardo points out to Romola as "a scarecrow and a warning" (v). On her first appearance, the latent conflict between worldliness and other-worldliness is apparent in her dress:

Three rows of pearls and a lower necklace of gold reposed on the horizontal cushion of her neck; the embroidered border of her trailing black velvet gown and her embroidered long-drooping sleeves of rose-coloured damask, were slightly faded, but they conveyed to the initiated eye the satisfactory assurance that they were the splendid result of

six months labour by a skilled workman; and the rose-coloured petticoat, with its dimmed white fringe and seed-pearl arabesques, was duly exhibited in order to suggest a similar pleasing reflection. A handsome coral rosary hung from one side of an inferential belt, which emerged into certainty with a large clasp of silver wrought in niello; and, on the other side, where the belt again became inferential, hung a scarsella, or large purse, of crimson velvet, stitched with pearls. Her little fat right hand, which looked as if it had been made of paste, and had risen out of shape under partial baking, held a small book of devotions, also splendid with velvet, pearls, and silver. (xii)

In chapter li, 'Monna Brigida's Conversion,' her prevarications and conversion under pressure receive most extended treatment. At the end of the novel, when Romola returns to Florence after rejecting and then finally accepting Savonarola's teaching, she is greeted by a Monna Brigida who has undergone similar vicissitudes: "Romola paused no longer. That evening she was in Florence, sitting in agitated silence under the exclamations of joy and wailing, mingled with exuberant narrative, which were poured into her ears by Monna Brigida, who had backslided into false hair in Romola's absence, but now drew it off again and declared she would not mind being grey, if her dear child would stay with her" (lxx). This caricature demands that we examine critically Romola's fluctuations, and yet because she never becomes anything else but a caricature, ~~it~~ Brigida's presence in the novel underlines the impossibility of George Eliot's attempt to fuse the diametrically opposed halves of Romola's life.

9 Barbara Hardy works out in convincing detail the symbolism of the paintings in Romola (Hardy, pp. 170-6)

10 George Eliot's ideas seem particularly close at this point to Heine's The Gods in Exile (1856).

11 Romola is called 'Madonna Antigone' on two occasions (xxvii and xlix) by Piero di Cosimo. Naumann's comment on Dorothea to Ladislaw in Middlemarch is an interesting gloss on this name:

'"If you were an artist, you would think of Mistress Second-Cousin as antique form animated by Christian sentiment--a sort of Christian Antigone--sensuous force controlled by spiritual passion"' (xix).

12 Compare Ernest Barker, Political Thought in England from Herbert Spencer to the Present Day (London, 1915), pp. 106-8; and Walter W. Simon, "Spencer and the 'Social Organism'", Journal of the History of Ideas, 21 (1960), 294-9.

13

G. H. Lewes obviously had his doubts about Romola even before George Eliot began writing the novel. In a letter to John Blackwood in May 1861, he is clearly worried by the extent of George Eliot's historical researches: "She is 'drinking in' Florence, and as far as the old past life can be restored she will, I am certain, restore it, if only from that wonderful intuition with which genius throws itself into all ~~forms~~ forms of life. As I often tell her most of the scenes and characters of her books are quite as historical to her direct personal experience, as the 15th century of Florence; and she knows infinitely more about Savonarola than she knew of Silas, besides having deep personal sympathies with the old reforming priest which she had not with the miser. Why is it that Shakespeare makes us believe in his Romans? Certainly not from any of these 'solid acquirements' which would have made him a valuable contributor to Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography, and earned the respect of the 'Saturday Review' (Letters, III, 420).

14

British Museum Additional MSS., 34,029, F. 297.

THE REFORMERS

(i)

The unresolvable conflict which George Eliot finally reached in Romola was between two social attitudes—between Savonarola's "theoretic conviction" about society and the world, and Romola's "personal tenderness" towards a few of her fellow human beings. Both attitudes are valid and necessary, but each is limited, and over the question of Bernardo's execution they come into violent collision. It is a collision between different kinds of duty, and by her desire to show these two valid principles of action in opposition we can see how far George Eliot's ideas about society have increased in complexity since the Antigone review. She was there aware of the dangers of social evolution through rebellion, but was confident on the whole that the dialectic would inevitably bring "the outer life of man...gradually and painfully... into harmony with his inward needs." In Romola, George Eliot's confidence has waned considerably. She returns again to the question of how the sacred rebel can be sure that his rebellion is justified, and we have seen how by various moral permutations she reveals the many complexities and anomalies in this problem. The final anomaly occurs when Savonarola's and Romola's parallel rebellion against wrongdoing leads them into opposition and to the stalemate we have just described. The conflict between their two ways of looking at human beings and society indicates the complexity of the social structure and the inadequacy of any simple belief in the concept of the social organism to explain this complexity. This concept or metaphor cannot answer the question posed by Romola:

what principle of conduct can be applied when a member's loyalty to the social organism as a whole is in conflict with his loyalty to a fellow individual? The relationship between these two loyalties is the central theme of Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda.

In both of these later novels, the head-on clash between Romola and Savonarola becomes an internal conflict in the mind of the titular hero. Felix Holt and Deronda are engaged simultaneously in private and public spheres of life. They become committed to a political or religious task at the same time as they are involved with a particular human being. At first, they both imagine that this second involvement is incompatible with the first, that these two loyalties are mutually frustrating. But by the end of the novels the two reformers have become aware that their two roles must be assimilated for it is only personal commitment to an individual which can give reality and meaning to their general social tasks. By means of this education, Felix and Deronda manage to combine Savonarola's "theoretic conviction" with the "personal tenderness" Romola opposed to it. They have now a balanced attitude to society, fully organic in the sense that they are simultaneously aware of the claims of the social macrocosm and the individual microcosm. Felix, for example, avoids involvement with Esther for fear of compromising his political aims, until he comes to realise that only through her can he hope to realise these aims; similarly, Deronda's larger aims appear to be bedevilled by his entanglement with Gwendolen until the end of the novel when it is precisely his contact with her suffering which makes real for him the suffering of the Jews, and precipitates him into a full acceptance of his public role. No longer are the worlds of social and political action and of the private individual (and their corresponding ethics) merely juxtaposed--now they meet and interact in the hands of the central characters.

In both of these novels, George Eliot is accepting as one of her données what she refused to accept in Romola, namely the essential difference between a loyalty to society and a loyalty to an individual—even though she insists that these loyalties need combining. And this,

I think, accounts for the loss of anxiety and strain we experience as we move from Romola to these two later works. Compared with these, Romola is a failure and yet in Romola George Eliot seems much more involved in her central moral problem than she does in Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda. Romola is a novel of ideas and in it George Eliot is earnestly seeking a resolution of conflicting moral principles by means of the painstaking balancing and resolution of conflicting ~~maxims~~ principles and loyalties in fifteenth century Florence. It is obvious that the final moral stalemate is, for George Eliot, an anguished one: the search for a single unifying principle of social action has failed. No single moral principle is sufficiently fundamental to guide society in its development; and society is becoming increasingly disordered and fragmentary as she shows by the creation of the discrete social worlds of the two post-Reform novels which follow. Since the social organism cannot be left to develop according to its own laws of natural growth, reformers must be created who can triumph over the difficulties which defeated the previous sacred rebels, and who, having achieved an organic view of society, will be able to redirect it along the correct lines of development. George Eliot's chief concern is no longer the search for universal principles of action beneath the complex and shifting duties in society; her concern now is with the hero's assimilation of the two roles which will make him into an effective social reformer.

Already in her novels George Eliot has presented on a small scale a series of characters with such a correctly organic attitude to life. These are her ideal clergymen—Gilfil, Tryan, Irwine and Kenn, with Lyon and Mordecai fulfilling a similar role. All of these characters are shown to combine an appreciation of the larger aims of life with a kindly yet realistic attitude towards their parishioners. They approximate in varying degrees to the ideal embodied in Mordecai in Daniel Deronda: "a mind consciously, energetically moving with the larger march of human

destinies, but not the less full of conscience and tender heart for the footstaps that bread near and need a leaning-place"(xlili). In each case, their general ministry is shown to be realistic and effective because of some past personal involvement with suffering. For example, almost the whole of "Mr Gilfil's Love Story" is a lengthy flashback which describes the tribulations of the hero's youthful love-affair and so accounts for his present character and ministry; whilst in "Janet's Repentance", Tryan describes to Janet Dempster his own past sins and suffering which forced him into his present public role. George Eliot's comment on Dr Kenn in The Mill on the Floss is the most explicit description of the function these characters are called upon to perform: "The middle-aged, who have lived through their strongest emotions, but are yet in the time when memory is still half-passionate and not merely contemplative, should surely be a sort of natural priesthood, whom life has disciplined and consecrated to be the refuge and rescue of early stumblers and victims of self-despair"(VI, xi). Their past experience of a suffering which has been caused by involvement with another individual and their present successful public ministry are shown to be inseparable. These clergymen are not central characters in the novels, but rather act as mentors or commentators on the main action; their education is in the past and is described in retrospect. But the nature of their education helps us to understand what George Eliot is doing in Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda. In these two novels, she takes now as her central theme this same fusion of private and public roles and shows how Felix and Deronda are not only being educated into the 'natural priesthood', but are also becoming reformers who can conduct societies (as well as individuals) to regeneration.

In the early novels, George Eliot is mainly concerned in tracing the sequence whereby the individual's egoism, for example, is transformed through personal suffering into a general sympathy. After Romola with its deadlock between Romola and Savonarola, George Eliot seeks to emphasise

the necessity for the co-presence and convergence of general social aims and personal tenderness in a correctly organic attitude to society. To do this she creates a new structure which will enable her to present the central character simultaneously filling his public and private roles in discrete worlds. Daniel Deronda shows this most clearly. The novel is divided into the aristocratic world of the Abbey and the 'working-day' world of the Jews. Deronda is the only link between these two worlds; he is poised between with a role in each. For most of the novel, the two roles seem as incompatible as the discrete worlds they occupy, and only at the very end do we see that only by an interfusion of the two can Deronda fulfil either effectively. Instead of emphasising the stages in a sequence, this structure draws attention to the convergence and final fusion of two different attitudes to human beings. In the same way, in Felix Holt the hero is poised between Esther with her aristocratic ambitions and the working-class world of Treby Magna, and the resolution of his roles poses the same problems as it does in Daniel Deronda. It is worth noticing that Felix Holt and Deronda, who are at the centre of these very similar structures, are at first very different characters. Felix's fault of character is an excessive confidence and self-assertion; he is a demagogic Adam Bede. Deronda's fault, on the other hand, is an excessive diffidence and uncertainty; he is a descendant of Philip Wakem and Ladislaw. Their educations, although they start from such different directions, achieve finally the same balance of qualities.

George Eliot adumbrated this new structure as early as "Janet's Repentance" in Scenes of Clerical Life. The Rev. Tryan is the centre of the action and he has a double role--the public reformation of Milby, and the private reformation of Janet Dempster. We are shown the parallel progress of Milby and Janet under his influence: Janet needs to "seek aid elsewhere than in herself"(iii), whilst Milby is reformed when, thanks to Evangelicalism, it comes to "that recognition of something to be lived for beyond the mere

satisfaction of self"(x). This relationship between microcosm and macrocosm is underlined by George Eliot's use of Dempster, Janet's husband, who is the antithesis of Tryan in both his roles; he opposes his evangelical reforms in Milby and attempts to counteract his influence upon Janet. His relationship to Tryan's two roles is exactly the same as Harold Transome's to Felix's roles in Felix Holt.

The chief difference between this story and the two later novels is that we do not witness the education of Tryan through the fusion of his two roles. Tryan has already "gone through the initiation of suffering"(xxii), as becomes clear when he narrates his ~~own~~ own past trials to Janet. Yet there are hints and suggestions that the reformer of Milby still requires the steadying influence of personal commitment to a suffering fellow human being. Before his involvement with Janet, Tryan suffers an initial setback in his reforming campaign. He blames his excessive self-reliance: "It seems," he began, in a low and silvery tone, "I need a lesson of patience; there has been something wrong in my thought or action about this evening lecture. I have been too much bent on doing good to Milby after my own plan—too reliant on my own wisdom"(iii). This^{is} a close anticipation of Felix's early mistakes in his reforming schemes, caused by what Lyon calls his "too confident self-reliance"(xxxvii). However, as Tryan's relationship with Janet develops, so his reforms become increasingly ~~re~~ successful, and at the end George Eliot suggests a connection between his two roles: "Even anti-Tryanite prejudice could not resist the fact that Janet Dempster was a changed woman...and that this change was due to Mr Tryan's influence. The last lingering sneers against the Evangelical curate began to die out..."(xxvi). It must be insisted that the presentation of Tryan's double role is only a preliminary sketch of the central theme and structural innovation of Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda. There is little attempt to develop the interaction between his two roles, and no attempt to create two contrasting worlds in which to practise these two roles. But we are made

aware that the regeneration of Janet and Milby society are connected, and George Eliot helps us to understand how by one of her most seminal generalisations which looks ahead to the two later novels: "Our subtlest analysis of schools and sects must miss the essential truth, unless it be lit up by the love that sees in all forms of human thought and work, the life and death struggles of separate human beings"(x). This understanding of "schools and sects" and societies must come from one's own personal relationships. If one is not fully committed to these, any attempt at wider understanding or efficacy is impossible.

(ii)

In the coach-ride introductory to Felix Holt we are conducted through the Midlands in the autumn of 1832. George Eliot emphasises the wide gulf existing between "the great centres of manufacture" and the world of "park and mansion...shut in from the working-day world." "It was easy," she says, "for the traveller to conceive that town and country had no pulse in common," and the structure of both Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda is an expression of this division in society. The rural, aristocratic worlds of Transome Court and Sir Hugo Mallinger's Abbey are as self-contained as the urban, working-class worlds of Treby Magna and the London Jews. This is, of course, an expression of the fragmentariness of society, a fragmentariness we saw beginning in The Mill on the Floss with the rise of the commercial class to which the Guest family belonged. But the structural division of these two novels has a more specific significance than this. The two disparate worlds in each novel embody in contrasting ways of life the positive and negative aspects of George Eliot's moral universe. Social and moral status are inversely

proportioned. On the one hand, there ~~are~~ are the 'working-day worlds' where Lyon and Mordecai epitomise the subjugation of the self and the pursuit of the larger aims of life, whilst on the other hand, there are the aristocratic worlds where the self is all-important and each person lives within his own narrow world. The first are presented as the product of true and traditional cultures, built firmly upon the past and grappling with the future, whilst the second are shown to be effete, exclusive and deracinated, complacent of the future and ignorant of the past which they have helped to destroy.

These contrasting worlds are a clear and logical development of the opposing 'moral traditions' which we saw Romola and Tito creating in the previous novel. Romola's tradition led to regeneration, whilst Tito's led to punishment and death. Now, these traditions are crystallised into the contrasting worlds we have described, and the effect is more impressive and significant. Instead of the detailed counterpointing of the development of the two characters, we have a positive ~~and~~ ethos juxtaposed with a negative ethos, with correspondence, contrast, and cross-reference continually doing the work of assessment. And the contrast in symbol and imagery developed in the earlier novel between Tito's decadent Hellenism, with its refusal to acknowledge the moral law of Nemesis, and Romola's striving for a comprehensive ethic under the guidance of the 'Hebrew prophet' Savonarola is present here: the sombre aristocratic worlds over which Nemesis broods are depicted repeatedly in terms of Greek, classical imagery whilst the moral atmosphere of the lower-class worlds is conveyed through Christian and Hebrew religious images.

Felix Holt and Deronda have an important role to play in each of these contrasting worlds, and it is important to understand the nature of these roles before going on to a detailed examination of the two novels in the next two chapters.

The working-class in Felix Holt and the Jews in Daniel Deronda have both lost their organic vitality, and this must be regained if they are to play a vital part in the moral reformation of society and the world. Felix Holt

has abandoned his career as a doctor in order to return home and stop the sale of the drugs, Holt's 'Restorative Elixir' and 'Cathartic Lozenges', to the working-class. Now he says, "I mean to stick to the class I belong to"(v) and try to improve their position—not materially or by getting them the vote, but by reforming their attitude to life and their vocations: "I have my heritage—an order I belong to. I have the blood of a line of handicraftsmen in my veins, and I want to stand up for the lot of the handicraftsmen as a good lot...." Instead of drugs and opiates, he means to give them a dose of truth and reality: "I want to be a demagogue of a new sort; an honest one if possible, who will tell the people they are blind and foolish, and neither flatter them nor fatten on them"(xxvii). Deronda's public role ~~is~~ is a similar identification of himself with the people to whom he belongs: "I consider it my duty—it is the impulse of my feeling to identify myself, as far as possible, with my hereditary people..."(liii). Like Felix, he has first to defeat the opposition of his mother, and then, having rediscovered his heritage, he can educate the Jews into a conviction of their social and spiritual significance. Felix feels he must give the working-class pride in its traditions and vocations so that it will be a moral force in society, and not a dissatisfied mob filled with the middle-class ambition of belonging "to the grimacing set who have visiting-cards and are proud to be thought richer than their neighbours"(xxvii). Similarly, Deronda by reviving Israel's 'organic centre' seeks to discourage the Jews from merging into the populations amongst which they live, so that by their separateness they may fulfil their historic role in the world. George Eliot chooses the Jews as her final and most complete example of an organic community because firstly their "religion and law and moral life... made one growth"(xlii), and secondly because the Jews have provided through their religion "a binding theory of to the human race"(lxi). Both Felix and Deronda see their public roles as religious tasks, as true vocations to which they are called as if to the priesthood, and Deronda's explicitly religious role in particular can be seen as the logical culmination of the Christian and Hebrew imagery and symbolism used throughout the novels.

These relationships between the ~~two~~ reformers and their hereditary communities are not successfully realised in the novels. If the reformers' aims are to mean anything, we must be shown the remnants of an organic community which has the possibility of being revived. In Felix Holt there is no suggestion of such a form of society, and Felix's contact with the workers is perfunctory and ineffective. In Daniel Deronda the possibility is made more likely in the creations of the Cohen family through whose ritualistic but limited way of life Deronda does catch a glimpse of the essential meaning of Judaism; but the Cohens are soon discarded, and Deronda and Mordecai define their aims and ambitions in the abstractions of the Philosophers' Club. Both attempts are greatly inferior to the vital traditions of family life depicted in The Mill on the Floss. There, of course, George Eliot was tracing the beginnings of disintegration, whereas now it is the more difficult task of re-creating a community after disintegration; and even in The Mill on the Floss George Eliot acknowledged that the detailed emphasis she had to give to this one task of creating the atmosphere of a certain communal way of life threw the novel out of balance. But Felix and Deronda never appear to be products of the communities they are trying to revive--and George Eliot requires them to be much more. Not only have they to accept their heritage; they have also to be sufficiently separate from it to assess its shortcomings so that they can revive and redirect it through the complexities of the nineteenth century. This is why Mordecai wants Deronda to be both Jew and "accomplished Egyptian", and why the unregenerate Felix has to have a sound medical education before becoming a watch-repairer. They have to sympathise with, without becoming too narrowly identified with, their community or race, and the result is that their public roles--the reinvigorating of traditionally organic communities--appear artificial and much too self-consciously therapeutic.

So that the reformers might become realistically aware of the true

nature of their public roles, they have to be personally involved in "the life and death struggles of separate human beings." They have to descend (Felix in spirit)^I into the negative worlds of George Eliot's moral universe, into the decadent aristocratic worlds where "the larger aims without which life cannot rise into religion" are non-existent. There they have to rescue Esther and Gwendolen from the pettiness and deadening egoism of what George Eliot describes in Daniel Deronda as "a small social drama almost as little penetrated by a feeling of wider relations as if it had been a puppet-show"(xiv). These two heroines are not seeking, like Maggie, Romola and Dorothea, a social ethic, but a place in Society; and it is there they pass through the phases of illusion, and disenchantment to an ultimate rebirth in the more bracing atmospheres of the reformers' lofty ideals.

The sophisticated worlds, which Esther and Gwendolen aspire to and eventually achieve, are a brilliant culmination and crystallisation of the moral decadence which we associate with the line of melodramatic villains of the earlier novels. In these earlier novels, George Eliot embodies her negative moral tradition in individuals such as Arthur Donnithorne, Stephen Guest, the Cass brothers and Tito. With monotonous regularity she surrounds them with the conventional stage-properties of the romantic villain—the attar of roses, the delicate white hands, and the indolent air. The first and most extreme of these villains is Captain Wybrow of "Mr Gilfil's Love Story". He might have stepped straight out of the pages of Mario Praz's The Romantic Agony, with "his small white hands, with their blue veins and taper-fingers, [which] quite eclipsed the beauty of his lace ruffles," and "the veined overhanging eyelids which gave an indolent expression to the hazel eyes"(ii).² He is equipped with "an admirable figure, the whitest of hands, the most delicate of nostrils, and a large amount of serene self-satisfaction"(iv), and he is compared traditionally to "an Olympian god" and Antinous.³ As he glides in

pursuit of Caterina he is preceded by "a breath of warmth and roses"(ii), and in his permanent illness and lassitude he longs like Tito for "some lotos-eating place or other"(x). If we add that this character practises his villainy at Cheveral Manor which is in process of being renovated in the "style of florid pointed Gothic"(ii) which attracted Sir Christopher in Italy, we can see that George Eliot has taken over, with little critical assessment, the paraphernalia of the Gothic romance and the novel of sensibility for the purpose of delineating moral decadence. Opposite to Wybrow she places Gilfil, the representative of the down-to-earth, homely virtues. This attempt to yoke together meaningfully the worlds of Mrs Radcliffe and Fielding soon becomes an unintentional comic burlesque as we jump from Wybrow "gliding across the drawing-room to the harpsichord" to the large-calved Gilfil "galloping on a stout mare towards the little muddy village of Callan, five miles beyond Sloppeter"(xix).

These melodramatic traits surprisingly persist. Arthur Donnithorne, irresponsible and handsome in his regimentals, is not a too-distant relative of his near-namesake Squire Thornhill and of More's Zeluco,⁴ that prototype of romantic villainy, whose adventures Arthur is reading in his Hermitage. Similarly, Stephen Guest, the Cass brothers (two stages in the same downward path), and the Renaissance villain Tito⁵ have a staginess in their initial delineation which George Eliot's psychological realism never fully overlays. She is obviously trying to transform the conventional villain into a human being by showing how fatally easy it is to degenerate into wrongdoing. This is an important aspect of George Eliot's moral aesthetic, her anti-romantic attitude to art and life; and we have seen how this attitude has resulted repeatedly in that structural design which asserts the moral proximity of hero and villain. Yet, however tenuous and artificial the dividing-line becomes ~~between~~, the attar of roses tends to cling to and identify the villains too easily.

It is clear why George Eliot seeks to humanise this romantic villain

convention and incorporate it into her novels. The values embodied in it will provide one extreme of her moral spectrum, and the stock romantic characteristics can be used as a⁸ shorthand contrast to the positive values of the novels. Romantic love of this kind is selfish, oriental and despotic; the atmosphere of roses symbolises for George Eliot an opiate world where consequences need not be faced; and in this 'lotos-eating' world of decadent beauty, self-interest is a duty which protects one from the past and the future. It is, however, not until Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda that George Eliot finally gets rid of the staginess and utilises this convention for her own purposes effectively. The uneasy gap between the lineaments of villainy and the psychological presentation of character disappears for the first time in Felix Holt.

This masterly fusion is achieved in Felix Holt not by seeking to humanise a stage-villain by even greater psychological detail than George Eliot showed in the character of Tito, but by presenting a romantic love-affair thirty years after so that the evil inherent in such a false human relationship has had time to develop. The embittered liaison between the portly Jermyn and the withered Mrs Transome is illuminated by retrospective glimpses of their youthful clandestine love-affair at the turn of the century. By means of dramatic juxtapositions of past and present, for example of Mrs Transome and her youthful portrait, we are made vividly aware of the "effect of thirty additional winters on the soft-glancing, versifying young Jermyn"(xlvi) and the beautiful Mrs Transome. The romantic Byronism has had time to congeal and reveal its true nature, and it is the sudden realisation of this which comes as a "vision of consequences" to save Esther after her doubts have been awakened by Felix's taunts at Chateaubriand and the "misanthropic debauchee" Byron, with "his corsairs and renegades, his Alps and Manfreds"(v).⁶ Similarly in Daniel Deronda, George Eliot has created not a single villain but a decadent society inhabited by Grandcourt, Lush, Mrs Glasher and the

the Princess Leonora Halm-Eberstein. This too is a romantic world of abbeys, mistresses, archery competitions, opera singers and Italian princesses; and it is a world, George Eliot shows, which has decayed. Deronda's and Meyrick's attempt to typify the characters of this world in terms of the characters of romantic opera (Grandcourt repeatedly appears as Duke Alfonso in Donizetti's Lucrezia Borgia)⁷ merely reveals how far they are from understanding its inherent and undramatic evil. It is a world where feeling has atrophied and where the only remnants of romanticism are ennui and selfishness.

(iii)

These are the contrasted worlds in which the reformers have to carry out their double roles, and the repeated cross-references by means of situation, symbol and character, illuminate continually the positive and negative poles of George Eliot's moral universe. In each novel, the two roles converge finally in the education of the reformers into an organic understanding of society, that is, the knowledge of society as a living whole combined with a sympathy for the suffering of particular individuals. The contrasting and conflicting nature of these public and private roles and their respective worlds has already been suggested; but their full complementariness can only be appreciated through an understanding of George Eliot's use of 'visions' in these two novels.

'Vision' in George Eliot's writings is a comprehensive term which includes dreams, previsions, and significant glimpses of any kind into the true meaning of reality. These experiences bring a vivid awareness of the meaning of the future which is hidden in the present. Visions

are dependent on the presence of an ordered universe controlled by universal laws by means of which past, present and future are connected. As Emerson says in his essay 'Compensation', "Cause and effect, means and ends, seed and fruit, cannot be severed; for the effect always blooms in the cause, the end pre-exists in the means, the fruit in the seed." A vision in George Eliot's novels gives a salutary glimpse of the fruit in the seed. In the earlier novels, no general need of such warnings makes itself felt. In her critical writings in particular, George Eliot seemed confident that development was proceeding inevitably under the guidance of positivist science. But we have seen now she has become progressively more cautious of social innovation and rebellion of any kind; and at the same time she has been becoming ~~more~~ frightened of a fully deterministic universe developing without regard for the individual. Now she turns to visions as the only means by which the individual and especially the reformer can hope to control his own life and that of the community. The use George Eliot's reformers make of their visions is similar to that made by Spinoza's prophets of their special faculty. Lionel Trilling describes this faculty in terms readily applicable to Felix Holt and Deronda:

This order or process [of the universe] is ascertainable through the kind of moral intuition Spinoza describes in the Tractatus, possessed by the lawgivers and prophets of mankind. Although not perfectly ascertainable, the order may be sufficiently known to establish the moral life on very firm ground, for the intuition by which it is apprehended is not a mystical and special one, but rather the exercise of all that is truly human in man....⁸

In ~~an~~ ^{an important recent} ~~an important recent~~ article, Robert Preyer has suggested that George Eliot by the time of Daniel Deronda was "passionately convinced of the need for some breakthrough into a larger, more comprehensive way of living",⁹ and he puts forward the idea that her use of visions in this novel is an attempt to effect such a breakthrough by escaping ~~from~~ from the control of the deterministic forces of the nineteenth century. The division of the

novel can be explained in these terms, says Preyer:

We may put the matter this way. The rationalist aspect of our author led her to a careful estimate of how large, impersonal environmental forces determined individual conduct. But along side this was a 'visionary' element which increasingly emphasised the way in which our receptivity (or lack of it) to signs and portents helps us to break ~~the~~ free from the tyranny of habitual responses and to find out, in Lawrence's words, "what the heart really wants after all." This second aspect of her sensibility bulks very large in Daniel Deronda, which can be understood, perhaps, as an effort to convey the simultaneous workings of both aspects of reality.¹⁰

Preyer's description of the novel is acute, and yet he seems to ignore the fact that visions are used in each half of the novel—not only in the public role, but also in Deronda's attempt to save Gwendolen.

In both Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda, visions are used by the reformers in two ways. In their private roles they seek to rescue the heroines from illusion and wrongdoing by means of "visions of consequence" which will reveal to the heroines the evil result of the corrupt moral traditions they are in process of establishing. Such glimpses into the future, into the workings of Nemesis, have already appeared as warnings in, for example, the willow-tapping preparing Adam Bede for the consequences of his harsh treatment of his father, in Maggie's dream bringing home to her the consequences of her flight with Stephen Guest, and in Dino's vision of a Hellenistic nightmare warning Romola against marriage with Tito. Now, such visions of ~~the~~ consequence are to be induced almost therapeutically as a means of dispelling the worst and preserving the heroines' best self. Felix tells Esther, "I am a man who am warned by visions...we are saved by making the future present to ourselves." He wants ~~to~~ her to be saved in this way: "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 att-a-of-rose fascinations—and nothing but a good strong terrible vision will save you" (xxvii). Similarly, Deronda attempts to turn Gwendolen's

visions of sin and retribution into saving visions of consequence:

"Turn your fear into a safeguard....It may make consequences passionately present to you. Try to take hold of your sensibility, and use it as if it were a faculty, like vision" (xxxvi). The vision momentarily frees the individual from the moral tradition which is controlling him, and allows a moment of choice, when ~~the~~ he is completely free to continue or start afresh. In these two novels, the visions appear much less fortuitous than in the earlier novels; here they are given a firm basis in the psychology of the heroines, ~~so that their supernatural aspect is played down.~~

These are the private, preventative visions rescuing Esther and Gwendolen from their disillusioned, aristocratic worlds. To balance them in the reformers' public roles we have the visions of reform. These are necessary because the vast forces controlling nineteenth century society seem to be getting out of hand, with the individual helplessly looking on. George Eliot seems to be assessing the inadequacy of her own early optimism when, in the debate at the Philosophers' Club in Daniel Deronda, Lilly brashly expresses his confidence in 'development':

"Change and progress are merged in the idea of development. The laws of development are being discovered, and changes taking place according to them are necessarily progressive; that is to say, if we have any notion of progress or improvement opposed to them, the notion is a mistake."

Deronda voices her later doubts in his reply:

"I really can't see how you arrive at that sort of certitude about changes by calling them development.... There will still remain the degrees of inevitableness in relation to our own will and acts, and the degrees of wisdom in hastening or retarding; there will still remain the danger of mistaking a tendency which should be resisted for an inevitable law that we must adjust ourselves to,—which seems to me as bad a superstition or false god as any that has been set up without the ceremonies of philosophising." (xlii)

The only way in which change can be understood, says Mordecai, is by the individual identifying himself with his class or race, and through their memories and traditions coming to a knowledge of the organic laws of development of society. Only by accepting fully his membership of a community and so becoming personally involved in the evolution of society can the individual and reformer arrive at an understanding of "the hidden bonds that bind and consecrate change as a dependent growth"(xlii).

Matthew Arnold considered that this task, the ascertaining of the dominant currents of a society, was the work of culture. George Eliot agrees with him on the essential importance of this, but they differ sharply in their recommendations for achieving it: Arnold is anxious for everyone to have a panoramic view of the movement of society, whilst George Eliot in these two novels recommends an understanding in depth of one particular culture—working-class of Jewish—as the best means of coming to a knowledge of the laws of organic growth. Then, one is in a position, particularly as a Jew, to understand the future by means of what Mordecai calls "the prophetic consciousness of our nationality"(xlii), and to control and redirect through one's own community the development of society as a whole. These visions of organic growth, essential to the reformers' public role, are far more positive and ambitious than the warning visions induced in the heroines.

We can best understand this startling new development in George Eliot's thought by going back to Romola where she is grappling with the idea in an historical and rudimentary form. There, Savonarola sees his relationship with the people of Florence as that between a 'Hebrew prophet' and 'a second chosen people'(xxi); "And the purer the government of Florence would become...the nearer would the Florentine people approach the character of a pure community, worthy to lead the way in the renovation of the Church and the world"(xxxv). As the prophet of this second chosen people, Savonarola professes to be guided by visions derived from a study of the Bible: "...in the Sacred Book there was a record

of the past in which might be seen as in a glass what would be in the days to come"(xxi). George Eliot debates in detail the validity of Savonarola's visions and shows how the more entangled he becomes in politics, and in particular the plan for the Great Council, the more he compromises his prophetic claims; and this, which is very closely connected with his doubts and uncertainties about his sacred rebellion against the 'living organism' of the Church, destroys him.

This failure makes clear what are intended to be the more successful methods of Felix Holt and Deronda. They too believe in the creation of a 'pure community' which will act as ^a healthy and invigorating organ in the whole body of the nation, or as in Daniel Deronda, of the world. But unlike Savonarola, they attempt to sidestep the contaminating, yet crucial, question of political power by means of which reform will be effected. In this, as in other respects, Romola is a braver novel than these two later works. Felix Holt and Deronda are going to accept their heritage which is theirs and then use this moral tradition of a community and the prophetic insight it gives as an instrument of future reform. The visionary powers which will enable the reformers to distinguish between "a tendency which should be resisted" and "an inevitable law that we must adjust ourselves to" are the distilled essence of what George Eliot calls "the organised memory of a national consciousness." This is why Mordecai insists upon the importance of Jewish separateness. The reform of the world can only be achieved if the vision is preserved in its pure form. This grandiose programme is formulated more clearly and ^{in much greater detail} ~~renewedly~~ in Daniel Deronda than in Felix Holt. In the earlier novel, we can see George Eliot approaching this balancing of public against private vision. In chapter xxvii, Felix tells Esther about his two obsessions: his vision of the professional politician he does not ~~want~~ want to become (this is his private vision of consequences), and his awareness of his public task, "the life of the miserable—the spawning life of vice and hunger." Having

described the warning potentiality of visions, he passes again to his public task and shows how it is dependent upon his 'heritage', upon "the blood of a line of handicraftsmen" which he has in his veins. In Daniel Deronda, it is this identification of Deronda with his race which leads to a sharing of the "prophetic consciousness" of the Jews. Here in Felix Holt it is only hinted at, but it is clear in retrospect that Felix's public role bridges the gap between Savonarola's prophecies and Deronda's use of Mordecai's creative visions.

The sacred rebel Savonarola was involved in the dialectic between established laws and elemental tendencies, between the two voices described in The Spanish Gypsy:

If conscience has two courts
 With differing verdicts, where shall lie the appeal?
 Our law must be without us or within.
 The Highest speaks ~~with~~ through all our people's voice,
 Custom, tradition, and old sanctities;
 Or he reveals himself by new decrees
 Of inward certitude. (bk 2)

As we have seen, the more sensitive and intelligent the rebel, the more he will tend to sympathise with both sides of the dialectic in which he is involved. The new style reformers avoid this destructive political dialectic by finding expression for their "inward certitude" through the "custom, tradition, and old sanctities" of their class or race which they now proceed to adapt to the present for the carrying out of social and moral reform. Past, present and future are inextricably linked, and, says George Eliot, the tortured vacillations of a sacred rebel can best be avoided by a return into an organic and traditional past, before leading with the aid of visions into the future. The new reformers are no longer, in the words of the Antigone review, rebelling against "the rules which society has sanctioned"; they have identified themselves with organic communities through which they can help to redirect the nation and the

world—and they will be saved from the fanaticism of Savonarola's "theoretic conviction" by the sobering contact with "the life and death struggles of separate human beings," whom they assist to redemptive visions of consequence.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Barbara Hardy says: "...the reader watches Esther and Harold, with Felix as a kind of ghostly presence invisible only to Harold"(p. 93).
- 2 See Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony, trans. Angus Davidson, 2nd ed. (London, 1951), p. 78.
- 3 Praz, pp. 314, 322, 334, 346, 379, 426.
- 4 Zeluco's ethic is very similar to that of George Eliot's villains: "From the observations which Zeluco had made on the conduct of mankind, confirmed by what passed within his own breast, his opinion was, that virtue was mere varnish and pretext; and whatever apparent disinterestedness, generosity, or self-denial, there were in the conduct of any person, that if the whole could be chemically analysed and reduced to their original elements, self-interest would be found at the bottom of the crucible"(xxxii). This is very close to Tito's examination of the various creeds of Florence: "And what motive could any man really have, except his own interest? Florentines whose passions were engaged in their petty and precarious political schemes might have no self-interest separable from family pride and tenacity in old hatreds and attachments; a modern simpleton who swallowed whole one of the old systems of philosophy, and took the indigestion it occasioned for the signs of a divine afflux or the voice of an inward monitor, might see his interest in a form of self-conceit which he called self-rewarding ~~vix~~ virtue; fanatics who believed in the coming Scourge and Renovation might see their own interest in a future palm-branch and white robe: but no man of clear intellect allowed his course to be determined by such puerile impulses or questionable inward fumes"(lvii).
See Praz, pp. 66-7.
- 5 Praz, in discussing (pp. 472-5) Pater's kinship with Winckelmann and Swinburne, sees a connection between the worship of Greek serenity and moral decadence. As we saw in the last chapter, George Eliot too instinctively assumes one will lead ultimately to the other.
- 6 See Praz, pp. 64, 66.
- 7 Daniel Deronda, xlv, lii, lxi. Mirah sees Gwendolen at one point in the novel as the Princess of Eboli in Don Carlos (lii).
- 8 Trilling, p. 272.

9 Robert Preyer, "Beyond the Liberal Imagination: Vision and
Unreality in Daniel Deronda," Victorian Studies, 4 (1960), 44.

10 Preyer, p. 48.

FELIX HOLT

(i)

At the centre of Felix Holt is the titular hero engaged in a private and public relationship. He is trying to reform both Esther Lyon and the working-class. He sees the two roles as being quite separate and incompatible, and his development through the novel is from his initial scorn of her and of women in general as being obstructive to his larger aims, to his final realisation that his relationship with her is inseparable from those aims of social reform. At the end of the novel, Felix achieves a more mature political outlook simultaneously with his marriage to Esther. This development of the hero is worth looking at more closely, for, in company with Deronda, Felix Holt is still seen by many critics as a static ideal character; and such a conception makes most of the novel meaningless.

On his first appearance in the novel, Felix complacently diagnoses his own fault of character to the Reverend Lyon:

"I'm perhaps a little too fond of banging and smashing," he went on; "a phrenologist at Glasgow told me I had large veneration; another man there, who knew me, laughed out and said I was the most blasphemous iconoclast living. 'That,' says my phrenologist, 'is because of his large Ideality, which prevents him from finding anything perfect enough to be venerated.' Of course, I put my ears down, and wagged my tail at that stroking." (v)

This iconoclasm, what Lyon later calls his "too confident self-reliance" (xxxvii), is manifested both in Felix's relations with Esther, and in his aims of social reform. To Esther, he says:

"That's what makes women a curse; all life is stunted to suit their littleness. That's why I'll never love, if I can help it; and if I love, I'll bear it, and never marry." (x)

This rejection of personal commitment on the assumption that it will conflict with his public task is closely linked with his lack of realism in politics: "Felix Holt had his illusions like other young men, though they were not of a fashionable sort"(xi). His idealism is made dangerous by the sudden rash fits of rebellion with which he springs to its defence. And Lyon warns Felix against this failing: "You yourself are a lover of freedom, and a bold rebel against usurping authority. But the right to rebellion is the right to seek a higher rule, and not to wander in mere ~~rebellion~~ lawlessness"(xiii). These two aspects of his iconoclam, the personal and the public, must be seen as symptoms of the same fault of character.

The interdependence of Felix's two roles is suggested structurally in a parallel series of events which contradicts his assertion of their incompatibility. Especially important is the election riot which occurs simultaneously with his rejection of Esther's love. The riot has already begun when Felix goes to Esther and renounces her love: "He felt that they must not marry—that they would ruin each other's lives. But he had longed for her to know fully that his will to be always apart from her was renunciation, not an easy preference"(xxxii). But this rejection of Esther is a rejection of self-commitment, not a true renunciation: "For the first time he had lost his self-possession, and ~~he~~ turned his eyes away. He was at variance with himself". Immediately afterwards, he becomes involved in the riot, when, seeing his plans disintegrating, he over-confidently imagines he can control events: "He believed he had the power, and he was resolved to ~~try~~ try, to carry the dangerous mass out of mischief till the military came to awe them"(xxxiii). Whilst attempting this he inadvertently kills a man and then the mob gets out of hand. His "too confident self-reliance" has caused the double failure.

Felix is imprisoned, Esther whisked off to Transome Court, and all appears to be lost. But she saves him from this double misfortune-- publicly by speaking out for him in court and so inspiring the petition, privately by insisting on her love for him. It is then that Felix realises that his two roles are not incompatible, that through her he can integrate the discrete halves of his life: "Her woman's passion and her reverence for rarest goodness rushed together in an undivided current"(xlvi). Now that he has found something "perfect enough to be venerated" in his private relationships, there is a corresponding maturing of his political iconoclasm:

"But I'm proof against that word failure. I've seen behind it. The only failure a man ought to fear is failure in cleaving to the purpose he sees to be best. As to just the amount of result he may see from his particular work--that's a tremendous uncertainty: the universe has not been arranged for the gratification of his feelings...." (xlv)

His love for Esther is inseparable from his political acknowledgement of the 'higher rule' to which he is now prepared to conform.

George Eliot does not rely wholly on the parallelism of events to show the interdependence of the two halves of Felix's life. In order to insist that the "subtlest analysis of schools and sects" and societies must be illuminated by an understanding and awareness of "separate human beings", she draws an analogy between the development of Treby Magna and the development of Esther. Both macrocosm and microcosm obey similar laws of organic growth. George Eliot uses a similar device in Middlemarch where the detailed analogy between Dorothea's progress through the novel and the last few years of the Reform movement asserts that she embodies in her strivings the essence of reform; and so when Ladislaw comes to love and understand Dorothea, he is enabled to participate effectively in the larger movement she epitomises. Analogy is used for the same purpose here.

Esther, living at Treby, frustrated in her desires for social advancement, comes under the influence of Felix Holt who shatters her genteel ideas. Her horizons expand and she begins to feel "that if Felix Holt were to love her, her life would be exalted into something quite new—into a sort of difficult blessedness, such as one may imagine in beings who are conscious of painfully growing into the possession of higher powers"(xxii). She sees him as the means of "checking her self-satisfied pettiness with the suggestion of a wider life"(xxxvii). But Felix's influence is removed when Esther, discovering the facts of her past, is taken to Transome Court for a rehearsal of her new position in society. Here, under the influence of Harold Transome, she begins to leave "the high mountain air" of Felix's love, and to "adjust her wishes to a life of middling delights"(xliv). Thanks, however, to the continued influence of the absent Felix, she comes to see through the gentility of Transome Court, rejects Harold and returns to Felix. If we juxtapose this sequence of events with the description in the third chapter of the political development of Treby Magna, it is clear that an analogy is implied. Just as for Esther the main concern of her life "was not religious differences, but social differences"(vi), so Treby society was mainly interested in social position—the Debarry's "as lords of the manor, naturally came next to Providence and took the place of the saints"(iii). Treby Magna remained in this state of narrow-minded complacency ~~in~~ "until there befell new conditions, complicating its relation with the rest of the world, and gradually awakening in it that higher consciousness which is known to bring higher pains"(iii). These new conditions are the canal and the coal-mines breaking down the isolation of Treby; but thirdly there ~~is~~ is the attempt to check this movement, to prevent the merging of Treby with the expanding industrial development of the country, by the discovery and exploitation of "a saline spring, which suggested to a ~~too~~ too constructive brain the possibility of turning Treby Magna into a fashionable watering-place"(iii).^I

Jernyn carries the plan through and the town discovers the facts of its ~~past~~ past: "an excellent guide-book and descriptive cards, surmounted by vignettes were printed and Treby Magna became conscious of certain facts in its own history of which it had previously been in contented ignorance"(iii). Each sojourn in the higher strata of society is short-lived: Esther returns to Felix and the working-class, whilst "The Spa, for some mysterious reason, did not succeed"(iii). The town reassumes its initial movement towards integration into the national, industrial economy: "In this way it happened that Treby Magna gradually passed from being simply a respectable market-town...and took on the more complex life brought by mines and manufactures, which belong more ~~the~~ directly to the great circulating system of the nation than to the local system to which they have been superadded..."(iii). When this analogy between the development of Esther and Treby is understood, the generalisation which closes the political biography of the town comes to have a greatly increased significance:

These social changes in Treby parish are comparatively public matters, and this history is chiefly concerned with the private lot of a few men and women; but there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life, from the time ~~of~~ when the primeval milkmaid had to wander with the wanderings of her clan, because the cow she milked was one of a herd which had made the pasture bare. (iii)

We can see now that this generalisation elucidates the analogy we have just examined, and the central structure of the novel. The same laws are operating in both the development of Esther and of Treby, and so the attempt by Felix to separate his public task of reform from his private relationship with Esther is impossible, and fatal to his political understanding.

This intimate connection between the two halves of Felix's life is again insisted on by a common religious imagery and terminology. He envisages his political task persistently in religious terms. For example, he tells Lyon that he "was converted by six weeks debauchery"(v) to his present political creed; also, he has a political 'congregation'(v) which

he addresses weekly in the room where Lyon holds his Wednesday preachings (xi). He finds support for his actions from St Paul (v) and the "old Catholics" (xxvii), and at his trial asserts one of the articles of his creed in suitably religious terms:

"I hold it blasphemy to say that a man ought not to fight against authority: there is no great religion and no great freedom that has not done it, in the beginning....I should hold myself the worst sort of traitor if I put my hand either to fighting or disorder...if I were not urged to it by what I hold to be sacred feelings, making a sacred duty either to my own manhood or to my fellow-man." (xlvi)

And during the election when he addresses the working-men, we see that he has appropriated not only a terminology but also a ritual: "he stepped on to the stone, and took off his cap by an instinctive prompting that always led him to speak uncovered"(xxx).

A complementary series of images is used to describe the influence of Felix on Esther, and the need for him to fill this private role which she is forcing upon him. For example, after Felix has renounced her love, Esther can only envisage their relationship in religious terms; she

...began to look on all that had passed between herself and Felix as something not buried, but embalmed and kept as a relic in a private sanctuary....The best part of a woman's love is worship; but it is hard to be sent away with her precious spikenard rejected, and her long tresses too, that were let fall ready to soothe the wearied feet. (xxxvii)

Similarly, at the end of the novel, when Felix and Esther meet in jail, they press their hands together "as children hold them up in prayer"(xlv), and, when Esther gives evidence at the trial, "Her clear voice sounded as it might have done if she had been making a confession of faith"(xlvi). The insistently religious nature of these two strands of imagery is constantly trying to bring together the two halves of Felix's life which they describe.

The common element in these two roles of Felix, which the religious imagery identifies, is the desire for what Esther calls a "beyond" (xliii), an escape from the mediocre ordinariness of everyday life where politics is expediency, and love is esteem of self. The imagery embodies this desire to emerge into the 'wider life' of ideals and aspirations where politics is a search for the eternal laws of society and love is a rejection of the bonds of self. An examination of this religious imagery and analogy, which is one of the most pervasive features of the novel, leads to a better understanding of Felix's two roles and their correlation; it can also help us to diagnose some of the shortcomings of the novel.

(ii)

Any such examination of the religious imagery must begin with the Reverend Rufus Lyon from whom most of ~~the~~ it stems. He plays an important part in the novel influencing both Felix and Esther because he has experienced the clash of personal love and religious beliefs and has emerged into the bracing atmosphere of the wider life. His eccentricities of dress, speech and behaviour—his "spasmodic leaps out of his abstractions into real life" (xvi)—are a convincing manifestation of a view of life where self is of little importance. The reason for his importance is to be found, therefore, not in his sectarian nonconformity, which none of the main characters treats seriously, but in his past. It is this which sanctifies his utterances.

Whilst a highly successful minister, he had fallen in love with Esther's mother, "an unregenerate Catholic", and his public role had to be forsaken: "A terrible crisis had come upon him; a moment in which religious doubt and newly-awakened passion had rushed together in common flood, and had

paralysed his ministerial gifts"(vi). This a pre-enactment of Felix's fear of personal involvement with Esther. Lyon's love for Annette proves "irreconcilable with that conception of the world which made his faith"(vi), and so he abandons the ministry and devotes himself to Annette. But it is this contact with "the life and death struggles of separate human beings" which brings him real knowledge:

Strange ! that the passion for this woman, which he felt to have drawn him aside from the right as much as if he had broken the most solemn vows...the passion for a being who had no glimpse of his thoughts induced a more thorough renunciation than he had ever known in the time of his complete devotion to his ministerial career. (vi)

Just as Felix modifies his political aims on accepting Esther's love, so Lyon on ~~ix~~ returning to the ministry after Annette's death began to extend his idea of "the limits of salvation, which he had in one sermon even hinted might extend to unconscious recipients of mercy"(vi). Clearly this flashback into Lyon's past occurring early in the novel is a preliminary statement of the main theme, supporting Felix's fears at the same time as it challenges Esther's love: can she, unlike her mother who whilst living with Lyon "regarded her present life as a sort of death to the world"(vi), help to unify Felix's life?

Lyon's view of life is a product of his past, and his presence in the novel sanctions, as it were, the use of religious terminology for a wide range of experiences. This terminology is an important evaluative element. It is used extensively, first of all, in the political discussions between Lyon and Felix, where Lyon as mentor seeks to educate Felix away from his early iconoclasm. These discussions usually centre on the problem of the relationship between the self and society, between freedom and authority. On one occasion, Felix visits Lyon as he is speaking to one of his deacons about an obstinate choir:

"Brother Nuttwood, we must be content to carry a thorn in our

sides while the necessities of our imperfect state demands that there should be a body set apart and called a choir, whose special office it is to lead the singing, not because they are more disposed to the devout uplifting of praise, but because they are endowed with better vocal organs, and have attained more of the musician's art. For all office, unless it be accompanied by peculiar grace, becomes, as it were, a diseased organ, seeking to make itself too much of a centre. ~~Such~~ Singers, specially so called, are, it must be confessed, an anomaly among us who seek to reduce the Church to its primitive simplicity, and to cast away all that may obstruct the direct communion of spirit ~~and~~ with spirit." (xiii)

As the analogy becomes clear we can read this as a political comment directed at the privileged world of Transome Court or perhaps at the exclusive electorate of the First Reform Act. After the unregenerate Felix has suggested that it is "a denial of private judgment" to make everyone sing the same tune, he is corrected by Lyon who proceeds to generalise the discussion:

"You yourself are a lover of freedom, and a bold rebel against usurping authority. But the right to rebellion is the right to seek a higher rule, and not to wander in mere lawlessness. Wherefore, I beseech you, seem not to say that liberty is licence. And I apprehend...that there is a law in music, disobedience whereunto would bring us in our singing to the level of shrieking maniacs or howling beasts: so that herein we are well instructed how true liberty can be nought but the transference of obedience from the will of one or a few men to that ~~transfer~~ will which is the norm or rule for all men." (xiii)

Then, having hinted at the possible dangers in this search for a Rousseauesque 'general will', Lyon goes on to imagine the culmination of such a search in terms anticipatory of Mordecai's description of the mystical organic unity of the Shemah; Lyon's is however a millenium of congregational dissent:

"And even as in music, where all obey and concur to one end, so that each has the joy of contributing to a whole whereby he is ravished and lifted up into the courts of heaven, so will it be in that crowning time of the millennial reign, when our daily prayer will be fulfilled, and one law shall be written on all hearts, and be the very structure of all thought, and be the principle of all action." (xiii)

Felix accepts this rebuke to his Jacobinical iconoclasm, and his reforming schemes become increasingly a quest for this "higher rule". Significantly, this quest leads him further and further away from political action. In his speech to the working-men he tells them that the vote is useless; ballot-reform is not sufficiently fundamental. They must first reform themselves so that they will be worthy of political power: "'The way to get rid of folly is to get rid of vain expectations, and of thoughts that don't agree with the nature of things"'(xxx). It is a question, says Felix, of improving human nature--"men's passions, feelings, desires,"--for this is the steam which drives the engines of political reform. And real power will come to the working-class not through political machinery but only when its human nature has created a forceful general will:²

"I'll tell you what's the greatest power under heaven," said Felix, "and that is public opinion--the ruling belief in society about what is right and what is wrong, what is honourable and what is shameful. That's the steam that is to work the engines, How can political freedom make us better, any more than a religion we don't believe in, if people laugh and wink when they see men abuse and defile it?" (xxx)

Lyon has already endorsed in suitably religious terms this belief in the moral force of communal belief as he rehearses a sermon earlier in the novel:

"My brethren, do you think that great shout was raised in Israel by each man's waiting to say 'amen' till his neighbours had said 'amen'? Do you think there will ever be a great shout for the right--the shout of a nation as of one man, rounded and whole, like the voice of the archangel that bound together all the listeners of earth and heaven--if every Christian of you peeps round to see what his neighbours in good coats are doing...?" (iv)

Lyon sees the clearest image of the spiritual "millennial reign" in the body of congregational dissent which seeks "to reduce the Church to its primitive simplicity, and to cast away all that may obstruct the direct communion of spirit with spirit"(xiii); Felix hopes to create an image of a social "millennial reign" in exactly the same way amongst the working-class, and in particular

amongst the handicraftsmen to whom he belongs. The analogy is apt and detailed if we remember that Congregationalism is a form of religious democracy where authority belongs to each ^{local} body of believers, and where each body when in actual church fellowship must be free of all external human control so that it can obey the will of God more fully. We can then see how Lyon's particular type of nonconformity corroborates Felix's trust in the sense of community, his mistrust of political machinery, and generally helps us to understand what he means by the creation of a valid and powerful public opinion. Not only does this religious analogy look ahead to George Eliot's use of the Jews in Daniel Deronda, however; it also refers back to Dr Kenn's description in The Mill on the Floss of the Dodson and Tulliver families under the guise of a religious analogy as one of "the narrow communities of schismatics" in which "the ideas of discipline and Christian fraternity" survive in a disintegrating society. This back-reference pinpoints the fundamental weakness of Felix Holt: in The Mill on the Floss the analogy is immediately significant because George Eliot has created such a schismatic yet living community; but in this novel where the religious and political analogies are much more extensive and detailed no such sense of community is achieved, however partial and corrupt, to illuminate Felix's reforming schemes.

Felix seems convinced that the creation of this public opinion is not a political task, and Raymond Williams has recently pointed out how shortsighted are George Eliot's slighting references (through Felix who is clearly her mouth-piece at this point in the novel) to the political machinery of reform, and how arbitrary her distinction between 'political' and 'social' reform. She never seems to suspect that the moral ^{and social} ~~and social~~ reform she demands of the working-class can only come when ~~g~~ political reform has created a congenial context for it. As Williams comments:

The winning through political reform of the means of education, of the leisure necessary to take such opportunity of the conditions of work and accommodation which will diminish poverty and

drunkenness: all these and similar aims, which were the purposes for which the 'engines' [of reform] were proposed, are left out of the argument. Without them, the sober responsible educated working man must presumably spring fully armed from his own ('drunken, ignorant, mean and stupid') head.³

George Eliot only shows herself aware of the importance of such reform in her rather negative definition in 1865 of a growing "external Reason" of institutions and organisations which supports "the multitude" and prevents it rolling back "even to a superstition that carries cruelty in its train."

It seems as ^{if} here in Felix Holt we have the culmination of George Eliot's fear of the destructiveness of innovation and rebellion. In the Antigone review her description of the dialectic by which society must develop is finely balanced between reverence for custom and tradition and her conviction for the need of rebellion. This careful balance of the 'antagonism between valid claims' was reflected in the climax of The Mill on the Floss in the impossible dilemma of Maggie's desire to escape from the family and the need to return to it. But after this, the relationship between the self which alters society and the society which creates the self becomes increasingly one-sided. As reverence for the complexity of tradition and the delicacy of the social organism increases--in the extended version of his speech to the working-men Felix compares society to "that wonderful piece of life, the human body, with all its various parts depending on one another, and with a terrible liability to get wrong because of that delicate dependence"--the role of the sacred rebel soon becomes impossible. As she says in her review of Lecky which she wrote while engaged on Felix Holt:

...perhaps large minds have been peculiarly liable to this fluctuation concerning the sphere of tradition, because, while they have attacked its misapplications, they have been the more solicited by the vague sense that tradition is really the basis of our best life. Our sentiments may be called organised traditions; and a large part of our actions gather all their

justification, all their attraction and aroma, from the memory of the life lived, of the actions done, before we were born. In the absence of any profound research into psychological functions or into the mysteries of inheritance, in the absence of any comprehensive view of man's historical development and the dependence of one age on another, a mind at all rich in sensibilities must always have had an indefinite uneasiness in an undistinguishing attack on the coercive influence of tradition.⁴

We saw these fluctuations becoming almost pathological in the "large minds" of Savonarola and Romola who were led by their rebellion into doubt and failure. Such minds, George Eliot seems to imply, can only debase themselves if they imagine that this dialectic of which they are so vividly aware could find expression through party politics; as proof of this we were shown that Savonarola's degeneration began when he identified his sacred rebellion too closely with one political party. The final proof that any larger aims must be corrupted as soon as they enter politics is to be found in the election riot in Felix Holt where even someone as high-minded as Felix can be led on to commit manslaughter. He is, of course, shown to be partly to blame on account of his over-confident self-reliance, but the riot also illustrates for George Eliot and Felix the futility of political action: "As he was pressed along with the multitude into Treby Park, his very movement seemed to him only an image of the day's fatalities in which the multitudinous small wickednesses of small selfish ends really undirected towards any larger result, had issued in widely-shared mischief that might yet be hideous"(xxxiii). This is the 'will of all' in action, and it confirms Felix in his belief that "'Till they can show there's something better than swilling themselves with ale, extension of the suffrage can never mean anything for them but the extension of boozing"'(xi). He turns as we have seen, from politics where the 'will of all' is given free play to the creation of a 'general will', a public opinion based upon an understanding of the nature of things. This is the only way to cope with what Lyon calls "the perplexed condition of human things, whereby even right action seems to bring evil consequences, if we have respect only to our own

brief lives, and not to that larger rule whereby we are ~~shown~~ stewards of the eternal dealings, and not contrivers of our own success"(xxxvii).

This attempt by Felix to embody the 'larger rule' in society by refusing to be contaminated by politics and its institutions, and the degradation of power, bypasses all difficulties. George Eliot, now more than ever convinced that "tradition is really the basis of our best life", is escaping from the dialectic according to which tradition is continually subjected to its antitheses, rebellion. Society is too delicate an organism for this rough treatment. A synthesis must be achieved by the reformer who understanding both the value of tradition and the necessity of reform, can develop society in terms of its living growth. Felix is to enter into a living relationship with his heritage and by doing so is to help to create a reformed society of the future. The plan of reform will be governed by the creative vision of past, present and future which Mordecai describes in detail in Daniel Deronda. Here it is only hinted at. Lyon, like Mordecai, is in a position to help the titular hero. The submergence of self allows him a "wider vision of past and present realities" by means of which he experiences the "willing movement of a man's soul with the larger sweep of the world's forces—a movement towards a more assured end than the chances of a single life"(xvi). We have a half-ironical corroboration of Lyon's powers on one occasion when Esther discovers him seeking assistance for his visionary faculty in the Bible, ~~xxxxxx~~ "absorbed in mastering all those painstaking interpretations of the Book of Daniel, which are by this time well gone to the limbo of mistaken criticism"; she hears him declare, with reference clearly both to the political and personal defeat of Felix, "with some parenthetic provisos, that he conceived not how a perverse ingenuity could blunt the ~~edge~~^{edge} of prophetic explicitness, or how an open mind could fail to see in the chronology of 'the little horn' the resplendent lamp of an inspired symbol searching out the germinal growth of an antichristian power"(xli). It is here when he tells Esther that his

studies & "have gone somewhat curiously into prophetic history" that he anticipates most clearly Mordecai's more mystical doctrines. By means of Lyon's example and advice, Felix is being led to a knowledge of the 'higher rule' in accordance with which he will conduct his reforms. Instead of his father's pernicious opiates concocted in answer to false "leadings" (xiii), he will give the working-class pure social reform prompted by visions of the nature of the social organism and its developing traditions. He tells Esther: "I am a man who am warned by visions. Those old stories of visions and dreams guiding men have their truth..." (xxvii). By means of these visions and, the destruction inherent in the dialectic of a changing society can be avoided as the reformer develops creatively its living tradition.

This, then, is the nature of Felix's public role. Religious imagery is used just as extensively to define his private role, the reform of Esther, and to show the same process at work in microcosm as in macrocosm. Like the working-class, she has to be educated out of false ideas about life, and in particular, saved from utopian dreams of gentility. She begins to free herself from the narrow world of self through the 'religious experience' of her contact with Felix:

The first religious experience of her life--the first self-questioning, the first voluntary subjection, the first longing to acquire the strength of greater motives and obey the more strenuous rule--had come to her through Felix Holt. (xxvii)

But the struggle for Esther's 'best self' is a protracted one, and she must decide it by a deliberate choice. As her moment of choice approaches, she begins to realise how her life, which she sees as a "heap of fragments", might be renovated and unified:

It seemed to her that she stood at the first and last parting of the ways. And, in ~~strict~~ one sense, she was under no illusion. It is only in that freshness of our time that the choice is possible which gives unity to life, and makes the memory a temple where all relics and all votive offerings, all worship and all

grateful joy, are an unbroken history sanctified by one religion. (xliv)

This is a description of a unified moral tradition which Esther now sees as within her grasp, and the imagery and structure of the novel again encourage us to correlate it with the social tradition upon which Felix places so much reliance in his reforming schemes. And just as "visions" of past and present realities" are the crucial factor in the public sphere, so here in the private drama, Esther can only be saved from the morally decadent world of Transome Court by a "vision of consequences" which will reveal to her the full implications of the choice she is about to make. As Felix tells Esther: "I want you to have such a vision of the future that you may never lose your best self. Some charm of other may be flung about you--some of your ~~atta-of-rose~~ fascinations--and nothing but a good strong terrible vision will save you"(xxvii). She will then be able to "lead a life of vision and of choice"(xli). The two visions she experiences are, in this novel, neither dreams nor willow-tappings, they are glimpses into the pasts of Lyon and Mrs Transome which reveal to her the consequences of her own present choice between her best and worst self.

Such a use of imagery and analogy helps to generalise the central theme through the apparently self-contained sections of the novel. The world of politics, religion, and love are shown obeying the same laws and striving for the same ideals. In addition, the translation of Esther's and Felix's aspirations and beliefs ^{into Lyon's terminology} ~~is a means of evaluation:~~ how do they stand up to the shift into the vocabulary of someone who sees all things sub specie aeternitatis? "Why not Wellington as well as Rabshakeh? and why not Brougham as well as Balaam?"(v), asks Lyon. But in the world of politics, this shift of Felix's problem into terms of Lyon's 'higher rule' seems to be for George Eliot a way of shirking the central problem--that of power and the means of achieving political reform.

(iii)

Once the nature of Felix's central role and the full importance of Lyon have been understood, the contrasted world of Transome Court fits neatly into the design of the novel. This sombre world is the negation of the belief in the submission of self in the search for the 'wider life'. Here the self is all-important. Harold Transome, the product of this world, reinforces the structure created by the central theme: he too is engaged in the double role of politician and lover, in each of which he opposes Felix. Harold's agents instigate the riot which shatters Felix's political hopes, whilst at Transome Court he attempts to counter the regenerating influence Felix has on Esther.

Yet the two men have a great deal in common. They are both Radicals, and at the opening of the novel they are both shown, much to their mothers' concern, in reaction against their families' beliefs. In addition, they are both excessively self-reliant, and this is most clearly manifested in their attitudes to women; Harold's opinion echoes Felix's—"Harold Transome regarded women as slight things, but he was fond of slight things in the intervals of business"(xvi). In this comparison between the two characters, the contrasting worlds of Transome Court and Malthouse Yard come close together and yet remain quite separate. Despite their extensive similarities, we are aware that Harold and Felix inhabit completely different moral worlds: Harold's aims both political and personal never free themselves from self-interest, whilst Felix's, though often misguided, are beyond self. Esther comes to realise this at Transome Court; Felix's political iconoclasm and his scorn of women are both aspects of his idealism, whilst Harold's bogus Radicalism and his scorn of women stem from his egoism. The irony of the fact that his first wife was a slave escapes Harold, but not Esther who quickly comes to understand

the complementary nature of his political and private lives:

His very good-nature was unsympathetic: it never came from any thorough understanding of deep respect for what was in the mind of the person he obliged or indulged; it was like his kindness to his mother--an arrangement of his for the happiness of others, which, if they were sensible, ought to succeed. And ~~xx~~ an inevitable comparison which haunted her, showed her the same quality in his political views: the utmost enjoyment of his own advantages was the solvent that blended pride in his family and position, with the adhesion to changes that were to obliterate tradition and melt down enchased gold heirlooms into plating for the egg-spoons of 'thepeople'. (xliii)

As this quotation suggests, Harold's political rebellion is a cynical parody of Felix's; he has no desire to seek the higher rule: "The years had nourished an inclination to as much opposition as would enable him to assert his own independence and power without throwing himself into that tabooed condition which robs power of its triumph. And this inclination had helped his shrewdness in forming judgments which were at once innovating and moderate"(viii). The subtle relationship of contrast and comparison in the portrayal of these two characters is one of the most successful things in the novel. It is much more suggestive than the more extreme contrast between Lyon and Mrs Transome; when the latter characters meet it is clear they have no common ground: "Mrs Transome hardly noticed Mr Lyon, not from studied haughtiness, but from sheer mental inability to consider him-- as a person ignorant of natural history is unable to consider a freshwater polype otherwisw than as a sort of animated weed, certainly not fit for table"(xxxviii). But Felix and Harold do come into contact and communicate, and George Eliot shows skilfully how the essential discrepancy in moral values between the two men leads, despite surface similarities, to mutual mistrust and misunderstanding. As the ideals and standards of Felix and Malthouse Yard are translated into terms of Transome Court a subtle devaluation occurs, and it is this which Esther has to resist. Once again, as in Silas Marner and Romola, we are being

invited by George Eliot to discover this discrepancy, the knife-edge which separates the two characters; and the finer the knife-edge becomes the more carefully we have to scrutinise character and ^{the} texture of personal relationships to discover George Eliot's positive and negative values. And the dividing-line here is not only between two characters, it is also between the two worlds of the novel; and it is this which gives resonance to the relationship of Harold and Felix.

Harold's "too confident self-reliance" then, is, unlike Felix's, at the service of his egoism.⁵ His failure and punishment are correspondingly more severe, and ~~it~~ only at the end of the novel is there a suggestion of regeneration. Once again, Lyon is used as the means of assessing the values of the central characters. A powerful effect is obtained by the juxtaposition of the practical man of business who is unwittingly bringing about his own downfall, and the eccentric, other-worldly Lyon. The author's comment on this contrast between men of ideas and men of practice further defines the divided structure of the novel:

...but I never smiled at Mr Lyon's trustful energy without falling to penitence and veneration immediately after. For what we call illusions are often, in truth, a wider vision of past and present realities—a willing movement of a man's soul with the larger sweep of the world's forces—a movement towards a more assured end than the chances of a single life....

At present, looking back on that day at Treby, it seems to me that the sadder illusion lay with Harold Transome, who was trusting in his own skill to shape the success of his own morrows, ignorant of what many yesterdays had determined for him beforehand. (xvi)

Felix quickly learns the error of "trusting in his own skill" too exclusively in the chaos of the election riot; Harold only gradually comes to a full realisation of his dependence upon others through the dénouement of "the labyrinthine confusions ~~of~~ of right and possession"(xliii) of the Transome Court theme.

The chief concern at Transome Court—and this is why it ~~is~~ is such an

excellent foil to the world of Malthouse Yard--is the despairing attempt to escape from these same "past and present realities" which Lyon understands so well. In this world, Mrs Transome stands, in stark antithesis to Lyon, as the type of "the clever sinner"(i), and her past must be contrasted with his. The clash between Lyon's religious beliefs and his personal experience led to a mature and tolerant philosophy; there is a similar clash in Mrs Transome's life, but here there is no reconciliation. Her creed is simple:

She had no ultimate analysis of things that went beyond blood and family--the Herons of Fenshore or the Badgers of Hillbury. She had never seen behind the canvass with which her life was hung. In the dim background there was the burning mount and the tables of the law; in the foreground there was Lady Debarry privately gossiping about her.... (xl)

In "fatal inconsistency" with this creed of "blood and family" is her past adultery with Jermy; they "had seen no reason why they should not indulge their passion and their vanity, and determine for themselves how their lives should be made delightful in spite of unalterable external conditions"(xxi). The presentation of the faded Mrs Transome at Transome Court still living by the creed she has defiled is without doubt one of George Eliot's supreme achievements.

The whole tragedy latent at Transome Court is presented with great economy in the opening scene of the novel. As Mrs Transome awaits Harold's return from the East, she mentally re-enacts the events of her life which have led up to this present climax. Exposition and character are here given dramatically and simultaneously; as she re-lives the past, the objects by which she is surrounded at Transome Court take on gradually a deeper significance and become transformed into symbols of her disenchantment. One feels immediately what a long way George Eliot has come from the combination of abstract analysis and self-conscious symbols of Romola. A further test of George Eliot's remarkable achievement here is to compare Mrs Transome with Dickens' type of disenchantment, Miss Havisham in Great Expectations,⁶ with whom she has clearly a great deal in common. Miss Havisham with her decayed

wedding-clothes and stopped clocks is a conventional and melodramatic symbol compared with the living and fearful reality of Mrs Transome's "keen sensibility and dread, which lay screened behind all her ~~patry~~ petty habits and narrow notions"(i).

Mrs Transome's illusory hope that all will be well now that Harold is returning, that her past needs will be forgotten and that she will be saved from the "hideous lottery" her life has become, is shattered by his arrival: "Three minutes before, she had fancied that, in spite of all changes wrought by fifteen years of separation, she should clasp her son again as she had done at their parting; but in the moment when their eyes met, she sense of strangeness came upon her like a terror"(i). This 'sense of strangeness' comes from his similarity to Jermyn whom he resembles both in character and appearance⁷—in his complete self-confidence, his brash egoism and assertiveness, and in his insensitivity to other people. As he sets out to restore the family fortunes, these are the qualities which very quickly lead him into conflict with Jermyn, to the discovery of his parentage, to disinheritance and social disgrace. This ~~is~~ is a miniature Greek tragedy⁸ which can only be described in terms of hamartia, peripeteia and anagnorisis; and that George Eliot saw it as such is clear from the introductory chapter when, after speaking of the Transome law-suit, she says

...there is seldom any wrong-doing which does not carry along with it some downfall of blindly-climbing hopes, some hard entail of suffering...some tragic mark of kinship in the one brief life to the far-stretching life that went before, and to the life that is to come after, such as has raised the pity and terror of men ever since they began to discern between will and destiny.

The irony of the peripeteia is that Harold, rejecting in his egoism this kinship and dependence upon others, sets out to pursue and destroy Jermyn—and forces the discovery of this very kinship upon himself. As we might expect in George Eliot's universe, Harold's hamartia is not simply a mistake or error of judgment; it is a moral flaw, the refusal to accept his position

and duties in the social organism, and his punishment, like that of his parents, is in proportion to his flaw. However complex George Eliot's idea of the relationship between the individual and the social organism becomes, she invariably achieves an exact proportion between crime and punishment. The innocent—with the possible exception here of the old Mr Transome—do not suffer, and this is why in the last resort the working out of this theme cannot be called tragic. The anagnorisis is so shattering to Harold because his character is what it is, and for this he must be held finally responsible.

The full implications of the relationship of the three protagonists in this theme only gradually emerge. In particular, our awareness of the full horror of Mrs Transome's position develops slowly through dramatic hints and juxtapositions. The actual moment of revelation comes to the reader, I think, in chapter viii, and it provides an excellent example of George Eliot's masterly indirection. Most of the chapter is taken up with a discussion of Harold's character, particularly his brash egoism, and with his mother's unexplained fears at his treatment of Jermy. We do not know at this point in the novel why she is so apprehensive of her son's reforms, why "she trembled under his kindness." The chapter ends with this superbly restrained yet ominous paragraph which is a foretaste of the sombre and tense world of Daniel Deronda:

She was standing on the broad gravel in the afternoon; the long shadows lay on the grass; the light seemed the more glorious because of the reddened and golden trees. The gardeners were busy at their pleasant work; the newly-turned soil gave out an agreeable fragrance; and little Harry was playing with Nimrod round old Mr Transome, who sat placidly on a low garden-chair. The scene would have made a charming picture of English domestic life, and the handsome, majestic, grey-haired woman (obviously grandmamma) would have been specially admired. But the artist would have felt it requisite to turn her face towards her husband and little grandson, and to have given her an elderly amiability of expression which would have divided remark with his exquisite rendering of her Indian shawl. Mrs Transome's face was turned the other way, and for this reason she only heard an approaching

step, and did not see whose it was; yet it startled her: it was not quick enough to be her son's step, and besides, Harold was away at Duffield. It was Mr Jermyh's.

Jermyh's approach explains silently and dramatically the lapse from the conventional in the "charming picture of English domestic life" at Transome Court; he comes to provide the missing factor in the picture and to explain Mrs Transome's lack of "an elderly amiability of expression." Then, in this role, he is linked significantly with Harold by the startled Mrs Transome who is fully aware of the difference in their steps. These hints help us to bridge the emotional gap between the apparent unimportance of Jermyh's arrival and the tension with which it is described, and suddenly the true relationship of three characters becomes perfectly clear. Without any explicit comment, the secret of Mrs Transome's dilemma is revealed. And alongside our growing awareness of this is being plotted with appalling irony the increasing assertiveness of Harold's egoistic will.

This is not the "willing movement of a man's soul with the larger sweep of the world's forces," but an attempt by these three protagonists to escape from these forces now turned Nemesis,⁹ George Eliot is showing us ^{here} the reverse of her familiar theme of the search for a social ethic: Esther is liberated by the vision of a "wider life", whilst Harold is punished by the shattering revelation of his sonship when he feels for the first time "the hard pressure of our common lot, the yoke of that mighty resistless destiny laid upon us by the acts of other men as well as our own" (xlix).

This is George Eliot's most satisfying dramatisation of the workings of Nemesis. She has no need to rely upon coincidence to bring about the punishment of the three protagonists--there is here no Baldassare waiting by the river for Tito. Given the relationship between these three characters, which has been established long before the novel opens, all that is required to precipitate the tragedy is the assertive egoism which Harold displays in the opening scene of the novel. Nemesis works convincingly through

through human agency and a sense of inevitability is achieved by taking the Transome Court theme so near its climax. Mrs Transome's adultery and the trickery over the Durfey inheritance—elements which correspond in their different spheres—are part of the irrevocable past which cannot be questioned. Harold's Nemesis is hereditary and entailed, and the extremely complex plot centering in the law-suit and will is an image of the interdependence of human beings, both in the past, present and future, within the social organism.

The contrast between Mrs Transome and Lyon must be insisted on. When his past returns to threaten him, he acts typically in persevering with the religious debate he has promoted:

What if he were inwardly torn by doubt and anxiety concerning his own private relations and the facts of his own past life? That danger of absorption within the narrow bounds of self only urged him the more towards action which had a wider bearing, and might tell on the welfare of England at large. (xv)

As the revelation of Mrs Transome's past approaches, she shrinks closer and closer within herself:

Here she moved to and fro among the rose-coloured satin of chairs and curtains—the great story of the world reduced for her to the little tale of her own existence—dull obscurity everywhere, except where the keen light fell on the narrow track of her own lot, wide only for a woman's anguish. (xxxiv)

To describe this moral response, images of sacrilege replace the religious imagery of the other half of the novel.

The full awareness of this contrast between the ethos of Transome Court and Malthouse Yard is brought home to us with the sudden introduction of Esther to Transome Court. Up to this point in the novel, she has been alternatively annoyed and impressed by the high ideals of Felix and her father; now she moves into the isolated, darker world of Transome Court where such ideals are unknown. The two sides of her character come into

equal conflict: the unregenerate Esther, a Mrs Transome in embryo, is attracted by the genteelness of Transome Court and the homage paid her by Harold, whilst the partly reformed Esther gradually becomes aware of the hollowness of this existence and "the threadbare tissue of this majestic lady's life"(xlix). The question is, will Esther's 'best self' succumb to its "middling delights, overhung with the languorous haziness of motiveless ease"(xliv), before she comes to realise the full relevance of the "desecrated sanctities" of Mrs Transome's life to her own future?

Here at Transome Court, the "moral mediocrity" of Harold's character is developed in effective detail. The "silken ⁿbodage" and "well-cushioned despair"(xlix) threatening Esther are, together with his attitude to women, his belief in political expediency, and his hookah, aspects of Harold's orientalism which is in direct contrast to the bracing "high mountain air"(xliv) of Felix's life. Harold is a convincingly portrayed product of the illicit liaison at the turn of the century between the dandified young Jermyn and (speculating on a Spa at Treby) and the aristocratic and beautiful Mrs Transome. With his premature portliness, his white hands, and his bogus Radicalism, Harold is a second-generation romantic lover, the victim of his parents. But the attractions of Transome Court and Harold's homage are also shown, countering the long-range influence of Felix, and we realise that only the awaited vision of consequences can save Esther.¹⁰ Slowly the moment of choice approaches: "And now, in these hours since her return from Loamford, her mind was in that state of highly-wrought activity, that large discourse, in which we seem to stand aloof from our own life—weighing impartially our own temptations and the weak desires that most habitually solicit us. 'I think I am getting that power Felix wished me to have: I shall soon see strong visions,' she said to herself..."(xlix). She is coming to understand more and more clearly the implications of the decorous life at Transome Court; but unless the vision comes, she will resemble the portrait of the youthful Mrs Transome, unaware of the future and the consequences of her choice. To escape momentarily from the

influence of this suffocating genteel world, she looks out into the night: "She wanted the largeness of the world to help her thought"(xlix). She is saved finally by the long-awaited vision. She already has experienced one vision in the revelation of Lyon's past, "a vision of passion and struggle, of delight and renunciation"(xxvi), which ^{epitomises} one ethic of the novel. Now comes the second, crucial vision which epitomises the other ethic of the novel--the sight of Mrs Transome at her moment of supreme suffering:

The dimly-suggested tragedy of this woman's life, the dreary waste of years empty of sweet trust and affection, afflicted her even to horror. It seemed to have come as a last vision to urge her towards the life where the draughts of joy sprang from the unchanging fountains of reverence and devout love. (1)

Now she sees the full relevance of Mrs Transome's ^{pat} to her own relationship with Harold, and so she turns instinctively to Felix.

Esther's choice is not merely a personal choice of Felix but also a social commitment to the working-class. This aspect is underlined by the parallel with the biblical Esther. Even before her elevation of rank, she is seen "in this small dingy house of the minister in Malthouse Yard" as "a light-footed, sweet-voiced Queen Esther"(vi). Later at Transome Court, Harold assures her that she is "empress" of her fortune, even though she confesses "I don't think I know very well what to do with my empire"(xl). As might be expected, the biblical parallel is further developed by Lyon who looks at everything from the same panoramic point of view: "he was so accustomed to the impersonal study of narrative, that even in these exceptional moments the habit of half a century asserted itself, and he seemed sometimes not to distinguish the case of Esther's inheritance from a story in ancient history"(xxxviii). For the Jews he substitutes the "body of Congregational Dissent", and hopes Esther will fulfil her ordained role: "Your education and peculiar history would thus ^{be} seem to have coincided with a long train of events in making this family property

a mean of honouring and illustrating a purer form of Christianity than that which hath unhappily obtained the pre-eminence in this land"(xli). His hopes are too narrowly sectarian as is shown when Esther continues her biblical role at the trial by using her new position to appeal for Felix, and identifying herself with the people amongst she has been brought up: "Some of that ardour which has flashed out and illuminated all poetry and history was burning today in the bosom of sweet Esther Lyon"(xlvi). The two aspects of her choice must be given equal emphasis if we are to understand how she is the woman who can make "a man's passion for her rush in one current with all the great aims of his life"(xxvii).

Indeed, the almost complete concentration of interest upon Esther during the final events of the novel is responsible for the final lack of balance. The titular hero waits passively in prison for the regeneration of Esther to be completed so that his divided life can be unified. Poised between the contrasting worlds of the novel, she is given the final task of evaluation and it is an anti-climax to realise at the end that as a reward for her rejection of the world of Transome Court she is allowed to marry Felix, who has throughout been insulated from its corroding gentility. In fact, she has usurped Felix's central position, so obscuring the nature of his education. George Eliot solves a similar structural problem much more satisfactorily in Daniel Deronda where Deronda remains throughout delicately poised between the Jews and Gwendolen, who at the end combine to effect a complete integration of his character. But, it is significant that in order to achieve this finer balance, George Eliot has to divide Esther's role between Gwendolen and Mirah.

Felix Holt is, then, a novel about the organic nature of society. The themes of politics, religion and love, all demonstrate that neither

the claims of the microcosm nor of the macrocosm can be neglected. Any attempt to reform or modify the social organism without due regard for and commitment to the individual is bound to fail from lack of reality, just as an egoistic assertion of the claims of the individual will fail by its very exclusiveness. In Romola, George Eliot examined the anomalies and contradictions inherent in the very nature of the social organism. In Felix Holt, she is no longer analysing the validity of conflicting principles of conduct; she has accepted the paradoxes of her moral universe and is seeking through her reformers emergency measures to effect a breakthrough. And there is an indication of her awareness and acceptance of these difficulties in the remarkable conviction with which, in this novel and in Daniel Deronda, she reverses the favourite theme of the search for an ethic and depicts a whole world in which society is seen as Nemesis pursuing and punishing those individuals who refuse its claims. One is the theme of worship and high endeavour, the other of sacrilege and punishment. The god in each case is society.

FOOTNOTES

1

The Spa at Treby carries the same moral connotations as do those in Scott's Saint Ronan's Well and Jane Austen's Sanditon. And there is a connection between Treby Spa and Scott's Spa of Saint Ronan's. Early in Scott's novel, Meg Dods says: "Ye'll be thinking o' the sermon he has printed," said the angry dame, "where he compares their nasty puddle of a Well yonder to the pool of Bethesda, like the foul-mouthed, fleecing, feather-headed fule as he is!"(ii); whilst in Felix Holt, "a report that the proposed name for the baths was Bethesda Spa, threatened to give the whole affair a blasphemous aspect"(iii).

2

Compare the following from "Moral Swindlers," Impressions of Theophrastus Such: "Do we desire to see public spirit penetrating all classes of the community and affecting every man's conduct, so that he shall make neither the saving of his soul nor any other private saving an excuse for indifference to the general welfare? Well and good. But the sort of public spirit that scamps its bread-winning work, whether with the trowel, the pen, or the overseeing brain, that it may hurry to scenes of political or social agitation, would be as baleful a gift to our people as any malignant demon could devise."

3

Culture and Society, 1780-1950, (London, 1958), p. 106.

4

Lecky, pp. 51-2.

5

A caricature of Harold's political beliefs is the publican Chubb's "political 'idee', which was, that society existed for the sake of the individual, and that the name of that individual was Chubb"(xi).

6

There are several interesting points of resemblance between Great Expectations (1861) and Felix Holt. The most obvious is between Miss Havisham at Satis House and Mrs Transome at Transome Court; although of course Miss Havisham is much more of an innocent victim of society than Mrs Transome. Also Estella and Esther, as well as the similarity of their names, are both being exploited in the aristocratic worlds of the novels. Finally, Esther's vision of Mrs Transome in her moment of suffering is closely anticipated in Pip's glimpse of Miss Havisham at her moment of supreme grief: "I therefore got up and put on my clothes, and went out across the yard into the long stone passage, designing to gain the outer courtyard and walk

there for the relief of my mind. But I was no sooner in the passage than I extinguished my candle; for I saw Miss Havisham going along it in a ghostly manner, making a low cry. I followed her at a distance, and saw her go up the staircase. She carried a bare candle in her hand, which she had probably taken from one of the sconces in her own room, and was a most unearthly object by its light. Standing at the bottom ~~top~~ of the staircase, I felt the mildewed air of the feast-chamber, without seeing her open the door, and I heard her walking there, and so across into her own room, and so across again into that, never ceasing the low cry"(xxxviii).

7

George Eliot makes excellent use of certain physical resemblances between Harold and Jermyn to suggest their tragic kinship; in particular, the similarity between Jermyn's "white, fat, but beautiful-shaped hands, which he was in the habit of rubbing gently on his entrance into a room"(ii) and Harold's is a sinister, suggestive and subtle use of a romantic, Byronic convention.

In Disraeli's novel Sybil there is an M. P. called Jermyn "with his brown eyes and his white hands"(xv). This novel, like Great Expectations, has some interesting thematic resemblances with Felix Holt. See Raymond Williams, pp. 97-100, 103.

8

See Fred C. Thomson, "Felix Holt as Classic Tragedy," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 16 (1961), 47-58.

9

The antithesis between these two themes emerges clearly from some of the epigraphs used in the novel. On the one hand, there are the epigraphs describing the world of visions and foresight; for example, chapters xli and xlix. On the other hand, there are the epigraphs describing the world of punishment and Nemesis; for example, chapters xxi and xlviii.

10

When Felix first meets Esther, she is shown to be in possession of a copy of Byron's poems, which he opens at 'The Dream' with the remark: "He'd better have been asleep and snoring." The narrative of Byron's poem has some resemblance to Esther's later fears of a future without Felix Holt; and the poem emphasises the importance and significance of visions:

[Dreams] do divide our being; they become
A portion of ourselves as of our time,
And look like heralds of eternity;
They pass like spirits of the past,—they speak
Like Sybils of the future: they have power—
The tyranny of pleasure and of pain;
They make us what we were not—what they will...

DANIEL DERONDA

In Daniel Deronda, George Eliot returns to the structure she created in Felix Holt, which she now employs more flexibly and economically. Middlemarch was a completely new development in George Eliot's novel writing, and its more open, less schematised structure represents quite different aims from either Felix Holt or Daniel Deronda. This is the reason why its discussion is reserved for the next chapter. Returning to the structure she experimented with in Felix Holt, George Eliot now centres her novel more firmly in the character of the titular hero. Deronda is the only link between the two discrete worlds of the novel—the world of Gwendolen, and the world of Mordecai—and the whole structure pivots firmly upon his developing character. Here clearly one can see George Eliot learning from a previous structural mistake. In the second half of Felix Holt, George Eliot's earlier concentration on her heroines and their search for a social ethic reasserted itself with the result that the novel was thrown off balance; Felix's education had to take second place whilst Esther moved from Malthouse Yard to Transome Court. There is no such uncertainty in this novel. Any feeling of imbalance we have whilst reading Daniel Deronda comes not from the structural organisation of the novel, but, as we shall suggest later, ~~from~~ from the nature of the hero's education.

The visionary element which was used a little tentatively in Felix Holt now focuses confidently the essential experience at the heart of each world, providing us with the clue to the broad and simple plan of the novel. In Daniel Deronda, the visions of Gwendolen and Mordecai, the

one of fear and the other of hope, the one a preventive vision of consequences and the other a positive vision of reform, crystallise the essential function of each of the separate halves of the novel in the education of the titular hero. A single quotation will indicate the fundamental relationship between these visions, and their connection with Deronda, the main character. Speaking of Deronda's desire for a confidant, George Eliot ends chapter xxxvii with these words: "But he had no expectation of meeting the friend he imagined. Deronda's was not one of those quiveringly-poised natures that lend themselves to second-sight."¹ The next chapter begins:

'Second-sight' is a flag over disputed ground. But it is matter of knowledge that there are persons whose yearnings, conceptions -- nay, travelled conclusions -- continually take the form of images which have a foreshadowing power: the deed they would do starts up before them in complete shape, making a coercive type; the event they hunger for or dread rises into vision with a seed-like growth, feeding itself fast on unnumbered impressions.

The event which Mordecai 'hungers for', and the event which Gwendolen 'dreads' are linked in this generalisation for the first time; whilst the juxtaposition with the comment on Deronda implies the double role he is going to play in relation to these visions -- that of fulfiller and that of redeemer.

(i)

The event which Gwendolen dreads 'rises into vision' most disturbingly in the charade from The Winter's Tale. Gwendolen as Hermione is about to be recalled to life when the concealed picture suddenly appears:

Heryklesmer, who had been good-natured enough to seat himself at the piano, struck a thunderous chord -- but in the same instant, and before Hermione had put forth her foot, the movable panel, which was on a line with the piano, flew open on the right

opposite the stage and disclosed the picture of the dead face and the fleeing figure, brought out in pale definiteness by the position of the wax-lights. Everyone was startled, but all eyes in the act of turning towards the opened panel were recalled by a piercing cry from Gwendolen, who stood without change of attitude, but with a change of expression that was terrifying in its terror. She looked like a statue into which a soul of Fear had entered: her pallid lips were parted; her eyes, usually narrowed under their long lashes, were dilated and fixed. (vi)

The intrusion of the painting of the drowning man and fleeing woman just before Gwendolen is to be 'resurrected' suggests that before she can emerge from her living death of sin and remorse she has to submit to the full horror of her dreaded vision, and so become aware of the evil within herself. The vision becomes reality at the climax of the novel, at the drowning of Grandcourt, when Gwendolen leaps into the sea away from the crime she ~~is~~ has willed: "I was leaping away from myself—I would have saved him then. I was leaping away from my crime, and there it was close to me as I fell—there was the dead face..." (lvii).² The half of the novel in which she is the principal character is a ~~long~~ long and painful movement towards this realisation of her vision. It is brilliantly successful because of the tension which George Eliot achieves between the horror of Gwendolen's dread and the sophisticated world in which she attempts to master it. A genteel politeness veils the horrors beneath. Here, at the charade, for example, the sudden melodrama of the painting is assimilated quickly and easily into the sophisticated setting:

"A magnificent bit of plastik that!" said Klesmer to Miss Arrowpoint. And ~~ix~~ a quick fire of undertoned question and answer went round.

"Was it part of the play?"

"Oh no, surely not. Miss Harleth was too much affected. A sensitive creature!"

"Dear me! I was not aware that there was a painting behind that panel; were you?"

"No; how should I? Some eccentricity in one of the Earl's family long ago, I suppose."

"How very painful! Pray shut it up."

"Was the door locked? It is very mysterious. It must be the spirits."

"But there is no medium present."

"How do you know that? We must conclude that there is, when such things happen."

"Oh, the door was not locked; it was probably the sudden vibration from the piano that sent it open."

This conclusion came from Mr Gascoigne, who begged Miss Merry if possible to get the key. But this readiness to explain the mystery was thought by Mrs Vucany unbecoming in a clergyman, and she observed in an undertone that Mr Gascoigne was always a little too wordly for her taste. However, the key was produced, and the rector turned it in the lock with an emphasis rather offensively rationalising--as who should say, "It will not start open again"--putting the key in his pocket as a security. (vi)

We are reminded of Mrs Transome's decorous and fearful life--except that here George Eliot is doing the more difficult task of revealing dramatically the future horror latent in the present trivialities.

Gwendolen's behaviour in the Hermione incident introduces us to "that liability of hers to fits of spiritual dread"(vi). The dread is a dread of her thwarted egoism. She knows that she is powerless to prevent her egoism asserting itself whatever the consequences. This is why she is terrified by the confrontation of her naked ego and the universe:

Solitude in any wide scene impressed her with an undefined feeling of immeasurable existence aloof from her, in the midst of which she was helplessly incapable of asserting herself. The little astronomy taught her at school used sometimes to set her imagination at work in a way that made her tremble: but always when some one joined her she recovered her indifference to the vastness in which she seemed an exile...(vi)

This is the reason why "the ordinary wirework of social forms" is so important to her; it shuts out the larger distances, reassuring her that "her horizon was that of the genteel romance"(vi), within the bounds of which her will can always prevail. But the horrific picture is a pre-figuration of the act she will be forced into as a final gesture of assertion when for the moment "the wire work of social forms" reveals

the pit beneath and the self is threatened with extinction. Then, only Deronda will be able to save her.

In this aristocratic half of the novel, we have in a more detailed and comprehensive form the world of Transome Court. Here George Eliot has presented in quintessence the world of self and of will, and its chief exemplar is Grandcourt. He is far more sinister and frightening than anything in Felix Holt because his egoistic will is not directed towards any understandable end. Jermyrn selfishly seeks wealth and security in his middle-age, but Grandcourt has no such immediately recognisable object. He wants to be completely free to exercise his will at all times without any control being placed upon him by his own or other people's desires, habits, or needs. This is why he enjoys yachting: "its dreamy do-nothing absolutism, unmolested by social demands, suited his disposition"(liv). He seeks to use his will without commitment to any course of action which might limit his will's future fluctuations. The result is ennui, prevarication and unpredictability--the same result paradoxically as that produced by Deronda's diametrically opposite attitude of excessive sympathy and altruism. This is a more extreme example of the contrast and comparison we examined between Felix Holt and Harold Transome. The recognition of a surface similarity leads to the discovery of the two poles of George Eliot's moral universe.

Grandcourt, unlike Arthur and Tito, is an accomplished egoist when the novel opens, and his character never changes. Like them he carries with him "the subtlest atmosphere of aura of roses" and speaks with "just a shade of amorous languor"(xxvii). But he has in addition a dimension of character which suggests the more perverse forms of 'the Romantic Agony',³ caused in his case by a hypertrophy, not of sentiment, but of will. Grandcourt is a convincing character for the same reasons as Jermyrn in Felix Holt. George Eliot does not attempt to make realistic the romantic lineaments of villainy; instead these lineaments are used half-humorously, half-apprehensively by the other characters in an attempt to define

something they do not understand. Viewed from a distance, Gwendolen and Grandcourt are playing parts in an operatic charade; but we also see them through each other's eyes when they recognise a mutual egoism and deadliness. Their appreciation of each other's stratagems for avoiding emotion of any kind is particularly convincing. As she puts on the betrothal ring which Grandcourt has sent by groom, Gwendolen comments: "He would rather make me put it on than ask me to let him do it. Aha! he is very proud. But so am I. We shall match each other. I should hate a man who went down on his knees, and came fawning on me. He really is not disgusting"(xxviii).

Grandcourt's deadliness is conveyed by means of images of torture and of passionless, insidious violence. Gwendolen can resist him no more "than she could have resisted the benumbing effect from the touch of a torpedo"; she is opposed by "a will like that of a crab or a boa-constrictor which goes on pinching or crushing without alarm at thunder"(xxxv); on the yacht, Gwendolen sees him as "a dangerous serpent ornamentally coiled in her cabin"(liv). The cruel assertion of his will on Gwendolen is seen repeatedly in terms of instruments of torture gripping her flesh. George Eliot had begun experimenting with imagery in this way in Felix Holt to describe the relationships between Mrs Transome, Harold and Jermyn. Then as now, it was for the purpose of showing Nemesis at work through a corroding and ultimately destructive personal relationship. For example, in the first chapter of Felix Holt Mrs Transome feels Harold's assertiveness "as much as she would have felt the unmanageable strength of a great bird which had alighted near her, and allowed her to stroke its wing for a moment because food lay near her"; her sense of shock at his Radicalism ~~is~~ ^{paralyses her speech} ~~is~~ ^{and action} ~~is~~ "as in a man who had just been branded on the forehead all wonted motives would be uprooted"; whilst her "hungry desire" for her eldest son's death on the birth of Harold grows "like a black poisonous plant feeding in the sunlight." The images are of the same sinister and macabre stock

as the more frequent ones in Daniel Deronda. The animal images seek to dehumanise the personal relationships described--this is why one of the most terrifying moments in the whole novel occurs when we are told that Gwendolen "was reduced to dread lest she should become a mother"(lv)--whilst the images of torture momentarily shatter the decorous surface of the aristocratic world and reveal its true nature. Their use is essential to the presentation of Grandcourt. His character cannot be presented dramatically because his actions, viewed over any length of time, are unpredictable and meaningless. Such a character, says George Eliot, "may even show sudden impulses which have a false air of daemonic strength because they seem inexplicable, though perhaps their secret lies merely in the want of regulated channels for the soul to move in--good and sufficient ducts of habit without which our nature easily turns to mere ooze and mud, and any pressure yields nothing but a spurt or a puddle"(xv). Without these "ducts of habit" the analysis of character becomes almost impossible, and Grandcourt, unlike Arthur and Tito, is not even consistent in the avoidance of difficulties and responsibilities. But George Eliot with the aid of metaphor manages to penetrate into Grandcourt's private world and convey its deadliness and futility. And in particular she emphasises the way in which "the languor of intention that came over Grandcourt, like a fit of diseased numbness, when an end seemed within easy reach"(xiv) begins gradually to infect Gwendolen as she succumbs to his will and feels "a sort of lotos-eater's stupor [that] had begun in him and was taking possession of her"(xiii). This disease of self-will is in direct contrast to the "mountain air" of Deronda's influence which frees the individual from the restrictions of the ego. Deronda is compared to the Matterhorn (i) whilst in one of the brilliant exploratory meetings between Gwendolen and Grandcourt, the latter's character is seen as "a knoll planted with American shrubs"(xiii) from which there is no view.

In Daniel Deronda, the world of self is more thickly populated than

that of Felix Holt. As well as Grandcourt, there are the varieties of egoism embodied in Lush, Mrs Glasher, Deronda's mother, Sir Hugo and his wife, and Gwendolen. In the regeneration of Gwendolen, George Eliot sets herself her most difficult task for as the positive worlds of the novels become more visionary and grandiose, the negative ones become more sombre and evil.⁴ Gwendolen has a great deal in common with Grandcourt. As we realise from the wooing, her will like his must prevail, and George Eliot goes further in showing the deadly force inherent in her heroine's self-will than ever before. The destructiveness of the female will was hinted at but not developed in Hetty's "Medusa-face"(xxxvii) in Adam Bede, and in the comparison of Maggie Tulliver, in whom there was "an alarming amount of devil"(VI, ii), to "a small Medusa with her snakes cropped"(I, x), and earliest and most melodramatically in Tina of "Mr Gilfil's Love Story" who seeks like Gwendolen to kill her betrayer with a dagger: "See how she rushes noiselessly, like a pale meteor, along the passages and up the gallery stairs! Those gleaming eyes, those bloodless lips, that swift silent tread, make her look like the incarnation of a fierce purpose, rather than a woman"(xiii). George Eliot's most depraved example is Bertha in The Lifted Veil, whose plans to poison her husband are revealed in a remarkable fashion. The deadliness of her "self-centred, negative nature" into which the hero has supernatural insight is conveyed by images which reappear in Daniel Deronda. She is a "sylph", a "siren", and her fatal attractions are juxtaposed with those of Cleopatra and of "Giorgione's picture of the cruel-eyed woman, said to be a likeness of Lucrezia Borgia." The dress of this femme fatale is in accord with her character. At first, "The pale-green dress, the green leaves that seemed to form a border about her pale blond hair, made one think of a Water-Nixie"; but later she becomes more positively serpentine—"the light became stronger, Bertha...with cruel green eyes, with green jewels and green leaves on her white ball-dress....It was a moment of hell. I saw into her pitiless soul....I saw the great emerald brooch on her

bosom, a studded serpent with diamond eyes." As Gwendolen moves into the aristocratic, insulated world of Daniel Deronda, she is described in classical Greek images which from the time of Adam Bede George Eliot has associated with her worlds of illusion; she is "a Calypso among her nymphs"(x), "a wood-nymph under the beeches"(xiv), an Amaryllis and a "perfect Diana"(xv). But beneath this cultivated, sophisticated surface, Gwendolen's character is shown to have the same "demonic force" as Bertha's, though here it is presented with convincing verisimilitude. In the opening scene of Daniel Deronda, Gwendolen is presented in the gambling hell at Leubronn in the "ensemble du serpent"; she is a "problematic sylph", a "Nereid in sea-green robes", and later we see her "magnificent in her pale green velvet and poisoned diamonds"(xlv). These details lead on to an awareness of Gwendolen's destructiveness which is inseparable from her agoraphobia, her fear of insignificance and domination. If she is not saved by Deronda, she will become like his mother whose "worn beauty had a strangeness in it as if she were not quite a human mother, but a Melusina, who had ties with some world which is independent of ours"(li). Rosamond Vincy had been George Eliot's most impregnable egoist in Middlemarch; only at one point does her egocentric vision of life disintegrate, and "her little world in ruins..she felt herself tottering in the midst as a lonely bewildered consciousness"(lxxviii). Rosamond's single experience of helplessness becomes an integral part of Gwendolen's character; the latter knows that her bewildered ego will attempt to reassert itself on the edge of damnation. This back-lash of her egoism before which she is a helpless spectator gives her character a compulsive, subconscious dimension which is shown effectively as an extension of her "fierceness of maidenhood"(vii). It is in contrast to "the refined negations"(liv) of Grandcourt's diseased will—diseased because it has no object—that Gwendolen's "iridescence"(iv) of character increasingly enlists our sympathy in its unequal conflict. Her redemption is dependent on Deronda's

ability to divert her destructive energy into regenerative channels. "Within ourselves our evil will is momentous," he says to her, "and sooner or later it works its way outside us--it may be in the vitiation that breeds evil acts, but also it may be in the self-abhorrence that stings us into better striving" (lvii). Just in time, Gwendolen's vision is transformed from a horrified glimpse of the inevitable result of her evil will, into a full vision of consequences which gives her freedom to resist.

The ethic of this half of the novel is brilliantly symbolised in the opening scene at the casino of Leubronn. Not only is the gambling scene an epitome of the negative extreme of George Eliot's moral universe; it is also a structural device to clarify the stages of Gwendolen's development. Just as the Hermione incident looks ahead to Gwendolen's ultimate regeneration, so this scene is the symbolic pre-enactment of the course of her fatal egoism.⁵ It is worth following this sustained example of George Eliot's private symbolism to see how she uses it consistently to control one of the themes of the novel.

Vehicle and tenor are fused in a masterly way in the opening scene:

Since she was not winning strikingly, the next best thing was to lose strikingly. She controlled her muscles, and showed no tremor of mouth or hands. Each time her stake was swept off she doubled it. Many were now watching her, but the sole observation she was conscious of was Deronda's who, though she never looked towards him, she was sure had not moved away. Such a drama takes no long while to play out: development and catastrophe can often be measured by nothing clumsier than the moment-hand. "Faites votre jeu, mesdames et messieurs," said the automatic voice of destiny from between mustache and imperial of the croupier; and Gwendolen's arm was stretched to deposit her last poor heap of napoleons. "Le jeu ne va plus," said destiny. And in five seconds Gwendolen turned from the table, but turned resolutely with her face towards Deronda and looked at him. (i)

Gradually, from George Eliot's comments, the full significance of this

roulette incident emerges. We see that it is a detailed symbolic development of Godfrey Cass's "worship of blessed Chance" and of the "hideous lottery" of Mrs Transome's life. Gambling expresses simultaneously a refusal to accept the unchangeable laws of an ordered universe and a desire to succeed at the expense of others, both of which qualities are of course abhorrent to George Eliot: "roulette encourages a romantic superstition as to the chances of the game, and the most prosaic rationalism as to human sentiments which stand in the way of raising needful money"(ii). The gamblers' "uniform negativeness of expression" anticipates the self-destructive egoism of the world of self of the novel. Later, Deronda makes the symbol clearer and helps us to apply it directly to Gwendolen's own conduct when she ignored the claims of Mrs Glasher and her children: "There are enough inevitable turns of fortune which force us to see that our gain is another's loss:- that is one of the ugly aspects of life. One would like to reduce it as much as one could, not get amusement out of exaggerating it"(xxix).

As Gwendolen's history develops, there is a persistent back-reference to this opening scene of the novel by means of imagery and analogy, a gradual unfolding of the meaning of the symbol which becomes a mnemonic of Gwendolen's moral progress--the hopes, the loss, the defiance, the final defeat and the turning to Deronda. The sequence of the gambling scene is an exact anticipation, and the back-references are made with precision. In Deronda's redeeming of the necklace in an attempt to prevent Gwendolen returning to the tables, we have the first expression of his central role: "Persons attracted him...in proportion to the possibility of his defending them, ⁶requiring them, telling upon their lives with some sort of redeeming influence"(xxviii). The necklace he redeems, which had come to Gwendolen from her father, is later joined in a symbolic shorthand by Mrs Glasher's "poisoned diamonds".

Gwendolen's gamble is her marriage with Grandcourt. Despite Deronda's

warning, the wedding-day is fixed and its significance is referred back to the opening scene: "she had wrought herself up to much the same condition as that in which she stood at the gaming-table when Deronda was looking at her and she began to lose." During the ceremony, at the last spin of the wheel, she shares the opiate condition of the monomaniac gamblers: "With her erect head and elastic footsteps she was walking amid illusions; and yet, too, there was an underconsciousness in her that she was a little intoxicated." Her qualms of conscience (Deronda "very likely despised her for marrying Grandcourt, as he despised her for gambling") are "surmounted and thrust down with a sort of exulting defiance as she felt herself standing at the game of life with many eyes upon her, daring everything to win much—or if to lose, still with éclat and a sense of importance"(xxxix). When Deronda sees her for the first time after her marriage, she has accepted her role as loser, but with éclat: "as he saw her receiving greetings with what seemed ~~in~~ a proud cold quietude and a superficial smile, there seemed to be at work within her the same demonic force that had possessed her when she took him in her resolute glance and turned away a loser from the gaming-table"(xxxv). In the next chapter, George Eliot comments: "Poor Gwendolen! It would by-and-by become a sort of skill in which she was automatically practised, to bear this last gambling loss with an air of perfect self-possession"(xxxvi).

As her plight gets worse, she appeals in terms of the gambling-scene to Deronda: "'You wanted me not to do that—not to make my gain out of another's loss in that way—and I have done a great deal worse.'" But she has still some defiance at his interference in her life: "'If I had gone on gambling I might have won again, and I might have got not to care for anything else'"(xxxvi). And Deronda comes to regret momentarily his "monitory redemption" of the necklace: "his interference about that unfortunate necklace might end in nothing^{but} an added pain to him in seeing her after all hardened to another sort of gambling than

roulette"(xiv).

At the climax of the acting out of the gambling symbol, Gwendolen is no longer playing a masterful, controlled game. She is "accused and helpless" and "looked like the unhappy ghost of that Gwendolen Harleth whom Deronda had seen turning with firm lips and proud self-possession from her losses at the gaming table." As she confesses the extent of her crimes to Deronda, she makes the final back-reference: "I wronged some one else. I broke my promise. I meant to get pleasure for myself, and it all turned to misery. I wanted to make my gain out of another's loss--you remember?--it was like roulette--and the money burnt into me"(lvi). Gwendolen herself has come to understand her sinful egoism in terms of the roulette symbol. During this process of continual back-reference, the opening scene has become increasingly emblematic. But it is not a static emblem. It gives in microcosm the sequence of crucial actions in the degeneration of Gwendolen's character. It provides a ground-plan of her development as well as a vivid correlative of her assertive will, and its dramatic vividness can be contrasted with the rather pedestrian use, for essentially the same purpose, of Dinah's sermon at the beginning of Adam Bede.

(ii)

The principal character in the other half of the novel is Mordecai who, like Gwendolen, has 'second-sight'. But his vision is neither horrific nor preventative. The event he "hungers for" and which "rises into vision with a seed-like growth" is the arrival of an "executive self" who will come to fulfil his plan for creating an organic centre for the Jews: "Revive the organic centre: let the unity of Israel which has made the

growth and form of its religion be an outward reality"(xlii). In contrast to Gwendolen's visions which as an expression of will are "like furies preparing the deed that they would straightaway avenge"(liv), Mordecai's are used by him for his own creative purposes. For example, when he describes his past life to Deronda: "'They said, 'He feeds himself on visions,' and I denied not; for visions are the creators and feeders of the world. I see, I measure the world as it is, which the vision will create anew"(xl). And after Deronda has made his prophesied appearance at Blackfriars Bridge, Mordecai is no longer in doubt that his "executive self" has arrived.

In this contrasted world of the Jews where the self is subordinated to the needs of society, George Eliot is developing the ideas she hinted at in the presentation of Felix Holt's public role. Visions are not used here to rescue from damnation and Nemesis, but to develop creatively the Jewish state and its traditions in order to bring about a universal regeneration. Visions which are based upon past traditions and memories and result from the identification of the individual with a community can lead confidently into the future. It is noticeable that as George Eliot's programme of reform becomes more grandiose and visionary, the irony which successfully pervaded parts of Felix Holt, in particular the presentation of Lyon, has been abandoned. In the earlier novel, Lyon's plans for a congregational millenium were used revealingly but ironically as an oblique analogy of Felix's plans of social reform; in Daniel Deronda, Mordecai does not badger and criticise like Lyon, but earnestly prepares the way for Deronda's assumption of his public role. Felix did not become a congregationalist, but Deronda turns out to be a Jew.

The Jews are chosen as the most fully 'organic' of all communities. "'Where else is there,'" asks Mordecai, "'a nation of whom it may be as truly said that their religion and law and moral life mingled as the stream of blood in the heart and made one growth...?'"(xlii). Once the

Jews have established themselves as a separate entity and so safeguarded their religious traditions, then they will be able to propagate the message of their unity amongst the disintegrating nations of the world. As Mordecai says: "The divine principle of our race is action, choice, resolved memory. Let us...choose our full heritage, claim the brotherhood of our nation, and carry it into a new brotherhood with the nations of the Gentiles. The vision is there; it will be fulfilled"(xliii). On a smaller scale this is what Felix was hoping to achieve in the moral education of society by means of his community of handicraftsmen; and what Savonarola was hoping for in the Catholic Church by means of the Florentine community. But Mordecai is much more explicit than they were about the role of his organic community. Israel, as well as acting as a model, will be a means of reconciling nations in conflict: "And the world will gain, as Israel gains. For there will be a community in the van of the East which carries the culture and the sympathies of every great nation in its bosom; there will be a land set for a halting-place of enmities, a neutral ground for the East as Belgium is for the West." "Difficulties?" asks Mordecai, "I know there are difficulties"(xlii). He does not stop here. Once the organic centre of the Jews has been revived, Israel will be able to act as interpreter between East and West; the Jews can "share the dignity of a national life which has a voice amongst the peoples of the East and the West—which will plant the wisdom and skill of our race so that it may be, as of old, a medium of transmission and understanding." Finally, we can see where George Eliot's programme of reform has led her: Israel is to be the means of achieving a synthesis in the universal dialectic of East and West: "Let our wise and wealthy show themselves heroes. They have the memories of the East and West, and they have the full vision of a better. A new Persia with a purified religion magnified itself in art and wisdom, So will a new Judaea, poised between East and West—a covenant of reconciliation"(xlii).

When George Eliot begins to designate the qualities required of the

messiah who is to envisage and carry out these schemes, it becomes clear how far she has moved from her early belief and confidence in the onward march of positivist science. When at the Philosophers' Club someone suggests, in terms reminiscent of George Eliot's earlier optimism, that "The laws of development are being discovered, and changes taking place according to them are necessarily progressive," his argument is dismissed briefly by both Deronda and Mordecai who are now seeking a more highly organic conception of growth and development. As Mordecai says, rejecting the arguments of the "rational Jew", Gideon: "I too claim to be a rational Jew. But what is it to be rational—what is it to feel the light of the divine reason growing stronger and stronger within and without? It is to see more and more of the hidden bonds that bind and consecrate change as a dependent growth—yea, consecrate it with kinship: the past becomes my parent, and the future stretched towards me the appealing arms of children" (xlii). This vision of the interdependence of past, present and future can only be achieved by a complete fusion of emotion and intellect in a new kind of rationalism. This re-definition of rationality—reminiscent of Arnold's "imaginative reason"—has been anticipated by Deronda in his contrast between the mathematician's abstracting intellect and Mordecai's "emotional intellect": "Men may dream in demonstrations, and cut out an illusory world ~~of~~ in the shape of axioms, definitions, and propositions, with a final exclusion of fact signed Q. E. D.... And since the unemotional intellect may carry us into a mathematical dreamland where nothing is but what is not, perhaps an emotional intellect may have absorbed into its passionate vision of possibilities some truth of what will be..." (xlii). Mordecai's visions are close to a scientific hypothesis which is not merely an induction from a large number of observed facts, but a conjecture making facts intelligible and controlling future discovery. Mordecai's nature, muses Deronda, "might be one of the natures where a wise estimate of consequences is fused in the fires of that passionate belief

which determines the consequences it believes in. The inspirations of the world have come in that way too: even strictly-measuring science could hardly have got on without that forecasting ardour which feels the agitations of discovery beforehand, and has a faith in its preconceptions that surmounts many failures of experiment"(xlii).⁶ The reformer, who is being defined here, joins past and future by means of vision (in the other half of the novel, vision is used to avert the evil consequences of the past);⁷ vision selects the vital elements from the past and controls their development into the future. Arnold, although he had a different solution, stressed the urgency of this task in his essay on Heine:

Modern times find themselves with an immense system of institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, rules, which have come to them from times not modern. In this system their life has to be carried forward To remove this want of correspondence is beginning to be the settled endeavour of most persons of good sense. Dissolvents of the old European system of dominant ideas and facts we must all be, all of us who have any power of working; what we have to study is that we may not be acrid dissolvents of it.

This awakening of the modern spirit must transform the beliefs and traditions of the Jews, says Mordecai, to meet the challenge of the present and the future without any of the destruction and suffering caused by those "acrid dissolvents", the sacred rebels.

This difficult task of selection and transformation in the preparation of Israel for its crucial role can only be successfully carried out by someone who has direct experience of both the conflicting forces of the world dialectic. This is why George Eliot lays so much stress upon the education of Mordecai and Deronda. Speaking of his own spiritual destiny, Mordecai says: "It was the soul fully born within me, it came in my boyhood. It brought its own world—a mediaeval world, where there were men who made the ancient language live again

in new psalms of exile. They had absorbed the philosophy of the Gentile into the faith of the Jew, and still they yearned towards a centre for our race"(xl). If Israel is to be the future arbiter between East and West, Deronda too must unite the two cultures. This is what he insists on when describing his public role to his mother; although he means to identify himself with the Jews, he is aware that "The effect of my education can never be done away with. The Christian sympathies in which my mind was reared can never die out of me..."(liii). The conflict between the world forces of Hebraism and Hellenism which in Romola George Eliot located in fifteenth century Florence, is now to be centred in the future state of Israel, and we are invited to anticipate the reformer, Deronda, a Jew with Christian sympathies and a classical education, bringing about the final universal synthesis.

As can be seen, most of the meaning of this half of the novel is conveyed through debate which is general and theoretic. Only in the family of the Cohens does George Eliot suggest, admirably but all too briefly, how a human community gains in fellowship and dignity from its observance of traditional rituals—even though these might not be fully understood. It is only when we are witnessing this Cohen family life that we have any real understanding of what Mordecai means by his Jewish revival. In this half of the novel, which is violently contrasted with the world of diseased self-will, Deronda has to attempt to fulfil Mordecai's prophecy. This is the world where live "the men who had the visions which, as Mordecai said, were the creators and feeders of the world—moulding and feeding the more passive life which without them would dwindle and shrivel into the narrow tenacity of insects, unshaken by thoughts beyond the reaches of their antennae"(lv). Deronda is placed between the world of visionary reform and this insect world, with a difficult role in each.

(iii)

These two visions, one in each half of the novel, urge Deronda's two roles upon him--the one private, the other public. Throughout the novel, there is an effectively modulated contrast between the Gentile and Jewish worlds; between, for example, the Cohens and Meyricks, between Mirah's count and Grandcourt, between Deronda's mother and Gwendolen. But whatever the specific comparisons and contrasts, we must recognise that the fundamental relationship is between Deronda and his two visionaries who are contrasted. In contrast to Gwendolen's selfish egoism we have Mordecai's wide-stretching purposes and submergence of self. Both have visions, but whereas Gwendolen's vision makes her fear "solitude in any wide scene", Mordecai's makes him yearn "with a poet's yearning for the wide sky, the far-reaching vista of bridges, the tender and fluctuating lights on the water which seems to breathe life that can shiver and mourn, and be comforted and rejoice"(xxxviii). As George Eliot says in the same chapter, Mordecai's "thought went on in wide spaces." And as the parallel action develops, Gwendolen becomes, except for her connection with Deronda, more and more indrawn and insulated: "...all outside the lava-lit track of her troubled conscience, and her effort to get deliverance from it, lay for her in dim forgetfulness"(lxv). Mordecai, on the other hand, after his discovery of his executive self, is seen more and more as "a frail incorporation of the national consciousness" obsessed with the role of Israel in the world. The transitions between the two worlds emphasise the introverted nature of Gentile society and the expansiveness and "sense of corporate existence" of even the mercenary Cohens.

It is worth noticing, even at this stage, the reciprocal nature of the relationship between these two ~~world~~ themes. By his participation

in each world Deronda is prepared for his role in the other. It is thanks to his experience in Gwendolen's world and polite society in general that he ~~now~~ comes up to Mordecai's requirement of being an "accomplished Egyptian"(lii) as well as a good Jew; whilst it is only by suddenly introducing Gwendolen to the knowledge of his Jewish activities, "the larger destinies of mankind"(lxix), that Deronda is able finally to bring her to a realisation of her own insignificance.

The novel becomes an organic whole by the way in which George Eliot traces the effect of these two people, who represent the two halves of the novel, upon Deronda. The presence of both is required for the education of the titular hero. Deronda's fault of character, in direct contrast to Felix Holt, is an excessive sympathy which paralyses action. This manifests itself, as it does in Ladislaw, in a Hellenistic "meditative yearning after wide knowledge"(xvi), in a "historic sympathy" (xxxii) which enables him to project himself in time and space. Just as Ladislaw was anxious to avoid "seeing the world's ages as a set of box-like partitions without vital connections," so Deronda becomes dissatisfied with Cambridge because of the lack of "insight into the principles which form the vital connections of knowledge"(xvi).⁹ Again, this width of interests is used as a symptom of moral weakness. In Arnold's terms, the Hellenism is not braced with sufficient Hebraism: "his early-wakened sensibility and reflectiveness had developed into a many-sided sympathy, which threatened to hinder any persistent course of action..."(xxxii). He projects himself too easily and readily into too many points of view:

His imagination had so wrought itself to the habit of seeing things as they probably appeared to others, that a strong partisanship, unless it were against an immediate oppression had become an insincerity for him. His plenteous flexible sympathy had ended by falling into one current with that reflective analysis which tends to neutralise sympathy. (xxxii)

He realises that he needs "some external event, or some inward light, that would urge him into a definite line of action," that would give him

"the moral force" he lacks. He wants to become "an organic part of social life"(xxxii), and as this need becomes more insistent, he feels increasingly reluctant to become ^a another Casaubon:

He was ceasing to care for knowledge—he had no ambition for practice—unless they could both be gathered up into one current with emotions; and he dreaded, as if it were a dwelling-place of lost souls, that dead anatomy of culture which turns the universe into a mere ceaseless answer to queries, and knows not everything, but everything else about everything.... (xxxii)

His Hellenistic^{culture} awaits an infusion of Hebraism.

Deronda's "social neutrality"(xvi) is in no way exonerated by George Eliot. His excessive sympathy is shown to be a disease which, like Ladislaw's dilettantism, has to be cured.¹⁰ Early in the novel, for example, just before his rescue of Mirah, we come upon Deronda rowing on the Thames and "questioning whether it were worth while to take part in the battle of the world"(xvii). George Eliot adds significantly that it is a mood common amongst "the young men in whom the unproductive labour of questioning is sustained by three or five per cent on capital which somebody else had battled for." Then, Deronda drifts with the tide and indulgently practises a kind of experimental empathy. He is attempting a complete loss of selfhood:

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,—when the sense of something moving on the bank opposite him where it was bordered by a line of willow-bushes, made him turn his glance thitherward.

This state of mind cultivated by Deronda is the exact antithesis of Grandcourt's diseased will. Grandcourt's will refuses to take account of, or be conditioned by, the outside world; Deronda renounces the self and the will and allows them to become merged in the outside world.

The first is entirely subjective, the second entirely objective,^{II} and both extremes lead to inaction and futility. Mirah's suicide attempt, however, shakes Deronda out of his empathy, and through her he comes into contact with Mordecai; and shortly afterwards he sees Gwendolen for the first time at Leubronn. Then the double pressure, which is to cure his disease, begins.

For ~~the~~ most of the novel, the two claims imposed upon him by the two visions seem completely opposed. Having developed his participation in each world separately, George Eliot exactly half way through the novel, at the beginning of book five, juxtaposes their two claims in conflict in Deronda's mind:

...and Deronda found himself after one o'clock in the morning in the rather ludicrous position of sitting up severely holding a Hebrew Grammar in his hands (for somehow, in deference to Mordecai, he had begun to study Hebrew), with the consciousness that he had been in that attitude nearly half an hour, and had thought of nothing but Gwendolen and her husband. (xxv)

This is an anticipation of what is to develop into the clash between his public and private roles. As Deronda moves between the two worlds, the two claims seem increasingly incompatible:

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. (xlv)

Mordecai claims Deronda as a national messiah, whilst Gwendolen requires him as a personal saviour. The "painful collision" is only resolved at the end of the novel.

George Eliot enforces this double pressure upon Deronda by means of a constant cross-reference between the two opposed worlds. This cross-reference is achieved by means of an ambivalent imagery and symbolism

which creates an interpenetration of the Gentile and Jewish worlds and their values. A simple example will introduce this formal technique which is one of the finest achievements of the novel. At the house-party at the Abbey, "a picturesque architectural outgrowth from an abbey, which had still remnants of the old monastic trunk"(xvi), we witness Gwendolen suffering an agony of remorse after her unsuccessful marriage gamble and requiring aid of Deronda. During singing in the drawing-room, Deronda "observed that Gwendolen had left her seat, and had come to this end of the room, as if to listen more fully, but was now standing with her back to everyone, apparently contemplating a fine cowed head carved in ivory which hung over a small table." He approaches the table, and "they looked at each other--she seeming to take the deep rest of confession, he with an answering depth of sympathy that neutralised other feelings." Then standing beneath the ivory head, they converse and Gwendolen ("looking up at the ivory a gain") makes her first oblique attempt at confession. This head when linked with the monastic trunk of the Abbey can clearly be seen as an objectification of Gwendolen's desire to escape from her vision of dread by confessing to Deronda, by turning him in fact into her priest. And at the end of this same chapter the process has developed so far in her mind that George Eliot can define explicitly Gwendolen's dependence: "...without the aid of sacred ceremony or costume, her feelings had turned this man, only a few years older than herself, into a priest"¹²(xvi). And with the final sentence of the chapter George Eliot underlines the function of her symbol and also gives a suggestion of the reciprocal nature of this relationship: "And perhaps in that ideal consecration of Gwendolen's, some education was being prepared for Deronda"(xxxv). The head is a proleptic symbol of Gwendolen's later, more clearly defined need.

For Deronda, however, the carved head has quite a different significance. Two chapters previously he had first met Motdecai, who is described as

"A man in threadbare clothing, whose age was difficult to guess-- from the dead yellowish flatness of the flesh, something like an old ivory carving..."(xxxiii). Reminding Deronda of Mordecai, the ivory head at the Abbey is another "foreshadowing of some painful collision" between the claims of the Jews and the growing dependence upon him of Gwendolen.

In the rest of this same chapter we can see the ambivalent symbolism being used extensively. On the following day it is decided to make a tour of the Abbey. As they set off, they discuss the architectural renovations carried out by Sir Hugo, who gives his "reasons for not attempting to remedy the mixture of the undisguised modern with the antique":

"Additions ought to smack of the time when they are made and carry the stamp of their period. I wouldn't destroy any old bits, but that notion of reproducing the old is a mistake, I think. At least, if a man likes to do it he must pay for his whistle. Besides, where are you to stop along that road--making loopholes where you don't want to peep, and so on? You may as well ask me to wear out the stones with kneeling; eh, Grandcourt?"

"A confounded nuisance," drawled Grandcourt. "I hate fellows wanting to howl litanies--acting the greatest bores that ever existed."

"Well, yes, that's what their romanticism must come to," said Sir Hugo, in a tone of confidential assent--"that is, if they carry it out logically."

The sudden earnestness with which Deronda interrupts the languid conversation brings the realisation that this is not merely a discussion on architecture; it is a further statement on the laws of organic development.

"I think that way of arguing against a course because it may be ridden down to an absurdity would soon bring life to a standstill," said Deronda. "It is not the logic of human action, but of a ^Aroasting-jack, that must go on to the last turn when it has been once wound up. We can do nothing safely without some judgment as to where we are to stop."

Here, Deronda is covertly beginning to formulate his ideas on the reviving of the organic centre of the Jews and their traditions. He is moving away from his earlier belief in "Judaism as a sort of eccentric fossilised form"(xxxii) towards a realisation that it must become a living and developing tradition with a national centre.¹³ The cross-reference is to the conversation at Mordecai's Philosophers' Club which defines the true nature of tradition and development: "It is to see more and more of the hidden bonds that bind and consecrate change as a dependent growth..."(xlii). This set discussion of ideas balances the weekend party at the Abbey and we are encouraged to witness each against the background of the other.

After Sir Hugo has fatuously concluded his remarks with "I find the rule of the pocket the best guide," Gwendolen insinuated her own problem into the analogy, giving Deronda another opportunity to define his point of view:

"Do you want to keep up the old fashions, then, Mr Deronda?" said Gwendolen, taking advantage of the freedom of grouping to fall back ~~into~~ a little, while Sir Hugo and Grandcourt went on.

"Some of them. I don't see why we should not use our choice there as we do elsewhere—or why either age or novelty by itself is an argument for or against. To delight in doing things because our fathers did them is good if it shuts out nothing better; it enlarges the range of affection—and affection is the broadest basis of good in life."

"Do you think so?" said Gwendolen, with a little surprise. "I should have thought you cared most about ideas, knowledge, wisdom, and all that."

"But to care about them is a sort of affection," said Deronda, smiling at her sudden naïveté. "Call it attachment, interest, willingness to bear a great deal for the sake of being with them and saving them from injury...."

"I wonder whether I understand that," said Gwendolen, putting up her chin in her old/saucy manner. "I believe I am not very affectionate; perhaps you mean to tell me, that is the reason why I don't see much good in life." (xxxv)

Becoming more and more explicit are the ideas with which Deronda will

assume his public role of messiah to the Jews, and yet they are doing so in the Gentile world and being so modulated as to merge with his advice to Gwendolen. The stress which Deronda here puts on affection is echoed by Mordecai at the club when he says: "...it is true...that Israel is the heart of mankind, if we mean by the heart the core of affection which binds a race and its families in dutiful love, and the reverence for the human body...and the tenderness which is merciful to the poor and weak and to the dumb creatures that wears the yoke for us"(xlii). The analogy has momentarily located the element which Deronda's two roles have in common, and which will ultimately bring about their fusion. These interpenetrations of the two worlds create the organic unity of the novel. And here, unlike Felix Holt, there is no feeling of strain in the correspondences. Even without Deronda, whose double role helps us to identify the complementary nature of these two worlds, there is in their mere juxtaposition a manysided and constantly changing significance.

The discussion by architectural analogy prepares us for the more detailed symbolic scenes which immediately follow. In the tower of the Abbey we have a prefiguring in miniature of Gwendolen's process of regeneration--in the movement from the ~~pur~~ purgatorial kitchen where Deronda is avoiding her and in which there is a "huge glowing fire" ¹⁴ ("I wondered how long you meant to stay in that damned place," comments Grandcourt) to the foretaste of her ¹⁵ paradiso in the derelict chapel where Deronda is cast in the role of absolving priest. Again, George Eliot seems to manage her symbols with complete confidence, maintaining a fine tension between the genteel moeurs of the Abbey to which nothing is of any real importance and the symbolic tenor where everything is relevant and in deadly earnest.

The central symbol here, and indeed of the whole novel, is the derelict chapel which has been converted into a stable. If we restrict its relevance to the 'Gentile world' in which it is placed, then it is a

further statement of Gwendolen's disenchantment and subsequent "conversion" by Deronda: "It is one of the secrets in that change of mental poise which has been fitly named conversion, that to many among us neither heaven nor earth has any revelation till some personality touches theirs with a peculiar influence, subduing them into receptiveness"(xxxv). Deronda, "who oddly enough had taken off his felt hat and stood holding it before him as if they had entered a room or an actual ~~church~~ church," is shown in the priestly role into which Gwendolen is forcing him. But the scene has a different meaning when viewed from the angle of Deronda's developing relationship with Mordecai. Then the chapel and its occupants become a symbol of the modern Jews ignorant of their heritage:

...the beautiful choir long ago turned into stables, in the first instance perhaps after an impromptu fashion by troopers, who had a pious satisfaction in insulting the priests of Baal and Ashtoreth, the queen of heaven. The exterior--its west end, save for the stable door, walled in with brick and covered with ivy--was much defaced, maimed of finial and gargoyle, the friable limestone broken and fretted, and lending its soft grey to a powdery dark lichen; the long windows, too, were filled in with brick as far as the springing of the arches, the broad clerestory windows with wire or ventilating blinds. With the low wintry afternoon sun upon it, sending shadows from the cedar boughs, and lighting up the touches of snow remaining on every ledge, it had still a scarcely disturbed aspect of antique solemnity, which gave the scene in the interior rather a startling effect; though, ecclesiastical or reverential indignation apart, the eyes could hardly help dwelling with pleasure on its piquant picturesqueness. Each finely-arched chapel was turned into a stall, where in the dusty glazing of the windows there still gleamed patches of crimson, orange, blue, and palest violet; for the rest, the choir had been gutted, the floor levelled, paved, and drained according to the most approved fashion, and a line of loose-boxes erected in the middle: a soft light fell from the upper windows on sleek brown or grey flanks and haunches; on mild equine faces looking out with active nostrils over the varnished brown boarding; on the hay hanging from racks where the saints once looked down from the altarpieces, and on the pale-golden straw scattered or in heaps; on a little white-and-liver-coloured spaniel making

his bed on the back of an elderly hackney, and on four ancient angels, still showing signs of devotion like mutilated martyrs--while over all, the grand pointed roof, untouched by reforming ~~xxx~~ wash, showed its lines and colours mysteriously through veiling shadow and cobweb, and a hoof now and then striking against the boards seemed to fill the vault with thunder, while outside there was the answering bay of blood-hounds. (xxxv)

This vivid "solidity of specification" becomes fully significant when it is juxtaposed with the Hebrew verses "after the model of Jehuda ha-Levi" which Mordecai attempts to teach young Jacob Cohen three chapters later in the novel:

"Away from me the garment of forgetfulness,
Withering the heart;
The oil and wine from presses of the Goyim,
Poisoned with scorn.
Solitude is on the sides of Mount Nebo,
In its heart a tomb:
There the buried ark and golden cherubim
Make hidden light:
There the solemn faces gaze unchanged,
The wings are spread unbroken:
Shut beneath in silent awful speech
The Law lies graven.
Solitude and darkness are my covering,
And my heart a tomb;
Smite and shatter it, O Gabriel!
Shatter it as the clay of the founder
Around the golden image." (xxxviii)

The chapel symbolises the decadent state of Israel deprived of its organic centre and unaware, like the horses, of its riches-unaware like the Cohens whom Mordecai describes as having "the heart of the Israelite within them, though they are as the horse and the mule without understanding beyond the narrow path they trod"(xlii). The poem is an appeal to Gabriel to illuminate this later Daniel¹⁶ so that from amongst the Gentiles who have desecrated the chapel he will come to revivify the national symbols, urging the Jews, as Jehuda ha-Levi

urged his contemporaries, to return to Zion.¹⁷ Deronda's instinctive gesture on entering the chapel now shows his readiness to assume his public role;¹⁸ it is the same ritualistic gesture as that adopted by Felix Holt when he is addressing the working men and exhorting them to remain true to their working-class traditions: "he stepped on to the stone, and took off his cap by an instinctive prompting that always led him to speak uncovered." In the later novel, George Eliot allows Grandcourt's sneer: "'Do you take your hat off to the horses?'"

The ambivalence of the symbolism brings into focus the two roles Deronda is being forced into by the demands of the two visions which form the nodal points of the separate halves of the novel. The mere fact that his two roles are fused in one symbolic expression does anticipate a final reconciliation, but the doubt remains until the final catalytic sequence of events which forms the climax of the novel. This climax is reached in Deronda's sojourn in Genoa, where he goes to meet his mother. Within the space of two days both visions are fulfilled—Deronda learns of his ancestry and realises he is well fitted to act as Mordecai's "executive self", and on the next day Gwendolen's vision of dread is enacted in Grandcourt's death by drowning and Deronda comes upon her in her inferno looking upon him for redemption: "pale as one of the sheeted dead, shivering, with her hair streaming, a wild amazed consciousness in her eyes, as if she had waked up in a world where some judgment was impending, and the beings she saw around her were coming to seize her"(lv). Both visions are fulfilled, but as yet Deronda is committed completely to neither of the two roles the visions are trying to force him into. His mother serves a double purpose at this point in the novel which helps to bring the fusion of roles nearer. First, she tells him of his ancestry, fortifying him in his desire to help the Jews by the narration of her life and by handing on to him his grandfather's writings. Her second function is very similar to Mrs Transome's at the climax of Felix Holt. She appears as a warning to Deronda of what Gwendolen might easily become,

thus emphasising the need for his assistance. Both his mother and Gwendolen have attempted to deprive someone of their rightful inheritance, and unless Gwendolen is rescued from her inferno of remorse she will come to resemble his mother who "looked like a dreamed visitant from some region of departed mortals"(liii), and who also is completely lacking in affection: "It is a talent to love --I lacked it"(liii).

At this penultimate stage of the novel, Deronda is in full sympathy with both his visionaries, but wholly committed to neither. Their claims upon him appear contradictory. In his first meeting with Gwendolen after Grandcourt's death, he rejects the role she is trying to thrust upon him: "He was not a priest. He dreaded the weight of this woman's soul flung upon his own with imploring dependence"(lvi). And although he has told his mother, ("I consider it my duty--it is the impulse of my feeling to identify myself, as far as possible, with my hereditary people..."(liii), he has not yet accepted a definite line of action with regard to his public role. The conflict is resolved and the design of the novel completed at the climax of his first visit to Gwendolen when his full realisation of her despair forces him into his acceptance of both roles:

...it seemed that the lot of this young creature, whose swift travel from her bright rash girlhood into this agony of remorse he had had to behold in helplessness, pierced him the deeper because it came close upon another [his mother's] sad revelation of spiritual conflict: he was in one of those moments when the very anguish of passionate pity makes us ready to choose that we will know pleasure no more, and live only for the stricken and afflicted. (lvi)

Through his contact with the particular ~~lot~~ "lot of this young creature", whose illusion and disenchantment he has witnessed, he has come to embrace instinctively the role of messiah to the Jews. So that, when he is ~~accosted by Kalonimos~~ accosted by Kalonimos he is able to state with

conviction: "I hold that my first duty is to my own people, and if there is anything to be done towards restoring or perfecting their common life, I shall make that my vocation"(lx). His intense emotional involvement with Gwendolen has acted as the catalyst which has precipitated him into his public role. He is cured of his disease of sympathy: "...his judgment no longer wandering in the mazes of impartial sympathy, but choosing with that noble partiality which is man's best strength, the close fellowship that makes sympathy practical" (lxiii). His relationship with society as a whole is now balanced with and inseparable from his relationship with an individual, and the terms used previously to describe Mordecai are now exactly applicable to Deronda: "a mind consciously, energetically moving with the large march of human destinies, but not the less full of conscience and tender heart for the footsteps that tread near and need a leaning-place"(xliii).

At this moment of the completion of the design of the novel, we can see the reciprocal nature of the two themes. Just as Deronda's compassion for Gwendolen has precipitated him into his public role, so in return the sudden awareness of that public role finally brings Gwendolen to self-knowledge, and regeneration. It is the explosion of Deronda's "wide-stretching purposes in/which she felt herself reduced to a mere speck" into her narrow egoistic existence which brings her salvation. Any final defiant assertion of will is now unthinkable for she has been learning her dependence on Deronda for the greater part of the novel. And now, when he is suddenly snatched away, comes a knowledge of self in relation to the "equivalent centre [s] of self" of other individuals:

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. (lxix)

This sudden expansion of Gwendolen's horizon when she glimpses the extent of the other half of Deronda's life—of the other half of the novel—is very powerful, so powerful indeed that Henry James thought the Jewish half of the novel justified if only for this one effect:

Her finding Deronda pre-engaged to go to the East and stir up the race-feeling of the Jews strikes me as a wonderfully happy invention. The irony of the situation, for poor Gwendolen is almost grotesque, and it makes one wonder whether the whole heavy structure of the Jewish question in the story was not built up by the author for the express purpose of giving its proper force to this particular stroke. ¹⁹

But this is to forget the reciprocal effect of the Gwendolen half of the novel upon Deronda's messiahship, to forget that it is her despair which thrust him into the acceptance of his wider task.

(iv)

In a letter to Mme Eugène Bodichon, written a month after the publication of the last book of Daniel Deronda, George Eliot comments upon some complimentary letters she has received concerning her characterisation of Deronda: "This is better than the laudation of readers who cut the book into scraps and talk of nothing in it but

Gwendolen. I meant everything in the book to be related to everything else there"(Letters, VI, 290). Yet in his pungent revaluation of George Eliot's novels in The Great Tradition, Dr Leavis can say: "As for the bad part of Daniel Deronda, there is nothing to do but cut it away....As things are, there is lost under that damning title, an actual great novel to be extricated. And to extricate it for separate publication as Gwendolen Harleth seems to me the most likely way of getting recognition of for it. Gwendolen Harleth would have some rough edges, but it would be a self-sufficient and very substantial whole....Deronda would be confined to what was necessary of for his role of lay-confessor to Gwendolen, and the final cut would come after the death by drowning...."²⁰ Clearly the unity of the novel which we have just examined is not the factitious unity implied by Dr Leavis's few "rough edges". It is not a unity obtained by placing the titular hero at an arbitrary point of junction between the two halves of the novel. The organic unity of the novel springs from Deronda's psychological condition: his disease of sympathy is the reason why he finds himself in relationship with Gwendolen and Mordecai, and the reciprocal movement consists in their demands curing him of his disease. Each half of the novel must be viewed against the background of the other half or else it will be lacking in a significant dimension, and only by this means will the final definition of meaning, which George Eliot tentatively approaches at the end of the novel, be intelligible.

This definition is couched in the political and religious terms of the Jewish nation. It is first approached in the discussion at the philosophical working-men's club where we find expressed the two antithetical hopes for the future of the Jews. Gideon says: "But I am for getting rid of all our superstitions and exclusiveness. There's no reason now why we shouldn't melt gradually into the populations we live among." As we have seen, Mordecai replies with the contrary view: "Revive the organic centre: let the unity of Israel which has made the growth and form of its religion be an outward reality"(xlii). And At the end

of the novel *Deronda* seeks to show that this second attitude need not lead to any narrow exclusive form of nationalism. He tells his mother that he means to retain his Christian sympathies, and when he is questioned by Kalonymos as to his future actions he replies: "I shall call myself a Jew....But I will not say that I shall profess to believe exactly as my fathers have believed. Our fathers themselves changed the horizon of their belief and learned of other races. But I think I can maintain my grandfather's notion of separateness, with communication"(lx). And in the next chapter of the novel, Mordecai expresses the same idea in transcendental terms, and it is here that the full symbolic purpose of George Eliot's ~~view~~^{choice} of the Jewish nation clearly emerges:

"...the Shema, wherein we briefly confess the divine Unity, is the chief devotional exercise of the Hebrew; and this made our religion the fundamental religion for the whole world; for the divine Unity embraced as its consequence the ultimate unity of mankind. See, then--the nation which has been scoffed at for its separateness, has given a binding theory to the human race. Now, in complete unity a part possesses the whole as the whole possesses every part: and in this way human life is tending toward the image of the Supreme Unity...." (lxi)

When this idea of the balance of "separateness with communication" is translated into terms of personal relationships, we can see its relevance to Gwendolen's attitude to Deronda. Just before her final awakening to self-knowledge, we find Gwendolen over-emphasising her own claims upon Deronda, exaggerating the element of "communication" in their relationship: "...she did not imagine him otherwise than always within her reach, her supreme need of him blinding her to the separateness of his life, the whole scene of which she filled with his relation to her..."(lxix). She has gradually come to the realisation of her dependence on others without yet acknowledging other people's distinct and separate individuality. This "passionate egoism of ~~the~~ imagination"(lxix) is very similar to Dorothea Brooke's inability to acknowledge Casaubon's "equivalent centre

of self" in Middlemarch. The discussions of the Jewish state and its role are a definition on a national level of the meaning of the personal relations in the other half of the novel. George Eliot examines these two analogous ideas, selfhood and nationhood, in the first and last of her Impressions of Theophrastus Such. In the first essay, 'Looking Inward', we saw her seeking a midway position between the individual's egoism and his excessive selflessness; in the last essay, 'The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!', she seeks to do the same in terms of nationality. Communication between nations must be balanced by an awareness and acceptance of each ~~sex~~ nation's individuality: "The tendency of things is towards the quicker or slower fusion of races. It is impossible to arrest this tendency: all we can do is to moderate its course so as to hinder it from degrading the moral status of societies by a too rapid effacement of those national traditions and customs which are the language of the national genius-- the deep suckers of healthy sentiment." This, she says, is "that spirit of separateness which has not yet done its work in the education of mankind, which has created the varying genius of nations, and, like the Muses, is the offspring of memory."

These two essays help us to understand George Eliot's final analogy between microcosm and macrocosm upon which the structure of Daniel Deronda ultimately rests. This analogy makes clear the climax of Gwendolen's development. Only when she has been shaken out of her inability to recognise another person's "equivalent centre of self" will Gwendolen achieve moral faith and be in a position to communicate helpfully with others. As Lionel Trilling says, commenting on Freud's ability to project himself systematically into the centres of self of his patients: "And certainly the willing suspension of disbelief constitutes moral faith--the essence of the moral life would seem to consist in doing that most difficult thing in the world, making a willing suspension of disbelief in the selfhood of someone else." But the ²²political analogy insists that a balance must be held between this quality of self-projection,

of full 'communication', and the quality of 'separateness'. "Here, as everywhere else, the human task seems to be the discerning and adjusting of opposite claims," she says in the same essay, echoing the phrases of Emerson's expression of the same idea in the title essay of his Society and Solitude (1870): "Here again, as so often, Nature delights to put us between extreme antagonisms, and our safety is in the skill with which we keep the diagonal line. Solitude is impracticable^{ca} and society fatal. We must keep our head in the one and our hands in the other. The conditions are met, if we keep our independence, yet do not lose our sympathy." If the element of 'communication' becomes over-emphasised, the resultant condition is Deronda's disease of sympathy which it has been the task of the novel to cure.

Any amputation of the Jewish half of the novel would obviously necessitate a drastic curtailment of significance for Gwendolen Harleth, and deprive the reader of this final definition of meaning which is achieved by means of the thematic structure of the whole novel. And yet there is something wrong with the Jewish half of the novel, and a symptom of this is the narrative texture which does become, as Dr Leavis says, "impotently wordy."²³ As a structure centred in the character of the titular hero the novel has a fine symmetry, and yet having read the novel we know that one half, the Gwendolen half, has many times more vitality and significance than the morally explicit Jewish half of the novel. This is the difference, as one critic has suggested, between an 'intellectual' and an 'affective' unity.

The lack of 'affective' unity is, I think, inherent in the very conception and structure of Daniel Deronda, and the reason can be found in the nature of George Eliot's development. Irving Howe, in his recent book Politics and the Novel, makes a distinction within the novel form which is relevant to this development:

The ideal social novel had been written by Jane Austen, a great artist who enjoyed the luxury of being able to take society for granted; it was there, and it seemed steady beneath her glass....But soon it would not be steady beneath anyone's glass, and the novelist's attention had necessarily to shift from the gradations within society to the fate of society itself. It is at this point, roughly speaking, that the kind of book I have called the political novel comes to be written--the kind in which the idea of society, as distinct from the mere unquestioned workings of society, has penetrated the consciousness of the characters in all of its profoundly problematic aspects, so that there is to be observed in their behaviour, and they are themselves often aware of, some coherent political loyalty or ideological identification. They now think in terms of supporting or opposing society as such; they rally to one or another embattled segment of society; and they do so in the name of, and under the prompting from, an ideology.²⁴

In her early novels, in Adam Bede and Silas Marner in particular, George Eliot took "society for granted" and we saw the individual developing from egoism and illusion, through particular personal relationships, to a final integration into society as a whole. The simple progression of this sequence depends upon the existence of an acceptable, organic society with which the protagonist can come to establish a correct relationship. The difficulty of establishing such a relationship in a changing society becomes apparent in The Mill on the Floss and is developed in detail in Romola. The proliferation of paradoxes arising from the moral permutations of Romola shows the impossibility of formulating universally acceptable principles to govern the relationship between the individual and society. In this novel we have a work, as Howe says, "in which the idea of society...has penetrated the consciousness of the characters in all its profoundly problematic aspects...." But as Howe goes on to ~~define~~ define the essential nature of such a novel, we can see where George Eliot stopped short in Romola:

The political novel...is peculiarly ~~the~~ a work of internal tensions. To be a novel at all, it must contain the usual representation of human behaviour and feeling; yet it must also absorb into its stream of movement the hard and perhaps insoluble

pellets of modern ideology. The novel deals with moral sentiments, with passions and emotions; it tries, above all, to capture the quality of concrete experience. Ideology, however, is abstract, as it must be, and therefore likely to be recalcitrant whenever an attempt is made to incorporate it into the novel's stream of sensuous impression. The conflict is inescapable: the novel tries to confront experience in its immediacy and closeness, while ideology is by its nature general and inclusive. Yet it is precisely from this conflict that the political novel gains its interest and takes on the aura of high drama.²⁵

For much of Romola we are shown analogies, some of which are effective, between these two spheres of existence, between the sphere of ideologies and the sphere of personal relationships, but when George Eliot attempts to develop the legitimate subject of the political novel, namely the interplay between these two spheres, we quickly end in the stalemate of the confrontation of Savonarola and Romola. The mutual mistrust and intolerance of the two characters at this point in the novel precludes any interaction between the worlds they represent; Savonarola's motives remain 'theoretic', Romola's 'personal'. George Eliot seems to conclude that their attitudes are so mutually exclusive that any interaction could only lead to suffering and destruction.

Therefore, in Felix Holt and Daniel and Deronda, she eschews politics and circumvents the problem by prescribing the education necessary for the creation of her two social reformers. They must synthesise in themselves the conflict between the sphere of ideology and that of personal relationships, and George Eliot creates two separate worlds in ~~which~~ which they can practise their double roles. But once again, these worlds do not come into conflict; they have only one ~~xxx~~ real point of contact—the titular heroes. The worlds touch briefly, are merged at the climax of the novels in the integration of the hero's personality, and then separate. The reformers then proceed to unify (outside the bounds of the novel) the society of which the contrasting worlds form fragments. At the end of the novels, the opposition between the two

worlds remains as extreme as ever; the reformers are about to go into action—and George Eliot's genuinely political novels remain unwritten.

In Daniel Deronda, it is because of this structural division that the Jewish half of the novel is unsatisfactory. It lacks any real significance because its ideologies, its 'wide-stretching purposes', remain insulated, uncontaminated and untested by the intensely personal and particularised life of the Gentile world. In the Gentile half of the novel, George Eliot has mastered supremely the art of delineating the incisive, corrosive relationships and conflicts between these sophisticated characters, the exponents of self-will. But in the Jewish half the subject-matter is essentially above the personal; this is the higher life in which the ~~self~~ self is of little importance.²⁶ Mordecai, of course, is the human embodiment of these larger destinies—he is the "frail incorporation of the national consciousness"—and because of this he never achieves any sort of individuality. His relations with Deronda are in no way personal. In Felix Holt also George Eliot failed to develop convincingly any sort of relationship between Felix and his general concern, the working-class, but in that novel there seemed to be a possibility of a solution in the character of Lyon. His awareness of the "larger sweep of the world's forces" was integrated into his individuality by means of his eccentricities which were an expression of his self-abnegation. Mordecai never attains his humanity.

And so we see George Eliot trying to bring Deronda into some sort of living relationship with a social and religious idea whilst knowing that this relationship can only achieve any sort of reality at the very end of the novel when it is fused with his immediate concern for Gwendolen's suffering. A ~~system~~ symptom of George Eliot's difficulty is the lack of any vivid particularity of character or incident in the Jewish world. Nothing really happens. The characters wait in suspended animation for the discovery of the hidden facts of Deronda's birth, and to fill in the interval we are given an account of Mirah's past and Lapidoth's degeneration.

Everything is too dependent upon the detail of plot and not enough upon the detail of character. George Eliot had succeeded brilliantly in The Mill on the Floss in depicting Maggie's relationship with the idea of society by using the family of Dodsons and Tullivers as a sort of synecdoche for society. But here in this novel she could not be satisfied with the smallest unit of corporate existence, the family; Deronda is not even in relationship with the working-class, but with a race, and a race which according to Mordecai is going to unify mankind. As George Eliot becomes more and more ambitious in attempting to express a sense of corporate existence, the individuals ~~composing~~ experiencing such an existence become immaterial and finally disappear.

And yet, as we have seen, George Eliot knew this, for this is what the novel is about. She is in Daniel Deronda stating structurally what she said explicitly in Middlemarch: "There is no general doctrine which is not capable of eating out our morality if unchecked by the deep-seated habit of direct fellow-feeling with individual fellow men." She fully realised that the larger aim without the personal contact was impossible. The duality of the private and public roles must become a mutual and necessary relationship, and this is the reason for the structure of the novel being what it is. The larger destinies of mankind cannot be embraced in a general way--such an attempt would be unreal. They must have an infusion of particular and astringent individual human relationships by means of which they themselves become real and valid. George Eliot accepts morally the impossibility of embracing a general social doctrine in the abstract. But to make this moral point she attempts to overcome a similar artistic impossibility--to express in terms of the solidity of specification of the novel form an incomplete relationship between an individual and a social idea. The final ~~in~~ imbalance of the novel bears witness to the truth of George Eliot's moral belief. Deronda is inhabiting in the Jewish half of the novel a world of shadows and ideas which has to be made real by an infusion of Gwendolen's individuality. Unfortunately, we have to wait until the end of the novel for this realisation.

FOOTNOTES

I

A Biblical parallel with Daniel, although not worked out in any great detail, is suggested by certain correspondences. Even though Deronda is not himself a visionary, he has by the end of the novel come to understand the significance of visions: "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams" (Daniel I, 17). And secondly, Sir Hugo Mallinger's Abbey is clearly the Babylon of Deronda's exile. Deronda himself says: "Suppose the stolen offspring of some mountain tribe brought up in a city of the plain, or one with an inherited genius for painting, and born blind--the ancestral life would lie within them as a dim longing for unknown objects and sensations.... Something like that, I think, has been my experience" (lxiii).

In addition, see footnotes (14) and (16) below.

2

Jerome Beaty, in his article "Daniel Deronda and the Question of Unity in Fiction," The Victorian Newsletter, No. 15 (1959), pp. 16-20, says: "The coincidence is somewhat undercut by the lack of real correspondence: in the background of the painting there is a fleeing figure; Gwendolen, frozen by her desire for Grandcourt's death does not flee but stands still, making no attempt to rescue her husband till it is too late" (p. 20). The details do in fact correspond. The full horror comes upon Gwendolen not immediately but only when she realises what her assertive will had intended, and then, as this quotation shows, we see her "leaping from" the crime--from the final intention of her egoistic will: "I only know that I saw my wish outside me" (lvi). This is the moment of transition between Gwendolen's vision of dread and her saving vision of consequences.

3

For example, one is reminded vividly of Grandcourt in the lengthy description, taken ~~from~~ by Mario Praz from the Goncourts' Journal of 1862, of the young Englishman, exponent of 'le vice anglais', who is described as "un fou, un monstre, un de ces hommes qui confinent à l'abîme" (pp. 417-8).

4

Since as we saw in the last chapter, Grandcourt is repeatedly cast in the role of Duke Alfonso in Lucrezia Borgia, Gwendolen must be seen as his wife, Lucrezia herself, who destroyed him.

5

These two strands in Gwendolen's character, the destructive egoism and the potential redemption, are epitomised in the two pictures which Gwendolen and her family discover in the dining-room at

Offendene: "the dining-room all dark oak and worn red satin damask, with a copy of snarling, worrying dogs from Snyders over the sideboard, and a Christ breaking bread over the mantel-piece..."(iii).

6

Felix Holt, when speaking to Esther of his future plans, uses two analogies, one of which is relevant here to Mordecai's vision of future reform, and the other to Gwendolen's vision of dread: "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"(xxvii).

7

Compare the epigraph to ch. xxi: "And looking at life parcel-wise, in the growth of a single lot, who having a practised vision may not see that ignorance of the true bond between events, and false conceit of means whereby sequences may be compelled...precipitates the mistaken soul on destruction?".

8

Compare George Eliot in Mackay in 1851: "But it would be a very serious mistake to suppose that the study of the past and the labours of criticism have no important practical bearing on the present. Our civilisation, and, yet more, our religion, are an anomalous blending of lifeless barbarisms, which have descended to us like so many petrifications from distant ages, with living ideas, the offspring of a true process of development. We are in bondage to terms and conceptions which, having had their root in conditions of thought no longer existing have ceased to possess any vitality, and are for us as spells which have lost their virtue....for succeeding ages to dream of retaining the spirit along with the forms of the past, is as futile as the embalming of the dead body in the hope that it may one day be resumed by the living soul. (pp. 353-4)

9

Deronda has clearly much in common both with Philip Wakem and Will Ladislaw—sympathy, wide-ranging intellectual and artistic interests, his torical imagination, and, at first, a lack of moral force. Several of these qualities and the way in which they are depicted are reminiscent of G. H. Lewes' description of Goethe in his Life and Work of Goethe (Everyman edition, 1908). Speaking about Goethe's youth, Lewes mentions "the strange impressibility of his nature, which, like the fabled chameleon, takes its colour from every tree it lies under"(p. 33), and "his manysidedness. Seldom has a boy exhibited such variety of faculty..."(p. 34). We may compare the following account of the effect of Rome upon Goethe with Ladislaw's reaction to the same city in Middlemarch: "In Rome, where he stayed ~~four~~ four months, enjoyment and education went hand in hand. 'All the dreams of my youth I now see living before me. Everywhere I go

I find an old familiar face; everything is just what I thought it, and yet everything is new. It is the same with ideas. I have gained no new idea, but the old ones have become so definite, living, and connected one with another, that they may pass as new.' The riches of Rome are at first bewildering; a long residence is necessary for each object to make its due impression. Goethe lived there among some German artists...he came for self-culture, and resolutely pursued his purpose." (p. 303)

Perhaps the closest parallel is between Goethe's and Deronda's interest in the Jews. This is the description of Deronda's awakening sympathy: "It was on this journey that he first entered a Jewish synagogue--at Frankfort--where his party rested on a Friday. In exploring the Juden-gasse, which he had seen long before, he remembered well enough its picturesque old houses; what his eyes chiefly dwelt on now were the human types there; and his thought, busily connecting them with the past phases of their race, stirred that fibre of historic sympathy....the forms of the Juden-gasse, rousing the sense of union with what is remote, set him musing on two elements of our historic life which that sense raises into the same region of poetry:- the faint beginnings of faiths and institutions, and their obscure lingering decay; the dust and withered remnants with which they are apt to be covered, only enhancing for the awakened perception the impressiveness either of a sublimely penetrating life, as in the twin green leaves that will become the sheltering tree, or of a pathetic inheritance in which all the grandeur and the glory have become a sorrowing memory. (xxxii)

Goethe also became interested in the Jews at Frankfort for very similar reasons: "He passed from the society of the Count de Thorane ...to the society of the Jews ~~in~~ in the strange, old, filthy, but deeply-interesting Judengasse; or to that of various artisans, in whose shops his curiosity found perpetual food. The Jews were doubly interesting to him: as social pariahs, over whom there hovered a mingled mystery of terror and contempt; and as descendants of the Chosen People, who preserved the language, the opinions, and many of the customs of the old biblical race. He was impressed by their steadfastness and courageous activity; by their strange features and accents; by their bright cleverness and good nature"(pp. 29-30).

10

George Eliot does not underestimate the absurd side of Deronda's excessive sympathy. For example, we have Hans Meyrick's comment on Deronda's relationship with Mordecai: "I confess that I have always held lightly by your account of Mordecai, as apologetic, and merely part of your disposition to take an antediluvian point of view, lest you should do injustice to the megatherium"(lii).

The following report of an absurd conversation at the Abbey makes the same point: "However, the talk turned on the rinderpest and Jamaica, and no more was said about roulette. Grandcourt held that the Jamaican negro was a beastly sort of baptist Caliban; Deronda said he had always felt a little with Caliban, who naturally had ~~his~~ his own point of view and could sing a good song; Mrs Davilow observed that her father had an estate in Barbadoes, but that she herself had never been in the West Indies; Mrs Torrington was sure she should never sleep in her bed if she lived among blacks; her husband corrected her by saying that the blacks would be manageable enough if it were not for the half-breeds; and Deronda remarked that the whites had to thank themselves for the half-breeds!"(xxix).

II

Compare Schopenhauer definition of genius, which Lionel Trilling suggests has been influenced by the Bhagavad Gita:
 "Only through the pure contemplation...which ends entirely in the object, can Ideas be comprehended; and the nature of genius consists in preeminent capacity for such contemplation. Now, as this requires that a man should entirely forget himself and the relations in which he stands, genius is simply the completest objectivity, i.e., the objective tendency of the mind, as opposed to the subjective, which is directed to one's own self--in other words to the will. Thus genius is the faculty of continuing in the state of pure perception, of losing oneself in perception, and of enlisting in this service the knowledge which originally existed only for the service of the will; that is to say, genius is the power of leaving one's own interests, wishes, and aims entirely out of sight, thus of entirely renouncing one's own personality for a time, so as to remain pure knowing subject, clear vision of the world...." (Quoted by Trilling in Matthew Arnold, p. 25).

I2

This wrenching of religious imagery away from the overtly religious half of the novel, the Jewish half, and applying it to Deronda's relationship with Gwendolen prepares us, as it did in Felix Holt, for the final complementary nature of his two roles. After this particular example, the imagery continues: In the next chapter, Gwendolen again seeks and obtains further advice from Deronda in the library--"An enormous log-fire, with the scent of russia from the books, made the great room as warmly odorous as a private chapel in which the censers have been swinging"(xxxvi). At her next appeal to him in London, her face is "framed black like a nun's"(xlvi), while she keeps her recovered faith in him "with a more anxious tenacity, as a Protestant of old kept his Bible hidden or a Catholic his crucifix, according to the side favoured by the civil arm"(xlvi).

13

In her review of Riehl, George Eliot expresses with the help of Ruskin and an architectural illustration, what she considers to be the natural, organic attitude to the past:

"This vital connection with the past is much more vividly felt on the Continent than in England, where we have to recall it by an effort of memory and reflection; for though our English life is in its core intensely traditional, Protestantism and commerce have modernised the face of the land and the aspects of society in a far greater degree than in any Continental country:—

'Abroad,' says Ruskin, 'a building of the eighth or tenth century stands ruinous in the open street; the children play around it, the peasants heap their corn in it, the buildings of yesterday nestle about it, and fit their new stones in its rents, and tremble in sympathy as it trembles. No one wonders at it, or thinks of it as separate, and of another time; we feel the ancient world to be a real thing, and one with the new; antiquity is no dream; it is rather the children playing about the old stones that are the dream. But all is continuous, and the words, 'from generation to generation,' understandable here.'

This conception of European society as incarnate history, is the fundamental idea of Riehl's book." (p. 70)

14

Compare this with Mirah's 'fiery furnace': "Men came about us and wanted to talk to me: women and men seemed to look at me with a sneering smile: it was no better than a fiery furnace"(xx); and with Mrs Glasher's "purgatorial Gadsmere" situated in a countryside "black with coal-mines...chiefly peopled by men and brethren with candles stuck in their hats, and with diabolical expressions..."(xxx).

15

One is prompted to speak in these terms by George Eliot's insistent references to Dante: Gwendolen is compared to "Madonna Pia...in Dante's Purgatory"(liv); chapters lv and lxiv both have epigraphs from Dante; whilst in chapter lviii we switch from the horrors of Gwendolen's history to Pennicote Rectory with these words: "Peaceful authorship!—living in the air of the fields and downs, and not in the thrice-breathed breath of criticism—bringing no Dantesque leanness; rather, assisting nutrition by complacency, and perhaps giving a more suffusive sense of achievement than the production of a whole Divina Commedia"(lviii).

16

Compare Daniel VIII, 15-17.

17

George Eliot has chosen Mordecai's model with care. Compare,

for example, Mordecai's ambitions with the following description of Jehuda ha-Levi:

"The remarkable and apparently indissoluble union of religion, nationalism, and patriotism characteristic of post-exilic Judaism reached its acme in Judah ha-Levi and his poetry. Yet this very union in one so consistent as Judah demanded the fulfilment of the supreme politico-religious ideal of medieval Judaism--the return to Jerusalem. Though his impassioned call to his contemporaries to return to Zion might be received with indifference or even with mockery...his own decision to go to Jerusalem never wavered. 'Can we hope for any other refuge either in the East or in the West where we may dwell in safety?' he exclaims to one of his opponents. (The Jewish Encyclopedia, London, 1904, VII, 348)

Isidore Epstein in his Judaism (London, 1959) emphasises ha-Levi's universalistic outlook, again in terms reminiscent of Mordecai's utterances:

"These ideas will appear nationalistic. Yet Judah Halevi was essentially universalistic in his outlook. For him the selection of Israel is but God's universal choosing of mankind. 'Israel', he declares, 'is the heart of the nations', filling the same role in the world at large as does the heart in the body of man. It is the people which is the most sensitive to the woes and sufferings of the world, supplying at the same time civilised mankind with its moral and spiritual lifeblood. Like Israel, all other nations are possessed of the prophetic faculty, except that in their case it is of a lower degree. But in the Messianic kingdom all nations will reach the same degree of spiritual life which is now ~~is~~ given to Israel, all of them ripening into the fruit of which Israel is the root"(p. 206).

Robert Preyer, in an article referred to on page 202 above, mistakenly says "the Jewish mystic who enlightens Deronda is a follower of Ben Jehuda, the fifteenth century Spanish Mystic"(p. 48). Jehuda ha-Levi's dates are c. 1085-1140.

18

There is an interesting resemblance between this important scene and the equally important, if less portentously symbolic, scene of the visit to the chapel at Sotherton in Mansfield Park. Jane Austen shows Edmund experiencing there an inner conflict between his ~~his~~ public vocation of clergyman and his infatuation for Mary Crawford, who is making ironical comments on the chapel and what it represents (I, xi).

19

Henry James's "Daniel Deronda: A Conversation" (1876) is quoted in full by Leavis in The Great Tradition, pp. 249-266. This particular judgment is made by the novelist and reviewer,

Constantius (p. 264), who arbitrating between the ecstatic Theodora and the critical Pulcheria seems to represent James himself in the dialogue.

20 Leavis, p. 122. Dr Leavis has since modified his opinion on the unity
of Daniel Deronda in his Introduction to the Harper Torchbooks edition
21 of the novel (New York, 1961).

The choice of the name Kalonymos is another indication of George Eliot's care in preparing the Jewish half of the novel. Isidore Epstein says the "Kalonymus family" carried the teachings of the "practical Kabbalah" to Germany in about 917. (pp. 230-1). These teachings, which, Epstein describes, are relevant to the understanding of Deronda's public role.

22 Freud and the Crisis of our Culture (Boston, 1955), p. 19.

23 Leavis, p. 85.

24 Politics and the Novel (London, 1961), p. 19.

25 Ibid., p. 20.

26 George Eliot diagnosed her own difficulty in her article "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness: The Poet Young," Westminster Review, 67 (1857), 1-42:

"The adherence to abstraction, or ^{to} the personification of abstractions, is closely allied in Young to the want of genuine emotion.... Now, emotion links itself with particulars, and only in a faint and secondary manner with abstractions. An orator may discourse very eloquently on injustice in general, and leave his audience cold; but let him state a special case of oppression, and every heart will throb. The most untheoretic persons are aware of this relation between true emotion and particular facts, as opposed to general terms, and implicitly recognise it in the repulsion they feel towards any one who professes strong feeling about abstractions, --in the interjectional 'humbug!' which immediately rises to their lips." (pp. 30-1)

MIDDLEMARCH

(i)

The nature of George Eliot's achievement in Middlemarch seems more extraordinary coming between the quite different achievement of Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda. In these two novels she is prescribing the education her reformers need if they are going to arrive at a fully 'organic' vision of society. It is an extreme formulation and this is why the worlds of the novels are so diametrically opposed: if the reformers can yoke together in their vision of society these extreme positive and negative worlds, then, the assumption is, they will be able to deal with the social worlds in between. In contrast, there is nothing prescriptive in the conception of Middlemarch. George Eliot's study of provincial life is panoramic and empirical. It is not ordered by an overall schematic structure which culminates in a social solution, the creation of the reformer. There is consequently a great gain in freedom and variety, but a loss of the climactic revelatory moments which illuminate brilliantly in Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda the whole structure of the novel. In Middlemarch George Eliot has generalised the central theme of these other two novels, accepting the fact that for choice and action to be possible each individual in society must achieve some kind of organic vision, some idea of society as an ordered whole. In the extreme worlds of Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda some of the characters achieve a complete fusion of different roles, whilst the rest lead completely contradictory, 'inorganic' lives.

In Middlemarch the positive and negative extremes are, together with the symmetrical structure, abandoned in favour of the more familiar middle reaches of society where each individual is shown trying to cope with the complexity of society by finding some kind of meaningful unity. Visionary or utopian theories of reform find little encouragement here. Lydgate's friend Trawley, who "was hot on the French social systems, and talked of going to the Backwoods to found a sort of Pythagorean community," is now, we are told, "practising at a German bath, and has married a rich patient" (xvii). Even Dorothea Brooke realises that "the time was gone by for guiding visions and spiritual directors" (x), and so she has to pin her hopes on Casaubon's research into Biblical Cosmology.

George Eliot now shows each person adopting a cosmology which will mediate between what she calls his "small hungry shivering self" (xix) and society. Such a cosmology, however idiosyncratically it may be conceived, attempts to reconcile the self and the different roles which society has created for the self. It must be repeated that George Eliot rejects in this novel either extreme of such an adaptation. She is concerned neither with the perfect fusion of roles which leads to the creation of the reformer, nor with the impossibility of reconciling conflicting roles which can lead to tragedy. The first extreme is the subject of Felix Holt and Daniel Deronda; the second extreme is treated in The Spanish Gypsy which George Eliot began and completed after Felix Holt in 1868. In this poem, Fedalma discovers she cannot be both wife to Don Silva and queen of the Gypsies; and in her "Notes on the Spanish Gypsy and Tragedy in general" (included by Cross in his biography) George Eliot locates the essence of tragedy in such a conflict:

Suppose for a moment that our conduct at great epochs was determined entirely by reflection...our determination as to

the right would consist in an adjustment of our individual needs to the dire necessities of our lot, partly as to our natural constitution, partly as sharers of life with our fellow-beings. Tragedy₁ consists in the terrible difficulty of this adjustment....

But George Eliot had to go to fifteenth century Spain to find such an irreconcilable tragic conflict, and she acknowledged this difficulty in her "Notes". By the time she came to write Middlemarch, she had accepted such a clash of roles as an inevitable part of modern society. No longer is the conflict tragic and dramatic, for the individual can no longer be seen in collision with a divine or established social order; George Eliot's conception both of tragedy and of the education of her visionary reformers has in Middlemarch become domesticated as the individual's inevitable plurality of roles. The conflict is now a private maladjustment which the individual either accepts, ignores, or attempts to rectify.

The complexity of these conflicting roles and the need for a cosmology are increased in Middlemarch by the further breaking down of the traditional divisions in society by the Reform movement which, at the time the novel opens, is accelerating the progress towards a greater and greater organic unity:

Old provincial society had its share of this subtle movement; had not only its striking downfalls, its brilliant young professional dandies who ended by living up an entry with a drab and six children for their establishment, but also those less marked vicissitudes which are constantly shifting the boundaries of social intercourse, and begetting new consciousness of interdependence. Some slipped a little downward, some got higher footing: people denied aspirates gained wealth, and fastidious gentlemen stood for boroughs; some were caught in political currents, some in ecclesiastical, and perhaps found themselves surprisingly grouped in consequence; while a few personages or families that stood with rocky firmness amid all this fluctuation, were slowly presenting new aspects in spite of solidity, and altering with the double

parish gradually made fresh threads of connection—change of self and beholder. Municipal town and rural ~~parish~~ gradually, as the old stocking gave way to the saving-bank, and the worship of the solar guinea became extinct; while squires and baronets, and even lords who had once lived blamelessly afar from the civic mind, gathered the faultiness of closer acquaintanceship. Settlers, too, came from distant counties, some with an alarming novelty of skill, others with an offensive advantage in cunning. (xi)

This description of the movement of Middlemarch society suggests how much more intimate is the relationship in this novel between individual and social forms. Felix Holt and Deronda are essentially outside society, analysing and diagnosing, and waiting. In Middlemarch, the characters are felt to be a product of the society they are trying to understand. We become aware of society as a structure which creates in the individual certain patterns of behaviour, and imposes upon him certain roles, and which, in this particular case, we experience as growing into a closer organic unity. But this growing "consciousness of interdependence" has achieved as yet no definite form, and the structure of the novel emphasises the fragmentary nature of Middlemarch society. Abandoning the symmetrical structure of Felix Holt, George Eliot has boldly divided the novel into what are basically five groups of characters which touch at their circumference. We are shown the characters in action within their own group whilst at the same time glimpsing other groups in the background. George Eliot manipulates the interconnections between these apparently self-contained social worlds to reveal "the stealthy convergence of human lots" and the "slow preparation of effects from one life on another"(xi). We are made to feel ~~xxxx~~ dramatically the fragmentariness of society and yet are aware at certain moments of an emerging unity.

Dorothea's quest, which is central to the novel, is an attempt to find a principle that will unify the fragmentariness which this structure of the novel postulates. At first, her search is theoretic and all-embracing; she refuses to acknowledge the anomalies inherent in society.

Her ardour and naive nature will not allow her to accept a plurality of roles: "She could not reconcile the anxieties of a spiritual life involving eternal consequences, with a keen interest in guimp and artificial protrusions of drapery"(i). She is, in fact, looking for "some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there"(i), and with a fine compassionate irony George Eliot admires her ardour whilst mocking the absurdity of such an aim. The irony is a sign of George Eliot's confident awareness of the complexity inherent in this theme; it springs from the understanding that Dorothea's aims, unlike those of a Romola, are partly an expression of the provincialism from which she is trying to escape.

Unlike Saint Theresa, Dorothea is "helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul"(Prelude), and so her search for a philosophy of life is complex and bewildering. At first, she imagines that from the "standing-ground"(vii) of Casaubon's Latin and Greek she will quickly arrive at a comprehensive world-view. But gradually she comes to realise that a personal "social faith" can only come through genuine self-knowledge, and self-knowledge only ~~through~~ through suffering. And it is the suffering which Dorothea has to undergo which finally resolves the conflict between her aims and her situation—she comes to understand simultaneously both herself and her relationship with others. Instead of a "lofty conception of the world", she has achieved a genuine knowledge of the nature of one's relations with one's fellow human beings. As Dorothea is educated into this knowledge, the complexities of Middlemarch society disappear—we come to see them either as derivatives or corruptions of the simple theory of human relations she evolves.

The stages of Dorothea's search and education are based on the movement, fundamental to all the novels, of illusion, disenchantment and

regeneration. And, in order to suggest how George Eliot uses this central search as a key to the complications of Middlemarch society, it is necessary first to trace briefly its main stages.

Dorothea's first disenchantment is the failure of her marriage with Casaubon. She quickly realises that he cannot provide her with the lofty, unifying conception of the world she desires, and in the description of Rome which they visit on their honeymoon, we have the most vivid of all George Eliot's correlatives of disenchantment.² Rome's "stupendous fragmentariness", as well as showing how far Dorothea is from achieving her unifying theory, also emphasises the futility of Casaubon's research, and from this double realisation comes Dorothea's first lesson: "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." Then, in the next paragraph, George Eliot develops the significance of Dorothea's presentiment and in doing so makes one of the most central definitions in the novel:

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 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 shadows must always fall with a certain difference. (xvi)

During the rest of her life with Casaubon, "where the sense of connection with a manifold pregnant existence had to be kept up painfully as an inward vision"(xxviii), she attempts to retain this distinct "feeling". And as she does so, her mind becomes less theoretic and her quest more realistic: "She was no longer/struggling against the perception of facts, but adjusting herself to their clearest perception; and now when she

looked steadily at her husband's failure, she seemed to be looking along the one track where duty became tenderness"(xxxvii).

After Casaubon's death, she learns of the codicil to his will and of Ladislav's feelings towards her. As a result she passes out of her protracted disenchantment into a second hopeful phase: "She might have compared her experience at that moment to the vague, ^a alarmed consciousness that her life was taking on a new form, that she was undergoing a metamorphosis in which memory would not adjust itself to the stirring of new organs. Everything was changing its aspect....Her whole world was in a state of convulsive change"(1). Yet she has not attained a full comprehension, "with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling," of her relationship with others. A second disenchantment is required for her to assimilate fully and to practise the lessons she has derived from her marriage. This occurs when she surprises Ladislav and Rosamond together at Lydgate's. Ladislav becomes for the moment the second "detected illusion"(lxxx). Here, at the climax of the novel, Dorothea transcends by an effort of will an egocentric interpretation of the situation and looks at it from the point of view of the "equivalent centre [s] of self" of the other protagonists:

It was not in Dorothea's nature, for longer than the duration of a ^a proxym, to sit in the narrow cell of her calamity, in the besotted misery of a consciousness that only sees another's lot as an accident of its own.

She began now to live through that yesterday morning deliberately again, forcing herself to dwell on every detail and its possible meaning. Was she alone in that scene? Was it her event only? (lxxx)

Not only must she look at the situation from their point of view, but she must accept the obligations which this brings: "And what sort of crisis might not this be in three lives whose contact with hers laid an obligation on her as if they had been suppliants bearing the sacred branch?"(lxxx). Struggling to achieve this vision, she looks

out into the dawn and experiences the revelation which is the moment of regeneration:

She opened her curtains, and looked out towards the bit of road that lay in view, with fields beyond, outside the entrance-gates. On the road there was a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying a baby; in the field she could see figures moving—perhaps the shepherd with his dog. Far off in the bending sky was the pearly light; and she felt the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance. She was a part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining. (lxxx)

The sense of connection with a "manifold pregnant existence" is no longer merely an "inward vision", and Dorothea acknowledges the revelation by discarding her widow's mourning, experiencing "the tradition that fresh garments belonged to all initiation"(lxxx). Then she returns to Rosamond to reconcile her with Lydgate, and through this comes herself to marry Ladislaw. Dorothea has attained a simple but extremely basic "social faith"; she has experienced the inescapable unity of mankind, at the same time recognising the inviolable separateness of the individual.

We can see from this summary of Dorothea's development how constant the basic rhythm of the novels has remained. But although the phases of the rhythm are the same, its nature has changed considerably. By the time of Middlemarch, George Eliot is much less dependent upon external events to motivate and demarcate these phases of development. Now, illusion and disenchantment manifest themselves in the subtle distortions of the individual's view of his fellow human beings, and if we are to understand these we must scrutinise carefully the rich texture of human relationships in the novel.

(ii)

Everyone in the flux of Middlemarch society has to create his own cosmology by which to unify the life around him, and to reconcile the different roles he has to play. These cosmologies, depicted with amazing variety, are assessed by juxtaposition to Dorothea's quest for a unifying theory, which they in turn help us to understand in greater detail. For example, Casaubon's life is completely governed by his search for the 'Key to all Mythologies', and this search for a unifying principle obliquely defines the central theme by detailed analogy:

...and he told her how he had undertaken to show...that all mythical systems or erratic mythical fragments in the world were corruptions of a tradition originally revealed. Having once mastered the true position and taken a firm footing there, the vast field of mythical constructions became intelligible, nay, luminous with the reflected light of correspondences. But to gather in this great harvest of truth was no light or speedy work. (iii)

This is clearly analogous to Dorothea's desire for a unifying theory to explain "the mythical systems or erratic mythical fragments" in Middlemarch society, and she herself experiences "the tradition originally revealed" in her revelation in the dawn. But although the analogy illuminates Dorothea's search, it also emphasises that as ^a way of looking at life Casaubon's researches are totally inadequate. There is a complete severance, which George Eliot exploits with full irony, between his abstruse scholarship and his everyday life. Far from helping him to understand the society in which he is living, his researches serve rather as a refuge. When, for example, Dorothea's philanthropic ardour becomes too insistent, he escapes into an historic parallel: "Mr Casaubon apparently did not care about building cottages, and diverted the talk to the extremely narrow accommodation

which was to be had in the dwellings of the ancient Egyptians, as if to check a too high standard"(iii).³

The final futility of Casaubon's search is symbolised in the "stupendous fragmentariness" of Rome, whose "gigantic broken revelations"(xx) are outside the scope of his mind. The symbol of Rome also marks a stage in Dorothea's analogous search--marriage with Casaubon has failed to provide the unifying principle she desires, and her inward confusion is reproduced in the chaos around her. But her personal grief in this city of suffering is a necessary stage of development which will eventually lead her to full knowledge and to Ladislaw who here is seen enjoying the beauty which can be found beneath the apparent confusion of Rome. However, at present, the clue to the "labyrinth of petty courses" which is Dorothea's life in Middlemarch has yet to be found; Casaubon's mind has merely "reflected ...in vague labyrinthine extension every quality she herself brought"(iii), and Ladislaw extends the image when he complains to Dorothea that she has "been brought up in some of those horrible notions that choose the sweetest women to devour--like Minotaur"(xxii). It is not long before he converts Casaubon into the Minotaur: "A man was bound to know himself better than that, and if he chose to grow grey crunching bones in a cavern, he had no business to be luring a girl into his companionship. 'It is the most horrible of virgin-sacrifices,' said Will; and he painted to himself what were Dorothea's inward sorrows as if he had been writing a choric wail"(xxxvii).⁴ In the confusion at Rome, Dorothea is still, hopelessly lost in the labyrinth and so is placed in antithesis to "the complete contentment"(xix) of the Ariadne in the Vatican museum. One lesson has, however, been learned. Now, after her disenchantment, she is "no longer struggling against the perception of facts, but adjusting herself to their clearest perception," whereas her mentor's "theory of the elements which made

the seed of all traditions was not likely to bruise itself against discoveries...it was a method of interpretation which was not tested by the necessity of forming anything which had sharper collisions than an elaborate notion of Gog and Magog"(xlvi). Her search, unlike Casaubon's is becoming less theoretic and more empirical.

The workings of the historical imagination provide a second analogy to Dorothea's quest for a social ethic. In the midst of the despair at Rome, Ladislav appears and underlines by contrast the inadequacy of Casaubon's imagination. When the three of them meet at dinner, Ladislav "passed easily to a half-enthusiastic, half-playful picture of the enjoyment he got out of the very miscellaneousness of Rome, which made the mind flexible with constant comparison, and saved you from seeing the world's ages as a set of box-like partitions without vital connection"(xii). Ladislav is an obvious contrast to the plodding Casaubon, and this is why Ladislav finds himself in conflict with Dorothea. She, still under the influence of her upbringing and her husband, is seeking a key to all the mythologies of Middlemarch society; she wants a "lofty conception", a "binding theory"(x) of the universe which will unify her life intellectually and morally and make significant its least action. Ladislav, on the other hand, is not seeking one all-embracing theory; he enjoys exercising his flexible mind upon the miscellaneousness of life and art without feeling the necessity to fuse all into a single rule of conduct. An element in this attitude to life is his refusal to identify himself with any one class in society: "As Lydgate had said of him, he was a sort of gypsy, rather enjoying the sense of belonging to no class"(xvi). In this presentation of the three characters in Rome, George Eliot is making her most fundamental distinction between two equally valid ways of approaching life. As we see Dorothea and Ladislav together in Rome discussing art and religion, it becomes

clear that here are two antithetical attitudes, two attitudes which we find placed in opposition and exactly delineated by Arnold in his contrast of Hebraism and Hellenism. A reading of Culture and Anarchy (1869)⁵ makes clear in a very vivid way what George Eliot is trying to do in the relationship between these two characters. Arnold makes his central contrast in these terms:

The uppermost idea with Hellenism is to see things as they really are; the uppermost idea with Hebraism is conduct and obedience....pursued with passion and tenacity, this notion would not let the Hebrew rest till, as is well known, he had at last got out of the law a network of prescriptions to enwrap his whole life, to govern every moment of it, every impulse, every action....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....An unclouded clearness of mind, an unimpeded play of thought, is what this bent drives at. The governing idea of Hellenism is spontaneity of consciousness; that of Hebraism, strictness of conscience.⁶

Each is valid but limiting. Dorothea experiences the attractions of both attitudes to life without being able to resolve their contradictions. Just as Romola was placed between Dino and Tito, and the corresponding gods of sorrow and joy, so Dorothea is torn by the less extreme and more recognisable contrast between the gloomy Casaubon with "his severe self-restraint", his desire to be "unimpeachable by any recognised opinion"(xxix), and his strong "sense of rectitude"(xlii), and the bright, volatile Ladislaw who is described by means of images of spring and sunlight. George Eliot depicts with fine irony the conflict between these two tendencies in Dorothea's character; Dorothea "felt that she enjoyed riding in a pagan sensuous way, and always looked forward to renouncing it"(i). In marked contrast to Romola's divided character, the two sides of Dorothea's character mingle convincingly, with each side ironically commenting on the other. The first chapter

of the novel is an excellent example of the way in which George Eliot has now forsaken the schematised, diametrical contrasts which were at their most extreme in Romola, and by a subtler use of symbol and image absorbs them into the day-to-day living of her middle-class characters. The down-to-earth Celia is shown to enjoy wearing the family jewels in an uncomplicated, sensuous way; Dorothea enjoys their beauty, but "all the while her thought was trying to justify her delight in the colours by merging them in her mystic religious joy."

Although the clash between Dorothea's predominantly Protestant ethic and Ladislaw's very different attitude is most extensively dramatised in Rome, there has been an anticipation of the clash earlier in the novel in Dorothea's misgivings over Brooke's casts and pictures at the Grange: "To poor Dorothea these severe classical nudities and smirking Renaissance-Correggiosities were painfully inexplicable, staring into the midst of her Puritanic conceptions: she had never been taught how she could bring them into any sort of relevance with her life"(ix). The last sentence is particularly revealing: Dorothea cannot be satisfied with Arnold's "seeing things as they really are," or, as Ladislaw says, with a "sturdy neutral delight in things as they were"(xxx). She must fuse everything into a unified code by her "fanaticism of sympathy"(xxx).

The antithesis is brought into sharper prominence in Rome which both provides Ladislaw an opportunity to exercise his spontaneous consciousness and which challenges devastatingly Dorothea's preconceptions. Ladislaw is ~~at ease~~ at ease in Rome with the Renaissance and its Correggiosities, where Romanticism "was fermenting still as a distinguishable vigorous enthusiasm"(xix); and it is, of course, in the Renaissance that Arnold sees "that great re-awakening of Hellenism, that irresistible return of humanity to nature and to seeing

things as they are." 7 The "fine bit of antithesis," which Naumann observes in the Vatican museum, is in fact ~~ix~~ a juxtaposition of Hebraism and Hellenism--it is the confrontation of two world-views:

...the two figures passed lightly along by the Meleager towards the hall where the reclining Ariadne, then called the Cleopatra, lies in the marble voluptuousness of her beauty, the drapery folding around her with a petal-like ease and tenderness. They were just in time to see another figure standing against a pedestal near the reclining marble: a breathing, blooming girl, whose form, not shamed by the Ariadne, was clad in Quakerish grey drapery; her long cloak...fastened at the neck, was thrown backward from her arms, and one beautiful ungloved hand pillowed her cheek, pushing backward the white beaver bonnet which made a sort of halo to her face.... (xix)

Naumann's comment on this juxtaposition points directly to Culture and Anarchy: "There lies antique beauty, not corpse-like even in death, but arrested in the complete contentment of its sensuous perfection; and here stands beauty in its breathing life, with the consciousness of Christian centuries in its bosom." And, as he continues, he anticipates the eventual merging of the two poles of the antithesis; he sees her "as antique form animated by Christian sentiment--a sort of Christian Antigone--sensuous force controlled by spiritual passion." 8

After this, the conversations between Ladislav and Dorothea merely fill in the details of the antithesis. When Ladislav taxes Dorothea with being "a heretic about art generally," she answers: "I should like to make life beautiful--I mean everybody's life. And then all this immense expense of art, that seems somehow to lie outside life and make it no better for the world, pains one." He replies that "The best piety is to enjoy--when you can. You are doing the most then to save the earth's character as an agreeable planet" (xxii). Later, at Tipton, the contrast is developed in more general terms. Dorothea says her religious belief is "That by desiring what is perfectly

good, even when we don't quite know what it is and cannot do what we would, we are part of the divine power against evil--widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower." "Ladislaw's still "To love what is good and beautiful when I see it" (xxxix). Dorothea again sees life in terms of conduct, of a struggle between good and evil; Ladislav seeks with his spontaneity of consciousness to know and appreciate as many things in the universe as possible.

G. H. Lewes focuses another aspect of this conflict when he draws a contrast between the Platonist and the Aristotelian in his biography of Goethe, written several years before Culture and Anarchy:

Frederick Schlegel (and after him Coleridge) aptly indicated a distinction, when he said that every man was born either a Platonist or an Aristotelian. This distinction is often expressed in the terms subjective and objective intellects. Perhaps we shall best define these by calling the objective intellect one which is eminently impersonal, and the subjective intellect one which is eminently personal; the former disengaging itself as much as possible from its own prepossessions, striving to see and represent objects as they exist; the other viewing all objects in the light of its own feelings and preconceptions. It is needless to add that no mind can be exclusively subjective, nor exclusively objective; but every mind has a more or less dominant tendency in one of these directions. ⁹

Dorothea's attitude is subjective in its "eagerness for a binding theory which could bring her own life and doctrine into strict connection with that amazing past, and give the remotest sources of knowledge some bearing on her actions." Ladislav's attitude in contrast is shown in the same chapter to be objective and uncommitted: "Genius, he held, is necessarily intolerant of fetters: on the one hand it must have the utmost play for its spontaneity; on the other, it may confidently await those messages from the universe which summon it to its peculiar work, only placing itself in an attitude of receptivity towards all sublime chances"(x). This fundamental distinction between two opposing

tendencies helps us to classify and assess the variety of cosmologies in Middlemarch society.

Now, I think, it is possible to see the more general significance of this many-faceted symbol of Rome. It is not merely, as was suggested in chapter one, a mile-post in the development of three important characters. It expresses an ethic which stands over against Dorothea's in a confident and challenging manner:

To those who have looked at Rome with the quickening power of a knowledge which breathes a growing soul into all historic shapes, and traces out the suppressed transitions which unite all contrasts, Rome may still be the spiritual centre and interpreter of the world. But let them conceive one more historical contrast: the gigantic broken revelations of that Imperial and Papal city thrust abruptly on the notions of a girl who had been brought up in English and Swiss Puritanism, fed on meagre Protestant histories and on art chiefly of the hand-screen sort; a girl whose ardent nature turned all her small allowance of knowledge into principles, fusing her actions into their mould, and whose quick emotions gave the most abstract things the quality of a pleasure or a pain.... (xx)

Ladislaw too must be understood in terms of this symbol. He manifests the inherent weakness as well as the strength of Hellenism, and in this he is a forerunner of Deronda.¹⁰ In both characters, the ability to project themselves back in time is an analogy, a symptom almost, of the ability to project themselves into other people's point of view. The weakness in this tendency lies in a refusal to commit oneself to a positive line of action. The excessive flexibility leads to moral indecision. Later in the novel, we learn that Ladislaw's "point of view shifted as easily as his mood"(xxxix), and his inability to choose a profession because the "universe had not beckoned"(x) is an aspect of Deronda's later disease of sympathy. Arnold again provides an interesting gloss upon this weakness:

The Renaissance, that great re-awakening of Hellenism, that

irresistible return of humanity to nature and to seeing things as they are, which in art, in literature, and in physics, produced such splendid fruits, had, like the anterior Hellenism of the Pagan world, a side of moral weakness and of relaxation or insensibility of the moral fibre....^{II}

And this weakness is linked definitely with the delight in miscellaneousness and many-sidedness: "The notion of this sort of equipollency in man's modes of activity may lead to moral relaxation."¹² Such an "equipollency" is not far from the dilettantism in Ladislav's character which has annoyed so many readers and which has been hastily ascribed to a failure of George Eliot's art, a failure of 'distancing.' Just as she has shown the narrowness inherent in Dorothea's ardent Hebraism, so here she is showing the weakness in Ladislav's Hellenism, the other side of the "flexibility which sweetness and light give." Lydgate picks out their crucial weaknesses when he finds Dorothea "a little too earnest"^(x) for his own tastes, and Ladislav "rather miscellaneous and bric-à-brac, but likable"^(xliii).

It must be added that there is at times an uncertainty of touch in George Eliot's delineation of Ladislav's character, and the reason is to be found, as was suggested in the chapter on The Mill on the Floss, in the nature of the Hellenistic attitude he and Philip Wakem embody. How can the novelist present convincingly and sympathetically as a valid way of life their 'attitude of receptivity' and enjoyment, an artistic attitude to the world without any resulting artefacts? The passive nature of their roles can be seen from the images which describe their relationships with the heroines: for Maggie, Philip is "an opening in the rocky wall which shut ~~out~~ in the narrow valley of humiliation"^(V, iii), whilst, for Dorothea, Ladislav is "like a lunette opened in the wall of her prison, giving her a glimpse of the sunny air"^(xxxvii). Whereas Dorothea's desire for a "binding theory", like that of the Dodson family's, finds expression in conduct,

ritual and moral decision, the spontaneity of consciousness of Philip and Ladislav, having no positive means of expression, can only assert itself in the novels by decrying the heroines' family and marital ties as narrow and restrictive. In an attempt to raise her artist manqué in our estimation, George Eliot has to fall back upon an imagery of "sweetness and light",^{I3} but the imagery cannot bear for long the full burden of characterisation.

As Ladislav and Dorothea come closer and closer together, we realise that these two basic kinds of world-view can be mutually beneficial. His use of his historical imagination points directly to Dorothea's ultimate vision of "the largeness of the world" and its "involuntary palpitating life." The use of the analogy is simultaneous with her increasing awareness of Casaubon's ~~equivocal~~ "equivalent centre of self" and her growing refusal to see human beings as "a set of box-like partitions without vital connection." She on her side helps Ladislav to overcome his indecision and to find a "strong partisanship" in politics, and channel his energies and sympathies towards a definite end.^{I4} Each of the two characters is the most fundamental criticism of the other, and their marriage, like that of Adam Bede and Dinah, signifies a mutual education.

The phrase "vital connection" suggests another search very similar to Casaubon's. Lydgate too is seeking unity in plurality in his anatomical investigations. The traditional analogy between society and the organs of the body has already been used in a rather pedestrian way by that other doctor, Felix Holt, in his Address to Working Men: "...society stands before us like that wonderful piece of life, the human body, with all its various parts depending on one another, and with a terrible liability to get wrong because of that delicate dependence....the body is made up of so many various parts, all related to each other, or likely all to feel the effect if any one of them goes wrong. It is somewhat

the same with our old nations or societies.¹⁵ In Middlemarch, the analogy is more detailed although its ~~xx~~ main function is the same as this. Lydgate is searching for the vital connection between the different organs of the body in order "to demonstrate the homogeneous origin of all the tissues"(xlv):

The more he became interested in special questions of disease, such as the nature of fever or fevers, the more keenly he felt the need for that fundamental knowledge of structure which just at the beginning of the century had been illuminated by the brief and glorious career of Bichat That great Frenchman first carried out the conception that living bodies, fundamentally considered, are not associations of organs which can be understood by studying them first apart, and then as it were federally; but must be regarded as consisting of certain primary webs or tissues, out of which the various organs—brain, heart, lungs, and so on—are compacted, as the various accommodations of a house are built up in various proportions of wood, iron, stone, brick, zinc, and the rest, each material having its peculiar composition and proportions. No man, one sees, can understand and estimate the entire structure or its parts—what are its frailties and what its repairs, without knowing the nature of the materials. And the conception wrought out by Bichat, with his detailed study of the different tissues, acted necessarily on medical questions as the ~~ix~~ turning of gas-light would act on a dim, oil-lit street, showing new connections and hitherto hidden facts of structure which must be taken into account in considering the symptoms of maladies and the action of medicaments. (xv)

Like the description of Casaubon's 'Key to all Mythologies', this description could ~~xxx~~ act as an image of the whole novel;¹⁶ more particularly, the terms are readily transposable to Dorothea's search for a social unity. When we place the details of this search alongside Dorothea's, it is clear that George Eliot has transformed a conventional comparison into a precise and revealing image. The unity beneath the apparent discreteness of the organs of the body expresses tersely Dorothea's discovery that man must be seen ~~xx~~ both as a separate individual with

"an equivalent centre of self whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference," and simultaneously as part of that "involuntary, palpitating life" of society as a whole. This is a more vivid version of Deronda's belief in "separateness with communication." The "primitive tissue" of society¹⁷ for which Dorothea is searching and which she at last finds, is suggested in a comment George Eliot makes on Bulstrode's theory of providence: "There is no general doctrine which is not capable of eating out our morality if unchecked by the deep-seated habit of direct fellow-feeling with individual fellow-men"(lix). This habit is the "tradition originally revealed" which will make intelligible the "constructions" of Middlemarch society. Lydgate, engaged in his own quest, catches fleeting glimpses of this direct fellow-feeling in his brief contacts with Dorothea.

These glimpses which Lydgate experiences are however only fleeting, and there is, as in the case of Casaubon, a severance between his scientific work and his human relationships which is exploited with full irony. He feels no necessity to employ his professional intelligence and discrimination in his relations with people. Here we have the most powerful treatment of the theme of the duality of roles in the whole novel. At the beginning of his career, Lydgate is on his guard against the more blatant forms of duality: "he did not mean to imitate those philanthropic models who make a profit out of poisonous pickles to support themselves while they are exposing adulteration, or hold shares in a gambling-hell that they ~~are~~ may have leisure to represent the cause of public morality"(xv). But he is not prepared for the subtler dualities, such as the attrition which can take place between the role of husband and the role of scientist. Yet this develops with the logic and inevitability of tragedy, a tragedy so domesticated however that George Eliot can ask in the middle of it: "...is it not rather what we

expect in men, that they should have numerous strands of experience lying side by side and never compare them with each other?"(lviii).

George Eliot uses some ingenious mock analogies to insist upon this dichotomy in Lydgate's life and to pinpoint exactly the cause of his failure. Lydgate is first attracted to anatomy by reading as a boy a passage on "the valves of the human heart"(xv), from ignorance of which organ he will of course be ruined. Later, in Paris, he is engaged on "some galvanic experiments" when he becomes infatuated with an actress. He "left his frogs and rabbits to some repose under their trying and mysterious dispensation of unexplained shocks"(xv) in order to undergo a similar therapeutic experience himself with Laure. Apparently this galvanic experiment has been successful, for "three days afterwards Lydgate was at his galvanism again in his Paris chambers, believing that illusions were at end for him"(xv). But the conflict and cross-reference between his "two selves"(xv) continues into his relationship with Rosamond when he first succumbs to her influence whilst studying "Louis' new book on Fever"(xvii). We are prepared for his marriage by his coveting and acceptance of Farebrother's "lovely anencephalous monster"(xvii), and Rosamond's breaking down of his desire for independence coincides fittingly with an experiment on maceration. George Eliot is at pains to point the analogy: "That evening when he went home, he looked at his phials to see how a process of maceration was going on, with undisturbed interest....The reveries from which it was difficult for him to detach himself were ideal constructions of something else than Rosamond's virtues, and the primitive tissue was still his fair unknown"(xvii). And finally just before Lydgate learns how Rosamond has coolly outmanoeuvred him over the sale of their house, we find him "looking at the fire with his hands clasped behind his head in forgetfulness of everything except the construction of a new controlling experiment"(lxiv).

A few pages later, the experiment has been completed without his knowledge when George Eliot tersely says—"she had mastered him"(lxv). His search for a literally organic unity, as well as helping us to understand the organic social unity which is the object of Dorothea's quest, serves as a running commentary on his relationship with Laure and Rosamond. The analogies emphasise the discreteness of "the two selves within him."

(iii)

Once we have grasped the central theme of the novel and the way it is being defined in detail, fresh links and comparisons are continually being suggested. These connections are prompted by the imagery used to describe the different world-views of the characters. The echoes of Lydgate's "primary webs and tissues" and Casaubon's "mythical constructions" are insistent throughout the novel. Just as George Eliot herself admits that she is scrutinising the "particular web" of Middlemarch society, "unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven"(xv) so the characters are imposing consciously or unconsciously their own unifying theories upon the changing society around them.

For example, Rosamond Vincy, "whose basis for her structure had the usual airy slightness, was of remarkably detailed and realistic imagination when the foundation had been once presupposed"(xii); into her structure, the "gossamer web" of "young love-making"(xxxvi), she incorporates Lydgate willy-nilly, with the result that his researches

collapse before her more persistent constructions. It is easy to see why George Eliot connects explicitly the pier-glass image (which opens chapter xxvii) with Rosamond; this parable expresses a view of life at the opposite pole from an awareness of other people's "equivalent centre [s] of self":

An eminent philosopher among my friends, who can dignify even your ugly furniture by lifting it into the serene light of science, has shown me this pregnant little fact. Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. It is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement, its light falling with an exclusive optical selection. These things are a parable. The scratches are events, and the candle is the egoism of any person now absent--of Miss Vincy, for example.

Here lies the secret of Rosamond's frightening impregnability: everything is seen by her as centring around her conventional ego, and anything which conflicts with this unity is discounted. "Rosamond, in fact, was entirely occupied not exactly with Tertius Lydgate as he was in himself, but with his relation to her..."(xvi). It is on similar grounds that Ladislav rejects the life of the German artists in Rome with "their way of looking at the world entirely from the studio point of view"(xxi), and angrily answers Naumann's solipsisms with "I do not think that all the universe is straining towards the obscure significance of your pictures"(xix). The cosmology similar to these which receives the most amusing treatment is Celia's. Perhaps the sympathy is there because her view is not quite egocentric; it radiates from her baby, "that unconsciousⁿ centre and poise of the world,

who had the most remarkable fists all complete even to the nails, and hair enough, really, when you took his cap off to make—you didn't know what: in short, he was Bouddha in a Western form"(1). The comedy of Celia's attempting to impose this child-centred view of the world upon a Dorothea who is earnestly attempting to assimilate the lessons of Casaubon's death goes straight to the central meaning of the novel.

Bulstrode, on the other hand, utilises the divine scheme of things for his own purposes: "In his closest meditations the life-long habit of Mr Bulstrode's mind clad his most egoistic terrors in doctrinal references to superhuman ends"(liii). His life is a continual and fluctuating attempt (not the fixed dichotomy of a Wemmick) to reconcile by this means his two roles of business-man and nonconformist lay-preacher; and his tragedy is the breakdown of this adjustment before his own conscience. His conduct serves as a warning of the way in which "that spiritual religion, that submergence of self in communion with Divine perfection"(iii), for which Dorothea yearned at the beginning of the novel, can be perverted. The Rev. Farebrother has, in a modified form, a similar difficulty of forming a consistent, homogeneous world-view because of a certain division in his life. It is, ironically, Lydgate who diagnoses this: "He is very fond of Natural History and various scientific matters, and he is hampered in reconciling these tastes with his position. He has no money to spare—hardly enough to use; and that has led him into card-playing ..."(1). He, however, fully understands his own problem and seeks an amused reconciliation in out-of-the-way reading matter: "a learned treatise on the entomology of the Pentateuch, including all the insects not mentioned, but probably met with by the Israelites on their passage through the desert; with a monograph on the Ant, as treated by Solomon, showing the harmony of the Book of Proverbs with the results

of modern research"(xvii).

Mrs Cadwallader appears as a comic Mrs Transome, with a similar aristocratic scheme of things; her interest centres in the "exact crossing of genealogies which had brought a coronet into a new branch and widened the relations of scandal," and "she believed as unquestionably in birth and no-birth as ~~she~~ she did in game and vermin"(vi). Her ally, Lord Chettam, has a similar foundation for his theory of life: "I do wish people would behave like gentlemen," said the good baronet, feeling that this was a simple and comprehensive programme for social well-being'(xxxviii).

Caleb Garth, with his catchphrase "'Things hang together,'" sees life in terms of "that sacred calling 'business'"(xl) and his world-picture is neither exclusive nor self-centred:

Caleb Garth often shook his head in meditation on the value, the indispensable might of that myriadheaded, myriad-handed labour by which the social body is fed, clothed, and housed. It had laid hold of his imagination in boyhood. The echoes of the great hammer...the precision and variety of muscular effort wherever exact work had to be turned out,—all these sights of his youth had acted on him as poetry without the aid of poets, had made a philosophy for him without the aid of philosophers, a religion without the aid of theology. (xxiv)

Mrs Garth is more down-to-earth than her husband. After we have been told "she had that rare sense which discerns what is unalterable, and submits to it without murmuring"(xxiv), we see her giving expression to this belief in teaching the laws of grammar to her rebellious children:

"Not without regard to the import of the word as conveying unity or plurality of idea*—tell me again what that means Ben."

(Mrs Garth, like more celebrated educators, had her favourite ancient paths, and in a general wreck of society would have tried to hold her 'Lindley Murray' above the waves). (xxiv)

Mr Brooke compromises and prevaricates on all theories of life: "The fact is, human reason may carry you a little too far...but I saw it would not do. I pulled up; I pulled up in time. But not too hard"(ii).¹⁸ Whilst Joshua Rigg, in superiority to Mr Casaubon, desires and obtains a plurality of keys—"The one joy after which his soul thirsted was to have a money-changers shop on a much-frequented quay, to have locks all round him of which he held the keys..."(liii). Standing apart ~~far~~ from the other characters is Mary Garth, whose very definite reality throughout the novel springs ultimately from her unique refusal to refashion the world according to her own wishes: "she neither tried to create illusions, nor indulged in them for her own behoof"(xii). The universal validity of the pier-glass image is questioned most decisively here in the presentation of her character—she is not prepared to allow egocentricity to produce "the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement."

It would, of course, be wrong to over-emphasise the unity created in the novel by this theme of the search for unity in plurality. The thematic parallels suggest comparisons which we quickly discover are never rigid or complete; in this way, the variety of the fictional life is brought home^{to} the reader. It is equally perverse, however, to ignore the analogies and parallels between different characters and groups of characters, and to say that Middlemarch reveals life in all its concrete and unschematic variety. W. J. Harvey comes near to this extreme in his recent book on George Eliot when he says: "It is dangerous, then, to discuss Middlemarch simply from a thematic point of view, since what emerges is not so much a theme as a set of variations and it is not in any abstract statement but in a richly depicted and subtly discriminated body of life that the strength of the novel lies."¹⁹ Here he rejects one extreme to embrace the other, on the assumption that the thematic unity and the "discriminated

body of life" of the novel are quite separate. In fact, what one is all the time aware of in Middlemarch is a tension between an emerging overall unity and the variegated life of the novel which stubbornly refuses to be unified. This is why the variety of the novel is so vivid and meaningful; this is how we realise that the "body of life" is "richly depicted" and "subtly discriminated."

(iv)

We saw, at the beginning of the chapter, that the society in which these different characters are evolving their varieties of world-views is become increasingly aware of its own organic unity. The society which includes Lydgate and Casaubon is itself experiencing a "new consciousness of interdependence," is refusing to see itself as a "set of box-like partitions without vital connection," and is in fact becoming aware of its "primary webs ~~and~~ or tissues." And George Eliot underlines subtly but with persistence the constant erosion of social stratum upon social stratum, the striving of Middlemarch society to overcome the fragmentariness inherent in the basic structure of the novel.

This growing self-awareness which is presented in dramatic detail in Middlemarch, finds expression at large in the Reform movement,²⁰ the crucial years of which are covered by the novel. And here we have the final analogy with Dorothea's search. In a recent article,²¹ Mr Jerome Beaty has shown by gathering together the terse political references in the novel how it is possible to reconstruct the main

events of the Reform movement from 1829 to 1832, which form a shadowy but meticulously planned background to the fictional events. He has examined the technique of this "history by indirection" but without showing its analogical function. In fact, what George Eliot is doing is to articulate and suggest the significance of the main lines of Dorothea's quest for a "social ethic" by means of the parallel political events. The cross-references between fiction and reality are, however, oblique and on the few occasions when they become overt, their significance is concealed by their ironic explicitness; for example, chapter xix begins, "When George the Fourth was still reigning over the privacies of Windsor, when the Duke of Wellington was Prime Minister, and Mr Vincy was mayor of the old corporation of Middlemarch, Mrs Casaubon, born Dorothea Brooke, had taken her wedding journey to Rome." That such references play a part in defining the central theme is suggested not by their obtrusiveness but by their insistence,

The main parallels can soon be stated. The first signs of the coming political upheaval are presented by reference to Brooke's "documents on machine-breaking and rick-burning"(iii); and it is in the same chapter we are given the first full description of Dorothea's discontent, "hemmed in by a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses." Her hoped-for release through marriage fails--reform cannot come from a Casaubon who is seeking the patronage of Peel. Casaubon's death coincides with the dissolution of Parliament in April 1831, the last Parliament to stalemate reform; and it is his death, of course, which opens the way for Dorothea's new relationship with Ladislaw, the zealous reformer. "Her whole world was in a state of convulsive change"(i), as is the political world as it prepares for the "famous 'dry election'"(li). The Commons pass Lord John Russell's Bill and Dorothea experiences her revelation in the dawn, but soon

afterwards the Lords throw out the Bill and Dorothea has to face concerted opposition to her marriage with Ladislaw. But shortly, the First Reform Bill will be passed and Dorothea will find a partial fulfilment in marriage. At this stage, Beaty points the analogy in detail:

Indeed there is a parallel in the fiction. The old world of Middlemarch makes a final effort to resist Dorothea's marrying an unsuitable foreigner....All is in vain. Dorothea will marry Ladislaw. But the wedding, the most important fictional event of the novel, takes place off stage, after the action of the novel ends too: it is scheduled for three weeks after the scene at Freshitt, very close to the June seventh date of the passage of the Reform Bill. This coincidence lends an air of finality or completeness to the story that began nearly three years earlier by Bringing to a close a historical as well as a fictional series of events.²²

This 'coincidence' also rounds off the political analogy which has made us become aware of the wider significance of the central theme of the novel. This implicit relationship between the fictional microcosm and the political macrocosm states that there is an interaction between Dorothea's quest and the Reform movement, at the same time as it implies the tenuousness of that interaction. This is very different from the direct interaction in George Eliot's overtly historical novel, Romola, where the characters control and are controlled by political events. The irony of the relationship between microcosm and macrocosm in Middlemarch lies in the fact that Dorothea, throughout the novel, is never in direct contact with the political movement, although the analogy asserts that she embodies the essence of reform. In the last paragraph of the novel, however, George Eliot transcends this ironic severance by a subdued optimism: "But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world ~~is~~ is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are

not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs."

The muted optimism of the close is in accord with the basic structure of the novel which remains throughout fundamentally fragmentary. There is no climactic moment which unifies the separate strands. Dorothea's moment of vision in the dawn is a climax of sorts, but it is not the pinnacle of a symmetrical structure. The peculiar power and strength of Middlemarch derives from the several scenes where the structure of the novel reinforces or contradicts the cosmologies evolved by the characters. It is when this interaction of individual and society takes place that we experience the essential realism of Middlemarch.

We can appreciate this simply in the relationship between two such characters as Dorothea and Casaubon. Casaubon is first presented as a caricature of a pedant, and we observe him either from the idealising point of view of Dorothea or from the critical point of view of Celia, Lord Chettam, and Mrs Cadwallader. In either case, we see him as absurd, either an index of Dorothea's stupidity or of the other characters' maliciousness. We accept this brilliant caricature because he seems to be at one with himself by means of his scholarship through which he sees everything. He even explains away the anti-climax of his marriage in terms of "the exaggeration of human tradition"(vii). It is only when we come to realise that Casaubon himself is uncertain of his scholarship and hence of his whole life, that he achieves a further dimension. In chapter x, George Eliot begins explicitly this revaluation ~~by sweeping aside~~ by sweeping aside both Dorothea's illusions and the other's prejudice, and begins to "turn from outside estimates of a man, to wonder, with keener interest, what is the report of his own

consciousness about his doings or capacity". Now we begin to see Casaubon as one more human being, and a particularly vulnerable one, amidst the flux of Middlemarch society. The revaluation is possible because George Eliot can accept and show with complete conviction that "Mr Casaubon, too, was the centre of his own world" (x); it is disturbing because we ourselves were satisfied with the caricature. The full force of this revaluation of Casaubon by the omniscient author is felt in chapter xxi, when Dorothea herself comes at last to acknowledge Casaubon's "equivalent centre of self" in her most important discovery. There is a shock of recognition which gives extra significance to the generalisation because we ourselves have been taken through this same process of revaluation and ~~xxx~~ discovery. We have experienced the invalidating of the pier-glass image upon which principle the presentation of Casaubon had been carried out. And after this, George Eliot can assert defiantly Casaubon's equal status: "One morning, some weeks after her arrival at Lowick, Dorothea--but why always Dorothea? Was her point of view the only possible one with regard to this marriage?"(xxix).

The full utility of the structure of the novel is also experienced in the relationship between the different ~~groups~~ strata of society as well as in the relationship between individuals. For example, we experience dramatically the fragmentariness of society when we witness, mainly through the eyes of Mrs Cadwallader, Featherstone's funeral from the upper-acting level of Lowick manor. The bizarre funeral seems to be something ~~different~~ from a different world: "The black procession, when dismounted, looked the larger for the smallness of the churchyard; the heavy human faces and the black draperies shivering in the wind seemed to tell of a world strangely incongruous with lightly-dropping blossoms and the gleams of sunshine

on the daisies"(xxxiv). Mrs Cadwallader's amused detachment ("Your rich Lowick farmers are as curious as any buffaloes or bisons") is understandable. But her aristocratic scheme of things is judged and found wanting when it clashes with Dorothea's: "The country gentry of old time lived in a rarefied social air: dotted apart on their stations up the mountain they looked down with imperfect discrimination on the belts of thicker life below. And Dorothea was not at ease in the perspective and chilliness of that height." It is a vivid clash of manner as well as of world-views; Mrs Cadwallader's witty and worldly manner is an excellent foil to the earnest and over-emphatic interest of Dorothea—"I'm fond of knowing something about the people I live among," said Dorothea, who had been watching everything with the interest of a monk on his ~~holiday~~ holiday tour.'

Dorothea is trying to bridge the division between these two groups of characters as they touch briefly, trying to overcome the feeling of grotesqueness and see the funeral not merely as an amusing backcloth. As she does so a feeling of foreboding is generated for we come to feel inexplicably, despite the naïvete of Dorothea's interest and concern, that this scene, "alien and ill-understood," is somehow relevant to Dorothea's own life. The feeling is given substance by hints which emerge from the dramatic detail of the scene. Just as Dorothea is commenting, "This funeral seems to me the most dismal thing I ever saw. It is a blot on the morning. I cannot bear to think that any one ~~we~~ should die and leave no love behind," Casaubon enters and gives an unexpected significance to the remark. We have been made to feel unwittingly some connection between the separate planes of action, and how this is being ~~reflexively~~ defined and the fragmentariness transcended. Then Celia discovers in quick succession Joshua Rigg and Ladislav amongst the funeral guests. Casaubon is immediately suspects Dorothea of inviting the latter, and the elements

for the thematic parallel are present. The peripheral contact between these two worlds has led to a realisation that Featherstone "In chuckling over the vexation he could inflict by the rigid clutch of his dead hand" is inhabiting the same selfish world as Casaubon who means to control the destiny of Dorothea and Ladislav after his death. The non-fulfilment of Casaubon's final demand prepares the way for the marriage of Dorothea and Ladislav, just as Mary Garth's refusal to carry out Featherstone's dying wish saves Fred Vincy and makes their marriage possible. Owing to Dorothea's rejection of egocentricity, the background scene has suddenly become central, preparing us for book V of the novel, "The Dead Hand," and the scenes in which Casaubon "sought to keep his cold grasp on Dorothea's life"(1). The significance of this ~~xxx~~ scene only becomes clear gradually, but that there ^{is} some emotional rapport between foreground and background is immediately apparent. Dorothea's unsophisticated earnestness has transcended the division in society by establishing the thematic parallel, and now we see this earnestness as something wiser than Mrs Cadwallader's worldliness. Unlike the other characters, Dorothea is aware of some sort of relevance between the funeral and her own life. It is one stage further in her quest for unity: "Scenes which make vital changes in our neighbours' lot are but the background of our own, yet, like a particular aspect of the fields and trees, they become associated for us with the epochs of our own history, and make a part of that unity which lies in the selection of our keenest consciousness."

Thackeray obtains a momentary effect similar to this peculiar force of Middlemarch when he unexpectedly reintroduces, however briefly, a character from a previous novel into his present narrative. Then the enclosed self-contained world of the novel is momentarily disturbed by a vision of a different form of living and being. Such

a vision is not merely a trick-device in Middlemarch; it is an integral part of the meaning of the novel. It might be a set, formal presentation of the relationship between social strata, as at Featherstone's funeral, or it may be a brief, less defined contact, as for example, in Fred Vincy's horrified glimpse of the disillusioned and desperate Lydgate gambling at the Green Dragon. Fred is in the process of having his life integrated and regenerated by Mary Garth's love, whilst Lydgate is sinking fast into disassociation and despair under Rosamond's "torpedo contact"(lxiv). The two men emerge from their different milieus and meet briefly, and in their "strange reversal of attitudes"(lxiv) there is a moment of revelation. The moral atmosphere of Fred's hopeful world is violently juxtaposed with the nagging cares and hopelessness of Lydgate's, and we become aware ~~of~~ immediately of the true nature of each, and how crucial these worlds are in determining the character and fate of the individual who inhabits them. And George Eliot achieves similar effects again and again within the limits of a single novel. The shock of the momentary contact between two alien worlds is transformed into a surprised awareness of their relevance to each other.

The final impact of Middlemarch is quite different from that of any other of the novels. This is largely because George Eliot is here not committed to any schematised structure with a final convergence of the separate strands of the novel into a unity. She has allowed herself a much greater freedom to depict various forms of life, and yet by means of imagery, symbol and analogy, she suggests the presence of an underlying unity at the level of society's primitive tissue. There is a constant interplay between this emerging unity, this Hebraic desire for a single standard and rule of conduct,

and between a Hellenistic delight in the variety of life. The conclusions and judgments of the former are continually being questioned and deepened by the miscellaneousness of the latter. And George Eliot finally refuses any easy victory; she compromises neither the heterogeneity nor the unity of her picture of Middlemarch society and is content with the subdued optimism of the close.

FOOTNOTES

- I Cross, III, 43-44.
- 2 See above pp. 40-2.
- 3 Compare Mackay: "It is better to discover and apply improved methods of draining^{to} our own towns, than to be able to quote Aristophanes in proof that the streets of Athens were in a state of unmacadamised muddiness....better to look with "awful eye" at the starry heavens, and, under the teaching of Newton and Herschel, feel the immensity, the order, the sublimity of the universe, and of the forces by which it subsists, than to pore over the grotesque symbols, whereby the Assyrian or Egyptian shadowed forth his own more vague impression of the same great facts"(p. 353).
- 4 The Minotaur image is further extended when Ladislaw resolves to stay in Middlemarch, despite Casaubon's resistance: "Stay he would, whatever fire-breathing dragons might hiss around her"(xlvii). And previously in Rome, appalled by Dorothea's marriage, he had seen Casaubon in similar hyperbolic terms: "And if Mr Casaubon had been a dragon who had carried her off to his lair simply and without legal forms, it would have been an unavoidable feat of heroism to release her and fall at her feet"(xxi).
- 5 Arnold's final lecture as Professor of Poetry in June 1867 was Culture and its Enemies, which was published in Cornhill in July. Frederic Harrison replied in Culture: a Dialogue in the Fortnightly Review in November, 1867. Arnold replied to this with five articles on Anarchy and Authority in the Cornhill January-August, 1868. In 1869, Arnold published the original lecture together with the Cornhill articles, somewhat revised, under the title Culture and Anarchy.
On 7 November 1867, George Eliot wrote to Frederic Harrison congratulating him on his reply to Arnold, but rather agreeing with Arnold on the definition of "culture": "I have not been able to find Matthew Arnold's article again, but I remember enough

of it to appreciate the force of your criticism. Only in one point am I unable to see as you do. I don't know how far my impressions have been warped by reading German, but I have regarded the word 'culture' as a verbal equivalent for the highest mental result of past and present influences" (Letters, IV, 395).

6

Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, ed. John Dover Wilson (London, 1932), pp. 131-2.

7

Ibid., p. 141.

8

George Eliot suggested a similar synthesis in Romola. See above, p. 163.

9

The Life and Works of Goethe (London, 1908), pp. 51-2.

Lewes applies the distinction he makes in this quotation to his contrast between Goethe and Schiller later in the biography, where we can see clearly its close anticipation of Arnold's Hebraism-Hellenism antithesis:

To look on these great rivals was to see at once their profound dissimilarity. Goethe's beautiful head had the calm victorious grandeur of the Greek ideal; Schiller's the earnest beauty of a Christian looking towards the Future The one looks, the other looks out. Both are majestic; but one has the majesty of repose, the other of conflict....

In comparing one to Greek ideal, the other to a Christian ideal, it has already been implied that one was the representative of Realism, the other of Idealism. Goethe has himself indicated the capital distinction between them: Schiller was animated with the idea of Freedom; Goethe, on the contrary, was animated with idea of Nature. This distinction runs through their works: Schiller always pining for something greater than Nature, wishing to make men Demigods; Goethe always striving to let Nature have free development, and produce the highest forms of Humanity....

But while the contrast between these two is the contrast of real and ideal, of objective and subjective tendencies, apparent when we consider the men in their totality, this is only true of them relatively to each other. (pp. 394-6)

George Eliot quotes the whole of these three pages in her review of Lewes' biography, "Life of Goethe," Leader, 3 Nov 1855, 1058-61.

I0 Jerome Beaty's note, "The Forgotten Past of Will Laidlaw," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 13 (1958), 159-163, substantiates this connection.

II Culture and Anarchy, p. 141.

I2 Ibid., p. 155.

I3 The phrase "sweetness and light" helps us to understand the images of brightness and ~~vast~~ volatility by which Laidlaw is described. For example:

- (i) "The first impression on seeing Will was one of sunny brightness, which added to the uncertainty of his changing expression. Surely his very features changed their form; his jaw looked sometimes large and sometimes small; and the little ripple in his nose was a preparation for metamorphosis. When he turned his head quickly his hair seemed to shake out light, and some persons thought they saw decided genius in these coruscations. Mr Casaubon, on the contrary, stood rayless." (xxi)
- (ii) "Hence the mere chance of seeing Will occasionally was like a lunette opened in the wall of her prison, giving Berthea a glimpse of the sunny air...." (xxxvii)
- (iii) "...and by this time the thought of vexing Mr Casaubon had become rather amusing to him, making his face break into its merry smile, pleasant to see as the breaking of sunshine on the water...." (xlvi)
- (iv) "Sometimes, when he took off his hat, shaking his head backward, and showing his delicate throat as he sang, he looked like an incarnation of the spring whose spirit filled the air--a bright creature, abundant in uncertain promises." (xlvii)

Compare Arnold's description of the Hellenistic ideal: "To get rid of one's ignorance, to see things as they are, and by seeing them as they are to see them in their beauty, is the simple and attractive ideal which Hellenism holds out before human nature; and from the simplicity and charm of this ideal, Hellenism, and human life in the hands of Hellenism, is invested with a kind of aerial ease, clearness, and radiancy; they are full of what we call sweetness and light." (Culture and Anarchy, p. 134)

I4

There is a definite, but not explicitly stated, development in Ladislaw taking place during his relationship with Dorothea. We can see this most clearly if we compare his earlier uncommitted dilettantism in Rome with his later political arguments with Lydgate in which he exhibits a more down-to-earth attitude. For example, he replies to Lydgate's objections to Mr Brooke as a political candidate by saying:

"...your cure must begin somewhere...Wait for wisdom and conscience in public agents--fiddlesticks! The only conscience we can trust to is the massive sense of wrong in a class, and the best wisdom is that will work is the wisdom of balancing claims. That's my text--which side is injured? I support the man who supports their claims; not the virtuous upholder of the wrong." (xlvi)

I5

Blackwood's, 103 (January 1868), 4.

I6

Compare Ruskin in his Introduction to The Seven Lamps of Architecture: "It has been just said, that there is no branch of human work whose constant laws have not close analogy with those which govern every other mode of man's exertion. But, more than this, exactly as we reduce to greater simplicity and surety any one group of these practical laws, we shall find them passing the mere condition of connection or analogy, and becoming the actual expression of some ultimate nerve or fibre of the mighty laws which govern the moral world."

I7

Professor Quentin Anderson has used a similar phrase, "the 'primitive tissue' of a community", in his chapter on Middlemarch in The Pelican Guide to English Literature, ed. Boris Ford, VI (London, 1958), 274-293. He points out that "The master^{image} of the book precisely parallels Lydgate's physiological inquiry: this is the image of human relationships as a web" (pp. 276-7), without showing the more detailed analogy with the central theme.

It is clear from Quarry for 'Middlemarch', ed. A. T. Kitchel (Berkeley, 1950), that George Eliot paid a great deal of attention to this aspect of Lydgate's career and the implicit analogy it contains. In particular, in Quarry, pp. 31-2, George Eliot quotes extensively from T. H. Huxley on Bichat's research, and from F. V. Raspail on the "substance membraneuse des organes Animaux."

There is an interesting later, and very similar use of this same analogy of the "primitive tissue" of society in Leslie Stephen's The Science of Ethics (1882). The ideas he expresses by means of it are often very close to George Eliot's. For example:

In order to mark this distinction [between the individual and society], I will venture to speak—applying an obvious analogy—of social 'tissue'. The tissue is built up of men, as the tissue of physiology is said to be built up of cells. Every society is composed of such tissue; and the social tissue can no more exist apart from such associations than the physiological tissue can exist from the organs of living animals. (p. 120)

...since the social tissue represents the general material or all-pervading substance from which the subordinate associations are constructed, we must consider the conditions of its vitality independently; and therefore we see that it is the primary unit upon which the process of evolution impinges. The social evolution means the evolution of a strong social tissue; the best type is the type implied by the strongest tissue.... (p. 136)

18

Brooke's shilly-shallying character, the epitome of non-commitment, has been closely anticipated in George Eliot's sketch of "the general reader" at the opening of Lecky.

19

W. J. Harvey, The Art of George Eliot (London, 1961), p. 155.

20

In a semi-facetious epigraph of her own composition which is placed at the head of the chapter in which Brooke makes his first and last political speech, George Eliot shows how party politics are part of the general organic structure of things:

Party is Nature too, and you shall see
By force of Logic how they both agree:
The Many in the One, the One in Many;
All is not Some, nor Some the same as Any:
Genus holds species, both are great or small;
One genus highest, one not high at all;
Each species has its differentia too,
This is not That, and He was never You,
Though this and that are AYES, and ~~may~~ you and he
Are like as one to one, or three to three. (li)

- 21 Jerome Beaty, "History by Indirection: the Era of Reform in Middlemarch," Victorian Studies, I (1957), 173-179. I am indebted to Mr Beaty for his reconstruction of the political background.
- 22 Beaty, p. 179.

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