"MUTUAL SUBJECTION OF SOUL":

A Reading of the Novels of George Eliot

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This thesis was submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at the Australian National University.

October, 1972.
This thesis is my own composition. All sources have been acknowledged.
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PREFATORY NOTE

The abbreviations I have used refer to the following editions of George Eliot's works:


MF: The Mill on the Floss, Boston, Riverside, 1961


The standard edition of George Eliot's novels is The Works of George Eliot, Edinburgh, Blackwood (Cabinet Edition), 1878-1885. However, while I was writing this thesis I did not have access to this edition, and there are, I believe, few copies of it in Australian libraries.

I have therefore used editions more readily available, and in order to facilitate reference to other editions, I have included chapter as well as page number in every reference.
INTRODUCTION

GEORGE ELIOT AND THE "WOMAN QUESTION"

George Eliot, in her own life, successfully challenged her contemporaries' derogatory assumptions about the female intellect, and surmounted the social ostracism pertaining to her as a woman who carried on her sexual relations outside legal wedlock. As Henry James said in his review of Cross' biography:

To her own sex her memory, her example, will remain of the highest value; those of them for whom the "development" of woman is the hope of the future ought to erect a monument to George Eliot. She helped on the cause more than any one, in proving how few limitations are of necessity implied in the feminine organism. ¹

Nevertheless, she was not a feminist. She remained aloof from the contemporary women's movement, a detachment which is the more surprising in view of the fact that a number of her friends - Sara Hennell, Barbara Leigh Smith, Harriet Taylor, Bessie Parkes - were ardently involved. She preferred, as she put it, "the part of the Epicurean gods" (GEL II 396), and wrote to Sara Hennell in 1857 that she would be "satisfied to look forward to a heaven made up of long autumn afternoon walks, quite delivered from any necessity of giving a judgment on the Woman Question":

I am so glad there are thousands of good people in the world who have very decided opinions and

are fond of working hard to enforce them - I like to feel and think everything and do nothing, a pool of the "deep contemplative" kind. (GEL II 383)

Her non-fictional writings reveal the same lack of interest in the Woman Question as is evident in her life and letters. Of the twenty-nine articles contained in Pinney's edition of the Essays of George Eliot, only three, and part of a fourth, deal with feminist issues. Superficially, it appears that the same is true of her fiction. It is noticeable that wherever George Eliot writes in the first person in her fiction ("The Notebook of an Eccentric", "The Lifted Veil", Impressions of Theophrastus Such), she adopts a male persona; and the narrators of her novels, insofar as their sex is revealed, are masculine rather than feminine. Four of the seven novels have men as titular heroes; only one has a titular heroine. The other two have dual protagonists - Tom and Maggie in The Mill on the Floss, Lydgate and Dorothea in Middlemarch. Middlemarch is the novel in which George Eliot comes closest to manifesting a concern with feminism; but even here the theme seems to be subdued. Barbara Hardy states what has been the common critical view of the feminist theme in Middlemarch ever since its publication:


\[\text{One of the few pieces of criticism to maintain that the feminist theme in Middlemarch is important is Lloyd Fernando's "George Eliot, Feminism and Dorothea Brooke", REL 4 1963 pp 76-90. But Fernando's interest is limited to the character of Dorothea, and his investigation is rudimentary: his conclusion about George Eliot's attitude to feminism is that "in a powerful plea that the dignity of women be recognised, marriage is re-sanctified and the old ethical ideals are re-endorsed" (p. 87) and he does not attempt to penetrate this interesting contradiction, or examine its implications for George Eliot's fiction.}\]
when she says:

Any suggestion of a feminist moral is controlled and extended by the complex plot, which puts Dorothea in her place as an example less of a feminine problem than of the frustrations of the human condition.  

I shall argue, however, that this apparent lack of concern with feminism in George Eliot's fiction is only superficial; that George Eliot was in fact very much preoccupied with the relation between the sexes and with the determination of human lives by patriarchal power-structures; that this preoccupation produced recurring themes and patterns in her fiction, and indeed shaped the novels in significant ways. These contentions are sustained, I hope, by the reading of the novels which forms the body of the thesis. An appropriate prelude to this reading, however, is an investigation of the apparent lack of concern with feminism evidenced in her life and in her non-fiction writing.

George Eliot gave her most explicit explanation of her non-involvement in the feminist cause in a letter to Mrs. Nassau John Senior written in 1869 (a letter which, incidentally, she told Mrs. Senior she was not to show anyone else). She wrote:

I feel too deeply the difficult complications that beset every measure likely to affect the position of women and also I feel too imperfect a sympathy with many women who have put themselves forward in connexion with such measures, to give any practical adhesion to them. There is no subject on which I am more inclined to hold my peace and learn, than on the "Women Question". It seems to me to overhang abysses, of which even prostitution is not the worst. (GEL V 58)

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It is clear from this that her lack of commitment to the feminist cause proceeded not from lack of interest in women's emancipation but from deep (and rather lurid) fears of its effects.

Some insight into the nature of these fears can be gained, I believe, by tracing the development of George Eliot's view of the position of women. The view expressed in her early essays is significantly different from that which emerges from the tentative, dubious comments in her letters. The essays I shall deal with are "Woman in France: Madame de Sable"\(^5\); "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft"\(^6\); "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists"\(^7\); and the review of Fredrika Bremer's *Hertha* in "(Three Novels)"\(^8\).

The first of these, "Woman in France", was written while George Eliot was in Germany with Lewes in 1854 - during her honeymoon, as it were. In it, George Eliot raises and answers two questions which are very important for what they reveal of her attitude towards the position of women. These questions are, firstly, why woman has not yet "contributed any new form to art, any discovery in science, any deep-searching inquiry in philosophy"\(^9\), and, secondly, what the causes were of the "earlier development and more abundant manifestation of womanly intellect in France"\(^10\). The answers to both questions have, George Eliot maintains, a "physiological basis"\(^11\), to which social influences are secondary.

\(^{5}\) Pinney, pp. 52-81.
\(^{6}\) Pinney, pp. 199-206.
\(^{7}\) Pinney, pp. 300-324.
\(^{8}\) Pinney, pp. 331-334.
\(^{9}\) Pinney, p. 56.
\(^{10}\) Pinney, p. 55.
\(^{11}\) Pinney, p. 56.
Thus George Eliot's answer to her first question is, quite simply, that "the necessary physiological conditions are not present in her". Women are, George Eliot asserts, different from men in their emotional organizations, and this will always be the case:

Under every imaginable social condition, she will necessarily have a class of sensations and emotions - the maternal ones - which must remain unknown to man; and the fact of her comparative physical weakness, which, however it may have been exaggerated by a vicious civilization, can never be cancelled, introduces a distinctively feminine condition into the wondrous chemistry of the affections and sentiments, which inevitably gives rise to distinctive forms and combinations.

These differences will not disappear with the "complete development of woman's intellectual and moral nature", but "will be a permanent source of variety and beauty". What is implied here, however, is that these differences do not preclude "complete development" either; even though we find out a few pages later that, since it is her lack of the "necessary physiological conditions" that have prevented woman from achieving any intellectual or artistic distinction, the "feminine organization" would have to change for this "complete development" to become possible. However, George Eliot states, "it would be rash to deny" that such a biological change might take place, "under more favourable circumstances in the future" - a statement made with admirable nonchalance, considering the dimensions of the change she is envisaging.

12 Pinney, p. 56.
13 Pinney, p. 53.
14 Pinney, p. 53.
15 Pinney, p. 53.
16 Pinney, p. 56.
So in the answer given to the first question, the "unfavourable external circumstances" of social conditioning are subordinated to the physiological conditions of the feminine organization. Similarly, the answer to the second question puts forward social influences, such as laxer sexual morality, as a "secondary cause" of the "intellectual effectiveness of French women", the primary cause of which, "perhaps",

... lies in the physiological characteristics of the Gallic race: the small brain and vivacious temperament which permit the fragile system of women to sustain the superlative activity requisite for intellectual creativeness; while, on the other hand, the larger brain and slower temperament of the English and Germans are, in the womanly organization, generally dreamy and passive. The type of humanity in the latter may be grander, but it requires a larger sum of conditions to produce a perfect specimen. Throughout the animal world, the higher the organization the more frequent is the departure from the normal form; we do not often see imperfectly-developed or ill-made insects, but we rarely see a perfectly-developed well-made man. And thus the physique of a woman may suffice as a substratum for a superior Gallic mind, but is too thin a soil for a superior Teutonic one.

To be fair to George Eliot, it should be pointed out that the belief in Aryan supremacy evinced in this passage altered over the years - she could hardly have written *Daniel Deronda* if it had not. But there is nothing to suggest that she ever changed her belief in the physiological determination of racial types. Nor that she ceased to believe in a physiologically determined difference between the sexes: this, in fact, seems to have been an opinion she held more firmly later on. In 1868 - in an important letter which I shall be referring to again - she wrote to Emily Davies that the "physical and physiological differences

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17 Pinney, p. 56.
18 Pinney, p. 56.
19 Pinney, p. 55.
between women and men" were "deep roots of psychological development, and their influences can be fully traced by careful well-instructed thought" (GEL IV 468).

An article by G.H. Lewes, "The Heart and the Brain"\(^\text{20}\), makes just such an attempt to trace psychological differences between men and women to physiological roots. The main concern of "The Heart and the Brain" is to re-examine the interconnections between the Heart (as the centre of the Nutritive System) and the Brain (as the centre of the Sensory System) in such a way as to throw the light of scientific truth on "the ancient doctrine respecting the heart as the great emotional organ" - a doctrine in disrepute since the establishment of the brain as the organ of sensitivity. The account of the physiological differences between masculine and feminine is given in the course of this re-examination.

The argument by which Lewes attempts to reinstate the heart with its ancient title concentrates upon the action of the pneumogastric nerve, the nerve connecting the brain to the heart. Sensations, Lewes says, generate nervous excitement, an excitement which is diffused through the nerves. One of the main channels for the discharge of this excitement is the pneumogastric nerve, which quickens the circulation of the blood, causing the pounding heart-beat and rush of blood to the face which we associate with a sudden intensification of emotion.

And thus, he concludes, even though "the heart, as a muscle, is not endowed with the property of sensibility", the heart, as the central organ of the circulation, is so indissolubly connected with every manifestation of Sensibility, and is so delicately susceptible to all emotional agitations, that we may not improperly regard it as the ancients regarded it, in the light of the chief centre of feeling.21

In the course of his exposition of the action of the pneumogastric nerve, Lewes states that its activity, as a channel of discharge of nervous excitement, varies from person to person. This variation can be responsible for differences between the stupid and the sensitive:

The stupid are stupid, not simply because their nervous development is below the average, but also because the connection between the two central organs, brain and heart, is comparatively languid: the pneumogastric is not in them a ready channel for the discharge of nervous excitement. The sensitive are sensitive because in them the connection is rapid and easy.22

More importantly for my present discussion, Lewes maintains that the variation can be responsible for differences between masculine and feminine temperaments:

The highly sensitive organism is one in which the reactions of sensibility on the circulation, and of the circulation on the sensibility, are most direct and rapid. This is often the source of weakness and inefficiency - as we see in certain feminine natures of both sexes, wherein the excessive sensitiveness does not lie in an unusual development of the nervous centres, but in an unusual development of the direct connection between brain and heart. There are men and women of powerful brains in whom this rapid transmission of sensation to the heart is not observable; the nervous force discharges itself through other channels. There are men and women of small brains in whom "the irritability" is so great that almost every sensation transmits its agitating influence to the heart.23

21 Lewes, p. 74.
22 Lewes, p. 73.
23 Lewes, p. 74.
The "feminine" temperament, then, is not one in which cognitive faculties are necessarily less powerful than in the "masculine", but one in which these faculties swiftly generate an emotional response. It is interesting, too, that Lewes finds this temperament in men as well as women - though his use of the term "feminine" to designate it suggests that he thinks of it as typical more of women than of men.

I believe that George Eliot utilized this theory of Lewes in some of her fictional characterizations. The clearest instances of this are Dorothea and Will in Middlemarch. Will indulges in this self-description of himself as a poet:

"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."

(Middlemarch Ch. 22 p. 256)

And Dorothea replies: "'I understand what you mean about knowledge passing into feeling, for that seems to be just what I experience'" (Middlemarch Ch. 22 p. 256). In this passage, Will and Dorothea have virtually self-defined themselves, in some detail, as examples of Lewes' "feminine" temperament. Less explicit instances are the irritable, susceptible, effeminate Philip Wakem, in The Mill on the Floss, and Maggie Tulliver herself.

On the basis of this evidence of George Eliot's use of Lewes' theory in her fiction, I think it possible that she had this theory in mind when she wrote to Emily Davies of the physical and physiological differences between the sexes as deep roots of psychological development which
could be traced by careful well-instructed thought. The influence of Lewes' theory in "Women in France", which was written eleven years before "The Heart and the Brain" was published, must remain a more doubtful matter. But it is probably unimportant here anyway.

Whatever the case, physiological determinism is not consistently maintained as the basis of the argument in "Women in France". Apparently abandoning at least the idea of the importance of the difference between the Gallic and Teutonic types of the feminine organization, George Eliot asserts without qualification that "women become superior in France by being admitted to a common fund of ideas, to common objects of interest with men; and this must ever be the essential condition at once of true womanly culture and of true social well-being."24. This state of things, George Eliot notes in what is a favourite point of hers, benefits men as well as women; for Madame de Sable, her exemplary woman of France, was, by virtue of her educated intelligence, "a woman whom men could more than love - whom they could make their friend, confidante, and counsellor; the sharer, not of their joys and sorrows only, but of their ideas and aims".25. The essay ends with a lyrical plea for equal educational opportunities for women, in which George Eliot re-asserts her previous position, that the differences between the sexes will not disappear with the full development of women, nor will they preclude it:

24 Pinney, p. 80.
25 Pinney, p. 80.
Let the whole field of reality be laid open to woman as well as to man, and then that which is peculiar in her mental modification, instead of being, as it is now, a source of discord and repulsion between the sexes, will be found to be a necessary complement to the truth and beauty of life. Then we shall have that marriage of minds which alone can blend all the hues of thought and feeling in one lovely rainbow of promise for the harvest of human happiness.26

In later, more dubious days, education remained a part of the women's movement which George Eliot felt she could support unreservedly. She wrote in the letter to Mrs. Senior:

On one point I have a strong conviction, and I feel bound to act on it, so far as my retired way of life allows of public action. And that is, that women ought to have the same fund of truth placed within their reach as men have; that their lives (i.e., the lives of men and women) ought to be passed together under the hallowing influence of a common faith as to their duty and its basis. And this unity in their faith can only be produced by their having each the same store of fundamental knowledge. It is not likely that any perfect plan for educating women can soon be found, for we are very far from having found a perfect plan for educating men. But it will not do to wait for perfection. (GEL V 58)

In "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft", published in 1855, two further points emerge. After introducing Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* and Mary Wollstonecraft's *Rights of Woman*, George Eliot goes on to single out and draw special attention to "one point on which they both write forcibly", namely, "the fact that, while men have a horror of such faculty or culture in the other sex as tends to place it on a level with their own, they are really in a state of subjection to ignorant and feeble-minded women".27 That men are also enslaved by the

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26 Pinney, p. 81.
27 Pinney, p. 201.
subjection of women is one of the points George Eliot is fondest of emphasizing. Here she quotes fairly lengthy passages on this point from both writers, and adds her own endorsement:

Men pay a heavy price for their reluctance to encourage self-help and independent resources in women. The precious meridian years of many a man of genius have to be spent in the toil of routine, that an 'establishment' may be kept up for a woman who can understand none of his secret yearnings, who is fit for nothing but to sit in her drawing-room like a doll-Madonna in her shrine.28

The modulation here, from the generality of men to geniuses too great to be understood by their wives, is rather unduly flattering to men. Nevertheless, George Eliot’s sympathies in this passage are with the "doll-Madonna" as well as with the "man of genius", for she goes on:

No matter. Anything is more endurable than to change our established formulae about women, or to run the risk of looking up to our wives instead of looking down on them. Sit divus, dummodo non sit vivus (let him be a god, provided he be not living), said the Roman magnates of Romulus; and so men say of women, let them be idols, useless absorbents of precious things, provided we are not obliged to admit them to be strictly fellow-beings, to be treated, one and all, with justice and sober reverence.29

A couple of pages earlier, however, she outlines the benefit men will derive from female education through having their mates made more amenable to reason, more manageable, and more likely to yield "in trifles":

There is a notion commonly entertained among men that an instructed woman, capable of having opinions, is likely to prove an impracticable yoke-fellow, always pulling one way when her husband wants to go the other, oracular in tone, and prone to give curtain lectures on metaphysics. But surely, so far as obstinacy is concerned, your unreasoning animal is the most unmanageable of

28 Pinney, pp. 204-205.
29 Pinney, p. 205.
creatures ... A really cultured woman, like a really cultured man, will be ready to yield in trifles. So far as we see, there is no indissoluble connexion between infirmity of logic and infirmity of will, and a woman quite innocent of an opinion in philosophy, is as likely as not to have an indomitable opinion about the kitchen.30

George Eliot's anxiety to justify the development of women in terms of the benefit men would derive from it, and what seems to be her reluctance to consider women's emancipation in its own terms, as an intrinsic good for women, has interesting effects upon her later feminist position, and upon her fiction as well.

The other point to emerge in "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft" is George Eliot's firm emphasis on the moral degradation of the unemancipated woman: "subjection and ignorance have debased her".31 On this, she registers her dissent from those sections of the women's movement that claimed otherwise:

Unfortunately, many overzealous champions of women assert their actual equality with men - nay, even their moral superiority to men - as a ground for their release from oppressive laws and restrictions. They lose strength immensely by this false position. If it were true, then there would be a case in which slavery and ignorance nourished virtue, and so far we should have an argument for the continuance of bondage.32

She commends both Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft for having "too much sagacity to fall into this sentimental exaggeration",33 and quotes with satisfaction a passage of The Rights of Woman in which Mary Wollstonecraft resolves the question of "the relative moral excellence of men and women" in favour of men.

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30 Pinney, p. 203.
31 Pinney, p. 205.
32 Pinney, p. 205.
33 Pinney, p. 205.
34 Pinney, p. 205.
George Eliot's assertion that women in their present state of subjection are men's moral inferiors is connected to a more general notion of hers about the degrading effects of oppression. In "The Natural History of German Life", she criticizes Dickens and Eugene Sue for "encouraging the miserable fallacy that high morality and refined sentiment can grow out of harsh social relations, ignorance, and want". And in an otherwise favourable review of Dred, she takes Harriet Beecher Stowe to task for the absence of any proportionate exhibition of the negro character in its less amiable phases. Judging from her pictures, one would conclude that the negro race was vastly superior to the mass of whites... - a state of the case which would singularly defeat Mrs. Stowe's sarcasms on the cant of those who call Slavery a "Christianizing Institution". If the negroes are really so very good, slavery has answered as a moral discipline. But apart from the argumentative suicide involved in this one-sidedness, Mrs. Stowe loses by it the most terribly tragic element in the relation of the two races - the Nemesis lurking in the vices of the oppressed.

The argument George Eliot uses here about the effects of oppression on the Negroes is very similar to the one she is using in "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft" to rebut the "overzealous champions of women". That women are in subjection, that the effects of this subjection are entirely debasing, is one of the points George Eliot makes most strongly and repeatedly in the 1850s essays. Insofar as the other two, "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists", and the review of Hertha, are relevant to my present discussion, it is for their endorsement of this point. In the review of Hertha, George Eliot argues against the notion that there is anything in women's present characteristics which would make the profession of medicine particularly suited to them:

35 Pinney, p. 272.
36 Pinney, p. 334.
Women have not to prove that they can be emotional and rhapsodic, and spiritualistic; every one believes that already. They have to prove that they are capable of accurate thought, severe study, and continuous self-command.37

"Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" is a witty, but very scathing, attack upon mediocre lady novelists for their feeble intellectual pretensions ("a really cultured woman", says George Eliot, "does not give you information, which is the raw material of culture, - she gives you sympathy, which is its subtlest essence"38) and their "amazing ignorance, both of science and of life"39. She sarcastically refers to the idea that women's purity and detachment from worldly affairs make them the "fittest vehicle of revelation" as a "notion ... rather akin to the superstition that the speech and actions of idiots are inspired"40.

I wonder if she recalled this passage when she wrote the court room scene in Felix Holt, in which Ester's "inspired ignorance", which "breaks through formulas too rigorously urged on men by daily practical needs", is described as one of woman's "most precious influences" (FH, Ch. XLVI, p. 414). For the aspect of George Eliot's position on the Woman Question which underwent the most

37 Pinney, p. 334.
38 Pinney, p. 317. Even in these early essays, George Eliot took every opportunity to make the point that education in woman should not imply loss of femininity, and to dispel the image of the cultured woman as a horrendous bluestocking. It is ironical, therefore, that such an image is, in the popular imagination, associated with her. It seems, however, to have been far from the truth. John Fiske, an American social scientist who visited the Priory, recorded this impression of her:

"I call her a good, honest, genuine, motherly woman with no nonsense about her...She didn't talk like a blue-stocking - as if she were aware she had got hold of a big topic - but like a plain woman, who talked of Homer as simply as she would of flat-irons."


39 Pinney, p. 310.
40 Pinney, p. 310.
serious alteration was precisely the point which, in the 1850s essays, is most heavily iterated: the moral debasement of woman. With this alteration goes a revision of the associated matter of "the relative moral excellence of men and women".

In "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft", George Eliot quotes approvingly Mary Wollstonecraft's denial that women are as capable of love and sympathy as men:

Women are supposed to possess more sensibility, and even humanity, than men, and their strong attachments and instantaneous emotions of compassion are given as proofs; but the clinging affection of ignorance has seldom anything noble in it, and may mostly be resolved into selfishness, as well as the affection of children and brutes. I have known many weak women whose sensibility was entirely engrossed by their husbands; and as for their humanity, it was very faint indeed, or rather it was only a transient emotion of compassion... Even women of superior sense, having their attention turned to little employments and private plans, rarely rise to heroism, unless when spurred on by love and love, as an heroic passion, like genius, appears but once in an age. I therefore agree with the moralist who asserts 'that women have seldom so much generosity as men'; and that their narrow affections, to which justice and humanity are often sacrificed, render the sex apparently inferior, especially as they are commonly inspired by men; but I contend that the heart would expand as the understanding gained strength, if women were not depressed from their cradles.41

We find her thirteen years later describing "the feminine character" as an "exquisite type of gentleness, tenderness, possible maternity suffusing a woman's being with affectionateness" which humankind cannot "afford to part with", and speaking of "the preparation that lies in woman's peculiar constitution for a special moral influence" as a "gain" that history has demonstrated "in the face of all wrongs, mistakes, and failures" (GEL IV 468). These descriptions occur in a

41 Pinney, pp. 205-206.
letter which she wrote in August 1868 to Emily Davies (one of the founders of Girton College), and which provides the most explicit account of George Eliot's later position on feminism, a position as tentatively and dubiously expressed as the earlier position was confidently asserted.

In this letter, George Eliot raises "certain points" - two, in fact - for Miss Davies' "deeper consideration" (GEL IV 467). The first of these, the psychological effects of the physical and physiological differences between the sexes, I have already mentioned in connection with the "Woman in France" essay, which puts forward a similar view. In that essay, however, it was confidently asserted that these differences between men and women, a "permanent source of variety and beauty", could not disappear with women's emancipation, since they were physiologically based rather than socially conditioned. By 1868, however, George Eliot's certainty about this has clearly evaporated, for in her second point she admits to believing that "there lies just that kernel of truth in the vulgar alarm of men lest women should be 'unsexed'" (GEL IV 468). The second point indeed is worth quoting in full, for the contrast it offers with the position enunciated in the 1850s essays:

2. The spiritual wealth acquired for mankind by the difference of function founded on the other, primary difference; and the preparation that lies in woman's peculiar constitution for a special moral influence. In the face of all wrongs, mistakes, and failures, history has demonstrated that gain. And there lies just that kernel of truth in the vulgar alarm of men lest women should be 'unsexed'. We can no more afford to part with that exquisite type of gentleness, tenderness, possible maternity suffusing a woman's being with affectionateness, which makes what we mean by the feminine character, than we can afford to part with the human love, the mutual subjection of soul between a man and a woman - which is also a growth
and revelation before all history. (GEL IV 468)

It was just such a view that George Eliot once condemned as "sentimental exaggeration." Admittedly, George Eliot's later view of woman's "affectionateness" is not so complete a turn-about as the Emily Davies letter indicates. In 1870, in a letter of condolence and consolation to the Hon. Mrs. Robert Lytton, she speaks of women's dangerous tendency to live "too exclusively in the affections", and advises:

We ought also to have our share of the more independent life - some joy in things for their own sake. It is piteous to see the helplessness of some sweet women when their affections are disappointed - because all their teaching has been, that they can only delight in study of any kind for the sake of a personal love. They have never contemplated an independent delight in ideas as an experience which they could confess without being laughed at. Yet surely women need this sort of defence against passionate affliction even more than men. (GEL V 107).

Nevertheless, even in this letter George Eliot claims that women's affections "are perhaps the best gifts we have".

What caused George Eliot to change her mind? I think the explanation lies in the humanism she espoused, and in three aspects of it particularly: the importance of the emotion, the ennobling effects of suffering, and the condemnation of egoism.

In examining these three aspects, I have no intention of giving an exhaustive account of George Eliot's moral beliefs. I am simply using the conclusions of the most thorough account of them that I know of - Chapter IV of Michael Wolff's dissertation "Marian Evans to George Eliot: The Moral and Intellectual Foundations of Her Career" without going into any of the evidence which led Wolff to his conclusions, or which has led me to share them.

The Importance of the Emotions

Wolff states that George Eliot shared Comte's and Feuerbach's sense of the importance of the emotions; that for her, "as for Comte and Feuerbach, feeling emotion, the affective function in man, are the grounds of morality"\(^{43}\). In Comte's view, "contrary to say the Aristotelian view of man as a reasoning being, the emotions are the center of human life"\(^{44}\). Comte also associates the emotions primarily with women - "the affective sex", as he calls them. (Wolff makes the point that in this context "affections" and "emotions" are synonymous - "'affective' is the standard nineteenth-century psychological term for any emotional behaviour"\(^{45}\).) George Eliot makes this association too. The clearest instance occurs in Daniel Deronda, in which she describes women as "delicate vessels" in which "is borne onward through the ages the treasure of human affections" (Ch. 11 p. 160), but, as we have seen, a belief in the greater emotionality of women is apparent in her early writings too.

The humanists\(^{46}\) emphasis on the importance of the emotions led them to two conclusions - conclusions that do not, I would maintain, automatically follow from this emphasis - of significance for my present discussion. One of these was the consecration of the family, as the source of the affective life in man. Wolff summarizes George Eliot's position on the family:

\(^{43}\) Wolff p. 208.
\(^{44}\) Wolff p. 204.
\(^{45}\) Wolff p. 204.
\(^{46}\) I use the term "humanism" to refer specifically to the philosophies of Feuerbach, Comte, and Comte's Positivist followers.
The path from self-love to sympathy with other men lies through family life and friendship. Moral feeling starts with those other beings who are closest to oneself - in a sense, hardly differentiated from oneself - one's wife and children, and grows to include those less and less intimately related.

Marian Evans' belief that the family is the source of morality, the link between egoism and altruism, the place where the "I" and the "Thou" are closest, is shared by both Feuerbach and Comte. George Eliot, then, holds Comte's and Feuerbach's theory of the family; but her position is something different from intellectual discipleship, or even intellectual agreement. Throughout, in discussing George Eliot's humanism, we must consider it as containing an active interrelation of her experience and her intellectual life. And in this particular aspect of it, George Eliot's own experience of the family, especially her relations with her father and her brother Isaac, is as important a factor as her reading of the theorists. Indeed, it was the experience which made her receptive to the philosophy.

Another conclusion of the humanist emphasis is the adoption of a conservative position on feminism. Woman, the "affective sex", is placed in a position of tremendous importance by the humanist ethical scheme: she is the guardian of the chief treasure of human life and civilization. Any change likely to disturb her condition is fraught with danger. George Eliot certainly saw women's guardianship of the affections as precarious. A fortnight before she wrote the letter to Mrs. Nassau John Senior in which she confesses how deeply she feels "the difficult complications that beset every measure likely to affect the position of

women", she wrote to Sara Hennell:

One trembles to think how easily that moral wealth may be lost which it has been the work of ages to produce, in the refinement and differencing of the affectionate relations. (GEL V 56)

Perhaps we may see in this loss of "moral wealth" one of the "abysses" (worse even than prostitution!) which she fears from female emancipation.

Woman's greater affectionateness is physiologically based, according to both Comte and George Eliot. Yet for Comte, this physiological basis is not sufficient: it must be re-inforced by excluding woman from public life and from the sordid relations of the marketplace. Thus Comte's adulation of woman leads him on to the most commonplace of conservative positions on the feminist issue: a woman's place is in the home. George Eliot had once described the situation Comte advocates as "bondage" and "subjection"; yet now she has come close to sharing Comte's view. She had once denied that slavery could act as moral discipline. There are aspects of humanism which imply that it does.

The Ennobling Effects of Suffering

B.J. Paris - whose book *Experiments in Life* contains another useful account of George Eliot's moral beliefs - quotes Lewes as stating that "Suffering humanizes". Paris says:

George Eliot viewed suffering as a part of man's education which leads him from his innate subjectivity to objectivity - that is, to an awareness of the interior life of others.

(We may note that, if both Wolff and Paris are correct -


49 Paris, p. 68.

50 Paris, p. 70.
as I think they are - in their accounts of George Eliot's beliefs, then, for her, the experience of suffering, and the family, are identical in what they do for the self. As Marx perceived, the humanist position implies considerable criticism, even condemnation, of the family in its present form. Comte and Feuerbach - and George Eliot - however, do not take this implication: their recognition of the family's importance in determining human life leads them to sanctify it!)

Wolff shares Paris' conclusion, linking George Eliot's view to that of Feuerbach:

Feuerbach insists that "only he who knows from his own experience what it is to suffer need and wrong can sympathize with others" (in Hoffding, II, 282). For George Eliot suffering may not be necessary, but its typical effect is certainly to increase the power of sympathy.

Referring to the passage in Adam Bede which begins "But it is not ignoble to feel that the fuller life which a sad experience has brought us is worth our own personal share of pain" (AB Ch. LIV p. 541), Wolff says:

In the most careful and explicit account of the effect of a sad experience, George Eliot suggests that the pain is worth it, that the greater strength which the pain has brought, the greater power for sympathy, is more than compensation.

For George Eliot, then, experience of suffering and capacity for sympathy go together. Now it is clear that George Eliot believed that women suffered more than men. "As a fact of mere zoological evolution", she wrote to John Morley,

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52 Wolff p. 225
53 Wolff p. 226.
"woman seems to me to have the worse share in existence" (GEL IV 364); and, as she indicated in her letter to Mrs. Lytton, the fact that women live principally in their affections means that they feel bereavement or rejection more acutely than men do. It follows that George Eliot believed women more capable of sympathy than men.

The Condemnation of Egoism

Suffering was one source of moral enlargement according to the humanist morality; subjection of self was another. Egoism was the chief sin of the humanist morality, and what Comte called "altruism" was its predominant virtue. In her essay, "The National History of German Life", George Eliot calls "attention to what is apart from" oneself the "raw material of moral sentiment". Wolff comments:

"Attention to what is apart from" oneself is the basis of Marian Evans' morality and the center of her ideal ethical psychology, as indeed it is for all the positivists. Comte makes this point categorically: "the expression, Live for Others, is the simplest summary of the whole moral code of Positivism. And Biology should indicate the germ of this principle." Vivre pour autrui is, in fact, part of the motto of the Positivist religion, and from it Comte coined the word "altruism" to describe Positivist ethical principle. I prefer to use "tuism", since the term "altruism", as it is commonly used today, has connotations of self-negation. This was not what George Eliot - or Comte - meant by it; for her, the acknowledgement of one's own wants and feelings is a necessary precondition of the fully moral life. In the novels, altruists like Dorothea Brooke and Daniel Deronda are criticized for their self-negation and detachment from

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54 Pinney, p. 270.
55 Wolff, p. 209.
56 The term "tuism", according to the Oxford English Dictionary, was in current usage as a description of the Feuerbachian ethical principle by the 1880s.
life. In *Adam Bede*, Mrs. Poyser criticizes Dinah's altruism:

"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.'"

(AB, Ch. XVIII p. 193)

And when Dinah tells Adam that "'All my peace and my joy
have come from having no life of my own, no wants, no wishes
for myself'" (AB, Ch. LII p. 519), Adam urges in reply a
position which (especially since she allows Adam's side of
the argument to win) I think we may see as George Eliot's own:

"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." (AB, Ch. LII p. 521)

The best description of George Eliot's ethical principle
is given in *Middlemarch*: it is the recognition of "an
equivalent centre of self" (*March* Ch.21 p. 243) in another.
This involves coming to terms with the other's intrinsic
existence, curbing the demands and projections of one's own
ego. Another good description is the definition of love
given in the letter to Emily Davies: "the mutual subjection
of soul" between two people. The "subjection" is more
important than the mutuality, for it is the subjection which
contains the ideas of the curbing of the ego, and of
adaptation to the existence of the other: the "attention
to what is apart from" oneself.

If moral outgrowth from egoism is connected with
"subjection of soul", then women must be less egotistic than
men, because of their greater experience of subjection. In
this, as in suffering, women are men's moral superiors.
(This aspect of her beliefs may also have caused George Eliot to regard feminist aims with apprehension, to see in them a reprehensible egoistic desire for predominance:—certainly she depicts Gwendolen Harleth's discontent with her woman's lot as this.)

George Eliot wrote her essays on feminism at a time when her humanist morality was already developing; but at a time, too, when she had not yet integrated all her opinions into her new creed. The influence of humanism, as we have seen, produces a more conservative position on female emancipation. In her later phase, George Eliot inclined to believe in the ideal of Victorian Womanhood—noble, pure, and compassionate; the figure she had once called the "doll-Madonna in her shrine". This tendency appears in her fiction: Romola and Dorothea Brooke are the clearest examples, with the former a more glaring instance than the latter.

But the humanist influence had other effects besides this: more interesting effects, I would say, especially as they emerge in the fiction. One is a paradoxical consequence of the conservatism: a softening of the rather sharp misogyny at times apparent in her 1850s writings. George Eliot now finds more to praise in women, more to feel kindly towards them for. And here particularly I think we must speak of the interaction of intellectual and biographical forces. Humanism may be the intellectual source of that softening, but there was another source too, in the events in her life that changed her from the Westminster Review's intellectual star, who, when the London intelligensia
gathered, would be the only woman present, a highbrow among her peers, to the woman scorned and ostracized, the de facto partner of a man of dubious morals. (She has Dorothea say in *Middlemarch*: "'Two years ago I had no notion of that - I mean of the unexpected way in which trouble comes, and ties our hands, and makes us silent when we long to speak. I used to despise women a little for not shaping their lives more, and doing better things'" (*Middlemarch* Ch. 54 p. 589).

Humanism also effected important revisions in her attitude towards the masculine character. In the 1850s essays, George Eliot described men as being themselves "in a state of subjection" by the enslavement of woman. She did not mean by this that they had been debased by their tenure of power; indeed, she tended to see masculine qualities as absolute human qualities, as virtues which she lamented women did not possess.

However, her later position implies a different conclusion to the question of the "relative moral excellence of men and women" from her previous one. If suffering and subjection are the sources of human sympathy, men are less capable of sympathy than women. More importantly, their separation from the life of the affections condemns them to moral degeneracy. Comte certainly believed that the arena of politics and commerce - the masculine sphere - was morally arid, and corrupted all who took part in it: he banished women - and his social scientist priests - from it as the only way of preserving them from contamination. (His despair, it seems to me, was an understandable response to nineteenth century society.) And the same belief that
men are inevitably corrupted by their activity, that they become alienated from the emotions which are the well-springs of human life, and from the women who have remained, in their state of subjection, in contact with the life of the emotions, emerges in George Eliot's writings.

She states the dichotomy clearly in this passage from *The Mill on the Floss*:

While Maggie's life-struggles had lain almost entirely within her own soul, one shadowy army fighting another, and the slain shadows for ever rising again, Tom was engaged in a dustier, noisier warfare, grappling with more substantial obstacles, and gaining more definite conquests. So it has been since the days of Hecuba, and of Hector, Tamer of horses: inside the gates, the women with streaming hair and uplifted hands offering prayers, watching the world's combat from afar, filling their long, empty days with memories and fears; outside, the men, in fierce struggle with things divine and human, quenching memory in the stronger light of purpose, losing the sense of dread and even of wounds in the hurrying ardour of action. (The Mill on the Floss, V, ii, p. 270)

It is in this sense, to re-apply George Eliot's own phrase, that we may speak of a "mutual subjection of soul" in the relations between the sexes: as a nexus of oppression, in which the oppressors are more debased than the oppressed.

In the end, it seems to me, the conservative conclusion of the humanist position is less important, for George Eliot's fiction, than the fact that it stresses the importance of the relation between the sexes and the shaping influence of the family. As we have seen, George Eliot in her Westminster Review days wrote few essays on the Woman Question and little on the family. This very likely indicates that she was not much interested in the matter and considered other issues to be of far greater importance. But after her
adoption of humanism, we can no longer speak of the Woman Question as separate from her central interests. For the relation between the sexes has become absolutely crucial to her widest concerns.

George Eliot's apparent lack of interest in feminism was the first point I raised. I would like now to reconsider that. We cannot assess from the 1850s essays how important an issue George Eliot considered feminism to be, for they are the production of the time before she had realized the full significance and scope of the Woman Question. Nor can her opinions of the 1860s and 1870s be properly constructed from the letters she wrote in this period. Letters were not, after all, her main way of expressing her vision of life during this time - her novels were. And as Lawrence says, never trust the teller, trust the tale. We know that George Eliot chose the novel as the only form subtle enough, concrete enough, to express her fully developed philosophical, social and political views - views to which personal experience, the function of feelings, and the relation between the sexes, were the vital part.

George Eliot described her novels as "a set of experiments in life" (GEL VI 216). Among other things, they are a set of experimental explorations of the implications of current relations of the sexes - this, rather than a number of statements of a fully developed (in the sense of settled, unchanging) position on the Woman Question. Thus George Eliot's particular kind of feminism, I would maintain, is inseparable not only from the main themes her fiction took, but from the form it took as well.
Joan Bennett says of Adam Bede that it is "the earliest and simplest example of the typical George Eliot form. The life of Hayslope envelops the tragedy."¹ This mistakes the novel's pattern, it seems to me. What Adam Bede enacts is, not the envelopment of an individual tragedy within a community, but the dissolution of the structure of that community. It is a representation in miniature of the downfall of the feudal world. The agent of the destruction of the old, and the basis of the formation of the new, is the relation between the sexes.

The relation between master and man, rather than that between man and woman, is the basis of old society. Work is the most important thing in rural Hayslope. The book opens in a carpenter's workshop; we first see Adam and Seth, the Poysers and Hetty, at their work, and, in a sense, their work and the way they perform it is the most telling index of their characters. In subsequent novels, a sharp division operates in this area - work is for men only. But in the Hayslope community there is no such split: hearth and workplace coincide. The women of Hayslope, like the men, work and have to work. It is a female character, Mrs. Poyser, who most clearly epitomizes the work-a-day life of the place.

Nor are men cut off from the hearth, from the sphere of the affections. It is significant that *Adam Bede* portrays the sentimental education of a man: in later novels of George Eliot’s, it is typically a woman whose sentimental education is depicted, while men are too hopelessly alienated from their affections for such an educative process to be possible.

Not only are the men of Hayslope effectively present in domestic affairs, as parents and so on; their working life is blended with their feelings. The relation between Arthur Donnithorne and Adam Bede, master and man, is no mere cash nexus between employer and employee; nor is it a simple friendship between two men. It is the symbiotic tie of rank, the vital, sustaining link of the feudal world.

The agent of its destruction - as is seen by the misogynist school-teacher Bartle Massey, with his harping on woman as the source of danger and subversion - is the relation between man and woman. The crucial scene for this reading of the novel is the one (in the chapter entitled "A Crisis", Ch. XXVII) in which Adam fights Arthur in the wood. Arthur presents his philandering with Hetty in traditional terms: as a young squire's time - honoured liberties with one of his female underlings. Included in this explanation is the implicit expectation that Adam, as a loyal servant, will accept it and keep his master's confidence. Adam's response is therefore quite unexpected: it is tantamount to a political declaration, to an act of rebellion against the established order.

Arthur was standing pale and motionless, with his hands still thrust in his waistcoat pockets. "What!" he (Adam) said, "won't you fight me like
In forcing the fight, Adam forces Arthur to recognize him as his equal. There are further moves to be made in the drama; but, essentially, with that punch of Adam's the old order crumbles; the rest of the book is dedicated to the exploration of whatever hope lies in its decease. And that hope lies elsewhere than in the reshaping of the ties between man and man. With the ranks of men now levelled because of a common masculinity, a social structuring based on sex supersedes that based on rank. The finale of the book, with Dinah receiving Adam on the doorstep as he comes from his last reconciliation with Arthur, establishes the relation between man and woman as the central social structure of the new order. The patriarchy brings about the downfall of feudalism, and in a new form outlasts it.

The woman who draws Adam and Arthur to an acknowledgement of their equivalence, thereby destroying the old order, and the woman who consolidates the new, are presented as polarized opposites. Dinah Morris and Hetty Sorrel are made to contrast: egoist and altruist, "higher nature" (Ch. XV, p. 163) and "lower." Beneath these opposing categories of the tuistic morality, however, it is easy enough to see the complementary halves of the traditional image of woman: lily and rose, angel and whore.
It may seem odd that a novel written by a woman should employ this traditional, dichotomous image. But *Adam Bede* is a novel written under an assumed male identity - the only one of George Eliot's novels which was so, since she revealed herself after its publication. Charles Dickens thought he detected a woman's touch in "Scenes of Clerical Life"; but, generally, "George Eliot" was still thought to be a man when she wrote *Adam Bede*. Its male pseudonymity effects its form in some important ways. Anne Summers says of the Australian male pseudonymous writer Henry Handel Richardson:

She says that she adopted the pseudonym because she wanted impartial criticism and because she wanted to test the assumption, popular in criticism at the time she wrote *Maurice Guest*, that it was possible to identify the sex of a writer by the style of the work. Having taken this step she had to take the further precaution of avoiding exposing her sexual identity by relegating women to marginal roles in her ensemble of characters, or else portraying them in highly conventional fashion. Even though Louise in *Maurice Guest* and Mary in *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney* are important characters in terms of their functions within both novels, they are there as props through which the dilemmas of the central male characters are explored.  

George Eliot's assumption of sexual disguise in *Adam Bede*, it seems to me, is taken to similar lengths. Her precautions against discovery involve not just the adoption of a male authorial persona (who speaks, at one point, of "the one little woman's face we love" - Ch. XIX, p. 212) but extend to the representation of the characters as well - in particular to that of the two chief women characters, whose inner life and feelings (especially Hetty's) are

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2 Haight, p. 251.
entered into in a way that reveals George Eliot's deep intrinsic interest in them but whose function in the novel's structure is in the end defined instrumentally, by the purpose they serve in relation to the male protagonists. (The superimposition of a male standard in Adam Bede is even very specific and direct. The fight in the wood, and Adam's marriage to Dinah - both episodes I have cited as defining Hetty's and Dinah's functions in the novel - were suggested by G.H. Lewes.)

What interests me, in the representation of Dinah and Hetty, is the way their intrinsic created existence threatens continually to burst through the functional definitions imposed on them. Both the Poyser nieces are dissenters from Hayslope. Dinah's dissent is based upon what George Eliot calls, in The Mill on the Floss, the "emphasis of want": a sense of personal stress and urgency born of life in industrial Stoniton, out of place in somnolent, harmonious Loamshire. Dinah is articulate in her dissent, bearing witness to another sort of life beyond the Loamshire borders, and to another account of human suffering which offers comfort when the resources of the Hayslope way of life have run dry. Dinah is thus not simply a stereotyped Angel; and yet it is the functional necessity for her to be one which wins in the end. As she settles back into the standard role (metamorphosed from Angel to Young Matron) her dissent is suppressed - suppressed so effectively that it is her husband who defends the silencing when Seth challenges it, her own speech being now limited to utterances of maternal command and wifely

Hetty's dissent from Hayslope is harder to contain, or to reduce to a stylized Whore role; in fact, George Eliot finds it quite unmanageable. She tries to explain it as vanity, and vanity mixed with selfishness and naive social pretension; and lavishes on it a good deal of animosity. But Hetty's dissent overflows these descriptions, to become a self-contained instinctive sensuality. Hetty has "a beauty like that of kittens, or very small downy ducks making gentle rippling noises with their soft bills, or babies... A springtide beauty; ... the beauty of young frisking things, round-limbed, gambolling, circumventing you by a false air of innocence..." (Ch. VII pp. 83-84). In her desperate wanderings, it becomes more than this: a sturdy vitality that keeps her going, that prevents her suicide, that makes her, in her darkest night, weep with hysterical joy that she had still hold of life, that she was still on the familiar earth, with the sheep near her. The very consciousness of her own limbs was a delight to her: she turned up her sleeves, and kissed her arms with the passionate love of life. (Ch. XXXVII, p. 395)

George Eliot can indicate the quality but she cannot handle it; it offers too violent a disturbance of the carefully detailed but equally carefully controlled Hayslope landscape. Shortly after the night in which Hetty kisses her arms, George Eliot leaves her altogether, returning to safer territory. As Raymond Williams says, George Eliot "abandons" Hetty, "in a moral action more decisive than Hetty's own confused and desperate leaving of her child."5

In the end, George Eliot obviously finds it easier to stick to Adam. Holding a man as the centre of attention, she can assert a reassuring continuity between the old way of life and the new, through an ending which seems conventional but which is really a lid hastily pressed down upon the implications of the Hetty-Arthur affair and its outcome. This affair is a demonstration of the patriarchal order in its explosive and tragic energy. It shows Adam his equality with Arthur, and that women are vulnerable and are punished where men get off scot-free. From his encounter with this unsettling knowledge, however, he comes away merely scathed, matured, and armed with a set of platitudes, rather than permanently disoriented. Arthur, too, it seems, is curable; and how Dinah feels, having renounced her own life, in her own place, where, she says, "'I was first planted, and have grown deep into it, like the small grass on the hill'" (Ch. VIII, p. 88), we are not permitted to know. Since Adam is the centre-piece, it cannot be said to matter, anyway.

And in the end, the only thing to do with Hetty is to banish her to the Antipodes, and there kill her off. Banishment to the Antipodes: in a figurative sense, the usual fate of women, of women's feelings and experience, in literature, art and cinema. George Eliot has gone so far with Hetty that we can feel this banishment to be a loss; in a sense, a betrayal of her artistic vision. Nevertheless, the banishment is complete; the focus returns to Adam finally, and to the familiar surroundings. But in The Mill on the Floss, George Eliot explores far into that stormy unchartered country, before the obliterating flood descends.
"In their death they were not divided"

The Mill on the Floss is set a generation later than Adam Bede, but still in the crucial time of the Industrial Revolution. It too deals with the destruction of the old way of life. There are several resemblances between Dorlcote Mill and the Hayslope of Adam Bede. Home and workplace are the same, as in that farming community; Mr. Tulliver feels the same attachment to it, as the familiar surroundings of his forbears and of his own childhood, and the same anguish at the thought of leaving it, as old Martin Poyser feels for Hall Farm; and Luke Moggs' "sense of natural fitness in rank which made his master's downfall a tragedy to him" (III viii p. 228) is an attitude we are familiar with from the first novel. Moreover - and this is I feel the most important point - in Mr. Tulliver's way of conducting his life, activity is not separate from feeling. He borrows and lends money within his family, he allows himself to be guided by his tenderness for sister and daughter when he is making his business decisions.

To this world both Dodsons and Tullivers, both old-fashioned families, belong. Only the Dodson can adapt to survive it. In the "richer blood" of the Tulliver veins, we are told, there are "elements of generous imprudence,
warm affection, and hot-tempered rashness" (IV i p. 240).
All three combine to ruin Edward Tulliver. There is no room
for them in the new encroaching world, the world epitomized
by Lawyer Wakem, whose domestic tenderness is kept strictly
separate from his life outside the home, and by Mr. Deane,
for whom business (associated with profit) and leisure
(associated with port-wine, snuff, and rumination) are
distinct activities, who works in St. Ogg's and lives in
pleasant suburban Tofton, whose company, Guest and Co.,
does "not carry on business on sentimental grounds" (III vii
p. 215), and who has no trouble in keeping up two distinct
attitudes towards Tom, his serviceable underling in public
life and his loved nephew in private life.

Mr. Tulliver's ruin, his degeneration and death, is
described as a "tragedy" (III i p. 174). It is the end of
a whole way of life. And, unlike Adam Bede, there is no
hope to be found in the new. For in The Mill on the Floss,
the patriarchal power-structure which the new and the old
societies have in common is not used as a source of re-as-
surance, but is itself subjected to examination.

The Mill on the Floss was conceived of as a "companion
picture" to Adam Bede (GEL III 55), but it turned out a
very different sort of novel. George Eliot's revelation of
her sexual identity, I believe, made at least some of the
difference. The Mill on the Floss exhibits throughout a
certain relaxation, a lifting of restraint. Perhaps the bad
effects of this - the sentimentalization of Maggie as a
child, the idealization of her as a woman - have been
overemphasized. There were good effects too. Spontaneity,
vividness, immediacy of response, passion - qualities rare, so most critics agree, in George Eliot's fiction - are manifestly present in The Mill on the Floss. I sense in The Mill on the Floss a new and heady feeling of liberation in its author. Having proved herself by male standards, George Eliot felt free to shape this novel as she willed.

The form she adopts in The Mill on the Floss is one which recurs (with significant variations) in four of the five subsequent novels: a double Bildungsroman, tracing the divergent development of a man and a woman.

It is a form in which the relation between the sexes has central importance. George Eliot's examination of patriarchal power-structures increases in subtlety, penetration, and breadth, in the course of her novel-writing career. But The Mill on the Floss, the first novel in which this concern asserts itself centrally, makes a unique contribution to her examination: for only The Mill on the Floss pays attention to the relation of adult and child, as well as to the relation of male and female.

George Eliot's depiction of childhood under the patriarchy is, I think, superb. We see the adults - uncles and aunts as well as parents - objectively, as narrow-minded, insignificant, perhaps tedious people, but we see them through the children's eyes too, as powerful, mysterious beings, capable of inflicting all sorts of intimate tortures and humiliations. And we see too, in the relationship of parent and child, how the exercise of power is inextricable from the processes of comfort and emotional nurturance.
The vulnerability and bewilderment of the children in their powerlessness is beautifully caught. The passages in which George Eliot pleads for the recognition of the reality of children's suffering are perhaps too prompted, if not by didactic purpose, at least by a consciousness that she is opening up new areas of human experience; but they are very moving passages nonetheless:

Very trivial, perhaps, this anguish seems to weather-worn mortals who have to think of Christmas bills, dead loves, and broken friendships; but it was not less bitter to Maggie - perhaps it was even more bitter - than what we are fond of calling anti-thetically the real troubles of mature life. "Ah, my child, you will have real troubles to fret about by-and-by", is the consolation we have almost all of us had administered to us in our childhood, and have repeated to other children since we have been grown up. We have all of us sobbed so piteously, standing with tiny bare legs above our little socks, when we lost sight of our mother or nurse in some strange place; but we can no longer recall the poignancy of that moment and weep over it, as we do over the remembered sufferings of five or ten years ago. Every one of those keen moments has left its trace, and lives in us still, but such traces have blent themselves irrecoverably with the firmer texture of our youth and manhood; and so it comes that we can look on at the troubles of our children with a smiling disbelief in the reality of their pain. Is there any one who can recover the experience of his childhood, not merely with a memory of what he did and what happened to him, of what he liked and disliked when he was in frock and trousers, but with an intimate penetration, a revived consciousness of what he felt then - when it was so long from one Midsummer to another?.... 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 pp. 59-60.)

One of the achievements of her overall depiction of the Tullivers' childhood is her portrayal of the differences between male child and female. Tom and Maggie, as children,
are in coalition against the adults. The love between them grows in the soil of their common oppression, through Maggie's hungry affectionateness and Tom's ability to comfort her. This tie between them in their shared oppression is what Maggie can never forget, is what Tom remembers at the last, and is what George Eliot, in the later portions of the book, comes to sentimentalize as a state of innocent happiness. The bond between them is never perfect, however, for Tom has use of - and exercises - the power which, as a male, is potentially his:

He was very fond of his sister, and meant always to take care of her, make her his housekeeper, and punish her when she did wrong. I v p. 36.

The sexual contrast between the two children is made explicit in Tom's very first appearance in the novel:

Maggie jumped first on one leg and then on the other, while Tom descended from the gig, and said, with masculine reticence as to the tender emotions, "Hallo! Yap - what! are you there?" Nevertheless he submitted to be kissed willingly enough, though Maggie hung on his neck in rather a strangling fashion, while his blue-grey eyes wandered towards the croft and the lambs and the river, where he promised himself that he would begin to fish the first thing tomorrow morning.

(I v p. 30)

In this scene we have the contrast which George Eliot is later to describe, in a passage I have already quoted, as that between Hector and Hecuba (V ii p. 269). In the Hector and Hecuba passage, George Eliot describes the contrast as eternal: "So it has always been". Similarly, here she attributes it to "Nature":
Under these average boyish physiognomies that she seems to turn off by the gross, she (Nature) conceals some of her most rigid, inflexible purposes, some of her most unmodifiable characters; and the dark-eyed, demonstrative, rebellious girl may after all turn out to be a passive being compared with this pink-and-white bit of masculinity with the indeterminate features.

(I v p. 30)

The criticism I would make of the childhood scenes is this - that they foreshadow the future that is to be depicted in the later part of the book in rather too determined a fashion. "Childhood has no forebodings" (I ix p. 76), George Eliot says at one point; and as though to compensate for this, her depiction of Tom and Maggie's childhood is full of prefigurations of their fate. Both child-characters have an air of governed predestination about them; what their characterization lacks, it seems to me, is free play - the sense of poised possibility that informs George Eliot's vision of other areas of human life. Both are a bit too obviously the miniatures of the adults they are to become.

* * * * *

Tom and Maggie's adolescence, their passing of "the golden gates of their childhood" (II vii p. 171) (George Eliot is already describing the childhood in such terms as these), happens at the time of Edward Tulliver's financial ruin. I think this is deliberately done: the destruction of the old harmonious way of life coincides with the destruction of the childhood unity of boy and girl, and one provides an image for the other. As man and woman, Tom and Maggie then go their
separate ways into the new, bifurcated world, with the burden of the old upon their shoulders.

In terms of the number of scenes allotted to him, Tom gets as full a treatment as Maggie does; but we don't remember him as we remember his sister. Maggie is definitely the star of *The Mill on the Floss*; the double-Bildungsroman is lop-sided in her favour. I think George Eliot is simply less interested in Tom, and in the education - the masculine education - depicted through him. For this education consists of the acquisition of an increasingly mechanical competence and an increasing familiarity with the habit of dominance. He learns self-repression, and the repression of others, in a single process. Tom is effectively deadened in the course of his education.

Moreover, the sort of education Tom undergoes, at school and at work, is orthodox; it is, as material for literary re-creation, known and available. But with Maggie, George Eliot is exploring new territory - processes of experiential growth which needed new artistic forms to express or even perceive them. She is involved here, powerfully and creatively. In making Maggie's experience tangible, George Eliot concentrates on the working through, with irresistible intensity, of one feeling - the "emphasis of want" (IV iii p. 256). The force of that working through has, I should think, wrought upon every reader of *The Mill on the Floss*: the memory of Maggie's aching hunger for the world remains, after the details of the plot have faded. Tom's education is an education in suppressing feeling. Maggie learns through
hers, but it too is a process of maturation and growth of faculty, and it too has its stages and completion.

Maggie's fight with Tom over his ruthless disruption of her friendship with Philip marks one important state of her education - a stage she has reached with Philip's sympathy and guidance. In Maggie and Philip we see a conjunction which is to recur in Middlemarch with Dorothea and Ladislaw - a natural alliance of sympathy between the feminine and the artistic temperaments. Maggie suggests that Philip would have made a good brother for her: they would have more completely shared the suffering childhood sense of vulnerability and oddity. As adults, they share more than this. Philip says of himself (with the unnerving talent for self-description which George Eliot gives him): "'I'm cursed with susceptibility in every direction, and effective faculty in none!'" (V iii p. 286); Maggie too is "susceptible". As I have suggested, Lewes' theory of the action of the pneumogastic nerve may have influenced the characterization here, making both Maggie and Philip examples of his feminine temperament, in which mental stimuli are rapidly transformed into emotional tumult. Certainly, what Lewes says of the feminine temperament - that its mode of operation is "often the source of weakness and inefficiency"\(^1\) - applies in Philip's case. The Mill on the Floss seems to me a novel permeated with despair, and here with Philip we have it: Philip is the one man capable of affinity with a woman, and

\(^1\) Lewes, p. 74.
the very thing that gives him this affinity makes him an unsuitable sexual mate. Middlemarch is to avoid this despair through Will Ladislaw, in whom sensitivity is combined with stamina - a rebel against the norm of masculinity, where Philip is simply a masculine failure. There are no Ladislaws in St. Ogg's. Maggie cannot escape, as Dorothea does, the tension caused by a masculine principle antipathetic to her nature, to which she is still compellingly bound and drawn.

The stage of Maggie's education reached through this relationship is that of articulation. In her challenge to Tom over his treatment of Philip, there is a self-confidence in her way of perceiving things which was never there before:

"Don't suppose that I think you are right, Tom, or that I bow to your will... You have been always sure you yourself are right: it is because you have not a mind large enough to see that there is anything better than your own conduct and your own petty aims... I know I've been wrong - often, continually. But yet, sometimes when I have done wrong, it has been because I have feelings that you would be the better for, if you had them... You have not even a vision of feelings by the side of which your shining virtues are mere darkness!"

(V vi pp. 303-304)

The scene is important, not simply as Maggie's first articulation of her point of view, but as a prototype of the conflicts of masculine "head" and feminine "heart" which are to recur in Romola and Middlemarch - arguments in which the man uses rationality, and the woman urges against him the claims of feeling. And, as in the later novels, this scene ends by revealing unmistakably the polarized opposition between male and female:
"Very well - that is your view of things," said Tom, more coldly than ever; "you need say no more to show me what a wide distance there is between us. Let us remember that in future, and be silent."

(V v p. 305)

Here, as later in Romola, the conflict is not a verbal debate conducted in vacuo; it is a power-struggle in which, while the woman scores the moral victory, it is the man who gets his way. Tom uses patriarchal authority in a number of ways in this episode. For one thing, he claims that his authority over his sister derives from his father; for another, he exerts his masculine superiority over Philip as a way of threatening him and cowing Maggie:

"What I wish is that you should understand me - that I shall take care of my sister, and that if you dare to make the least attempt to come near her, or to write to her, or to keep the slightest hold on her mind, your puny, miserable body, that ought to have put some modesty into your mind, shall not protect you. I'll thrash you."

(V v p. 302)

And finally, he ends the argument with Maggie by taunting her with her feminine powerlessness:

"Well", said Tom, with cold scorn, "if your feelings are so much better than mine, let me see you show them in some other way than by conduct that's likely to disgrace us all - than by ridiculous flights first into one extreme and then into another. Pray, how have you shown your love, that you talk of, either to me or my father? By disobeying and deceiving us. I have a different way of showing my affection."
"Because you are a man, Tom, and have power, and can do something in the world."
"Then, if you can do nothing, submit to those that can."

(V v p. 304)

The themes raised in this episode - the alienation of man from woman, the conflict of head and heart, male domination
and female rebellion - are to remain important for the rest of George Eliot's fiction-writing life.

For a number of reasons, then, the break with Philip marks an important stage of Maggie's education. Her rejection of Stephen is its culmination. Maggie's fight with Tom is a conflict of heart against head. But Stephen's grounds of argument (or, rather, the grounds he adopts when rational persuasion fails) are Maggie's own: strength of feeling.

"What a miserable thing a woman's love is to a man's! I could commit crimes for you - and you can balance and choose in that way."

(VI xiv p. 418)

Maggie finds this far more difficult to resist; she must feel for her reply:

"I can't argue any longer - I don't know what is wise; but my heart will not let me do it. I see - I feel their trouble now: it is as if it were branded on my mind. I have suffered, and had no one to pity me; and now I have made others suffer."

(VI xiv p. 419)

The contrast here is between Stephen's unrefined emotional strength, and Maggie's cultivated feeling. Stephen feels this as the first time he has loved with his "'whole heart and soul'" (VI xiv p. 418); Maggie has a long, familiar experience of feeling to which she can refer, making the associative connections which produce her eventual decision. Maggie's rejection of Stephen, it seems to me, is the climax round which the book is designed, the action designed to display Maggie's intuitive processes of moral discrimination which have been so long and difficultly in preparation.
Stephen Guest has always been a great trial to the critics. Some attempt to disentangle the issues involved in the critical accounts of him may be in order.

One of these issues Leavis pointed out and disposed of: the confusion between a moral judgment of Stephen and an artistic judgment on his convincingness as a fictional creation.

Stephen...is sufficiently 'there' to give the drama a convincing force. Animus against him for his success with Maggie and exasperation with George Eliot for allowing it shouldn't lead us to dispute that plain fact - they don't really amount to a judgment of his unreality.2

Leavis sees Stephen as credible, and Maggie's attraction to him as credible, and in both these judgments I concur. But he goes on to conclude that George Eliot meant Stephen to be seen as a "satisfactory soul-mate" for Maggie, and that "it is quite plain that George Eliot shares to the full the sense of Stephen's irresistibleness"3.

This is not quite plain to me. These are the terms in which George Eliot describes Maggie's attraction to Stephen:

It was very charming to be taken care of in that kind graceful manner by some one taller and stronger than one's self. (VI ii p. 334)

There is something strangely winning to most women in that offer of the firm arm: the help is not wanted physically at that moment, but the sense of help - the presence of strength that is outside them and yet theirs - meets a continual want of the imagination. (VI vi p. 356)

There was an unspeakable charm in being told what to do, and having everything decided for her. (VI iii p. 409)

3 Leavis, pp. 56-57.
What such passages as these make clear is not only the grounds of Maggie's attraction but also George Eliot's dissociation from her: Maggie is here depicted as very much a provincial girl, culturally and socially deprived. Indeed, George Eliot goes out of her way to stress the point:

She found joyless days of distasteful occupation harder and harder - she found the image of the intense and varied life she yearned for, and despaired of, becoming more and more importunate. (VI ii p. 326)

Had anything remarkable happened? Nothing that you are not likely to consider in the degree unimportant. She had been hearing some fine music sung by a fine bass voice - but then it was sung in a provincial amateur fashion, such as would have left a critical ear much to desire. And she was conscious of having been looked at a great deal, in rather a furtive manner, from beneath a pair of well-marked horizontal eyebrows, with a glance that seemed somehow to have caught the vibratory influence of the voice. Such things could have had no perceptible effect on a thoroughly well-educated young lady, with a perfectly balanced mind, who had had all the advantages of fortune, training, and refined society. But...in poor Maggie's highly-strung, hungry nature - just come away from a third-rate schoolroom, with all its jarring sounds and petty round of tasks - these apparently trivial causes had the effect of rousing and exalting her imagination in a way that was mysterious to herself. (VI iii p. 335)

George Eliot, I would say, regards Stephen as being more like a "typical provincial coxcomb" (Sir Leslie Stephen's evaluation of him) than like an irresistible soul-mate. I think, in fact, that she dissociates herself from him rather forcefully, and I shall return to that later on.

What has occasioned another - and to my mind a more important - kind of critical dismay is not Stephen, nor Maggie's running away with him, but her subsequent running
W.R. Steinhoff finds evidence, in Maggie, of "a fixation on her family", and suggests that "it is not too difficult to believe...that even had circumstances favored marriage with Stephen he could not have substituted successfully for her father or Tom". Similarly, Peter Coveney speaks of Maggie as suffering from an "inability to come to terms with her life after the 'golden gates' of childhood closed". Steinhoff believes that "George Eliot understood the flaw in Maggie's development", whereas for Coveney "Maggie Tulliver is not, intentionally, presented as a young woman who could not successfully extricate herself from the affections of her childhood". Nevertheless, both agree in finding in Maggie an "inability to choose adult experience at the expense of being uprooted from family life"; and it is surely the rejection of Stephen on which both critics largely base their case. I agree with Coveney that George Eliot endorses Maggie's decision to leave Stephen; as I have suggested, I think she intended it to be seen as the culmination of Maggie's education. But I think the notion of inability to grow up needs closer examination.

Certainly, the emphasis on the past, in the reasons offered, by both Maggie and her author, for Maggie's rejection of Stephen, cannot be missed. There are Maggie's often-quoted

6 Steinhoff, p. 240.
7 Coveney, p. 167.
8 Steinhoff, p. 241.
debating-points: "'Love is natural; but surely pity and faithfulness and memory are natural too'" (VI xi p. 394); "'If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment'" (VI xiv p. 417). As well as this, Maggie's dream on the boat, in which the image of Tom emerges as predominant over all others, seems to indicate that the tie of the past is meant to be taken as the unconscious motivating force behind Maggie's action, as well as its overt reason.

If this was all there was to it, then the accusation which Steinhoff and Coveney level at Maggie would, I think, be justified. And since George Eliot clearly sanctions Maggie's action, this would imply severe criticism of George Eliot's notions of what constitutes valid and praiseworthy behaviour. But to interpret Maggie's rejection of Stephen this way seems to underestimate George Eliot - to underestimate the complexity of the issues she was raising and hoped to resolve. She didn't resolve them, that is clear: the end-portions of the book remain muddled and disturbing. Again, my task is disentanglement - this time, of issues in the novel, rather than issues in the criticism. Maggie, in rejecting Stephen and choosing Tom, makes two choices in a single action: she chooses poverty instead of wealth, and sexual repression instead of sexual fulfilment. These choices must be looked at one by one.

Wealth vs. Poverty

Not all of Maggie's arguments depend upon an appeal to past ties. At a crucial point, George Eliot describes Maggie
as feeling tempted to, but refusing, "the last act of base-
ness - the tasting of joys that were wrung from crushed 
hearts" (VI xiv p. 414). This formulation of her situation, 
like that (which it closely resembles) in Daniel Deronda 
about making gain out of someone else's loss, has more than 
one layer of application. The most obvious "crushed hearts" 
here belong to Philip and Lucy. But, in the whole book, the 
most thoroughly crushed heart is Tom Tulliver's. And it is 
Stephen who has crushed it. Not only, or even primarily, 
because he is the acknowledged sweethaert of the girl with 
whim (it is hinted) Tom is in love. Rather, it is Stephen 
the heir to Guest & Co.'s mill, Stephen with his educated 
charm and parliamentary ambition, Stephen as the representative 
of his whole class, who has crushed Tom Tulliver's heart.

We are told that Stephen's "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 
p. 316). This forms part of the initial description of him, 
and the incongruity in it is not a simple literary device, 
an ironic touch to a charm which, in general, George Eliot 
assents to. It is a serious condemnation of that charm and 
refinement - of the means by which it is acquired and 
maintained, through the oppressive toil of the uncharming, 
unrefined Tom Tullivers of the world.

This is not the first time in The Mill on the Floss that 
such a charge is laid; and in the earlier passage, the note 
of urgent protest and outrage is unmistakable:
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: it spends its heavy years often in a chill, uncarpeted fashion, amidst family discord unsoftened by long corridors. (IV iii pp. 255-256)

I think we must see the same tone present in the whole depiction of Stephen, indeed in the whole presentation of culture and refinement; for the condemnation extends even to Philip, who, as the legitimate son of the revered wife, is advantaged over his bastard half-brothers towards whom Wakem "held only a chiaroscuro parentage, and provided for them in a grade of life duly beneath his own" (III vii p. 224). Yet what Philip says of himself is true, that in another way he was "'nurtured in the sense of privation'" (VII iv p. 440); it is his nurture in privation which is determining for him. As Maggie's is for her. In rejecting Stephen, she identifies herself not simply with the past, but with the poverty which was the all-pervasive quality of that past - the deprivation which sustains the life which Stephen offers: "a life filled with all luxuries, with daily incense of adoration near and distant, and with all possibilities of culture at her command" (VI ix p. 382).

George Eliot does not present the promise of that life of delight and refinement as illusory. In this regard, we may compare The Mill on the Floss favourably with Felix Holt.
Felix Holt indulges an aristocratic disdain for the rich:
"'The habits of their lives are odious to me'" (FH Ch. XXVII
p. 245). He takes to the life of poverty as a life more ta-
steeful which he and George Eliot are content to present in
the light of its simplicity and its freedom from bothersome
 customs, like the wearing of stocks and the leaving of
sees with unswerving honesty the connection between grace
and privilege, refinement and the possession of power.
Maggie's rejection of the affluent life is shown as a real
cutting-off from things that really would satisfy at least
some of the passionate hungers in her. Nor are there any
secret rewards in the offing for her. Esther Lyon, who makes
a similar choice, can at least look forward to Felix; the
hard, deprived life Maggie has known intimately and bitterly
contains no secret comforts or delights.

It is clear that the thought of Lucy and Philip is not
all that makes Maggie turn her back on Stephen.

Was that existence which tempted her the full
existence she dreamed? Where, then, would be all
the memories of early striving - all the deep
pity for another's pain, which had been nurtured
in her through years of affection and hardship?
(VI xiii p. 402)

The "intense and varied life" (VI ii p. 326) which Stephen
offers is not a full existence - only the good half, a half
made possible by the impoverished, arduous existence of the
other half. The joys of that life are wrung from crushed
hearts; and though they are real joys Maggie refuses them,
returns to the fellowship of the oppression of the many,
eventually recovering him who was her companion in the first, most vivid oppression of her troublesome life.

We have seen how in her essays George Eliot is inclined to justify the development of woman in terms of the benefit men will derive from it. A similar inclination is apparent in the ending of *The Mill on the Floss*. Maggie's education is validated, not by her own achievement of moral integrity, but by its effect upon the men in her life. And it isn't sufficient, either, for her to have given Philip what he calls "'the new life into which I have entered in loving you'" (VII iii p. 440), or to have produced in Stephen the maturing influence that will eventually bring him - so the epilogue implies - to recognize the loyalty and generosity of the girl he used to undervalue. To really prove and justify herself and what she has undergone, she has to do something far more difficult - she has to reach back into her childhood, and redeem her long-lost brother. For this purpose George Eliot equips her heroine with a flood, a rowing-boat, and a heroic death which will bring to the indomitable Tom a fleeting redemption through love, and to Maggie a fleeting, but sublime, vindication before him and the world.

Tom and Maggie's drowning embrace in the flooded Floss is a second attempt at climax, after the achieved climax of Maggie's decision to leave Stephen. And it too, like the rejection of Stephen, is something that can be approached from more than one angle. Let us look at the interpretation of it that emerges from the second meaning of Maggie's choice.
Sexual Fulfilment vs. Sexual Repression

I have suggested that the contrast between Dinah and Hetty in *Adam Bede* is a traditional contrast of the images of Angel and Whore, with the sin of unchastity translated into the sin of the humanist canon, egoism. In *The Mill on the Floss*, George Eliot uses the contrast again, as it appears in fair-haired Lucy Deane and her dark, passionate cousin. Here the exploration is more subtle than a simple imposition of new moral categories upon the old ideology - the contrast between Maggie and Lucy could never be described as an altruist-egoist contrast. But there is one description which does carry over from the earlier book - that which sees them as contrasting higher and lower natures.


It is our habit to say that while the lower nature can never understand the higher, the higher nature commands a complete view of the lower. But I think the higher nature has to learn this comprehension, as we learn the art of vision, by a good deal of hard experience, often with bruises and gashes incurred in taking things up by the wrong end, and fancying our space wider than it is.

(AB Ch. XV p. 163)

Accordingly, Dinah is brought down to earth, as we have seen. This aspect of the higher nature, its inadequacy and inexperience, is emphasized in the Higher Nature of *The Mill on the Floss*, good little Lucy Deane. Lucy as Higher Nature is sexually innocent and immature - where Maggie is continually excited by Stephen's presence and touch, Lucy can blandly say: "I would rather not be engaged. When people are engaged, they begin to think of being married soon...I would..."
Lucy seems to be too uncomplicated to counterbalance the tempestuous Maggie. And indeed, Lucy's chief function is as "Maggie herself in Lucy's form" (I vii p. 55) - as the externalized image of Maggie's own higher nature, for Maggie is self-divided between higher and lower. One instance in which this externalization is used is the image of the pure Higher Nature being soiled: in the childhood scene at Garum Firs, Maggie pushes Lucy in the mud; later the image is internalized, and refers to Maggie's own self-conflict:

She often strove after too high a flight, and came down with her poor little half-fledged wings dabbled in the mud.

(IV iii p. 256)

Another important employment of this externalization is the elopement - a betrayal of Maggie's Higher Nature which is quite literally a betrayal of Lucy too.

Then there is the image of the woman who sits in the prow of the boat: a figure which is, in its first appearance, the Virgin Mary herself, in the St. Ogg's legend, then Lucy in Maggie's dream, and finally Maggie herself, sitting in the prow as Tom rows them to their death in the flooded Floss.

Maggie's Higher Nature is externalized in Lucy; her Lower Nature is associated with images of the Devil. Images of the Devil begin to appear early in the book, and continue through Maggie's adolescence and early adulthood. ("'An alarming amount of devil there', was Stephen's first thought", VI ii p. 328.) They first occur in the scene where, as a little girl, Maggie is showing off the knowledge of the
Devil she has gleaned from *The Pilgrim's Progress* and Defoe's *History of the Devil*. Earlier in this same chapter, George Eliot warns against Mr. Tulliver's "error" of "rampant Manichaeism" (I iii p. 14), of seeing the world in terms of a strict dichotomy between Good and Evil. In her presentation of Maggie, George Eliot is not initially guilty of Manichaeism, but the reality with which she is dealing is: and eventually the difficulty of coping with this leads her into those aspects of the depiction of Maggie in which F.R. Leavis (along with many other critics) detects elements of idealization.

Maggie is a fully substantial figure, vital and sexually aware - but she inhabits a world split between Good and Bad, Spirit and Matter, in which the only choice possible is between halves; she must be either Angel or Whore. As a girl, she is frightened by the powerful "lava stream" of feeling within her into "a sense that it was not difficult for her to become a demon" (IV iii p. 252), and she tries playing Angel: first as ascetic, then as Philip's asexual lover. It doesn't work; as Philip himself tells her, she is doing violence to her full nature. For the sake of fairness, George Eliot's honesty about the Angel-Image in the middle books of the novel must be acknowledged and praised: it was no mean feat for a mid-Victorian novelist to portray a heroine who has sexual feelings.

But in the end it is the Angel-Image which is settled for. (And to return briefly to Coveney's and Steinhoff's interpretations: it is not so much a child-image of Maggie

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9 Leavis, p. 54.
which George Eliot is endorsing, as an Angel-image, for which the child forms a convenient metaphor.) Maggie leaves Stephen, and settles for being an Angel - an Angel misunderstood, reviled, but all the more an Angel for that.

If Maggie had married Stephen, there would have been no scandal; so her rejection of him can look, superficially, like a choice of disreputability, of Whoredom. But the whole tone surrounding the action emphasizes the point to be taken from it: that Maggie is only thought to be a Whore, while really, she is an Angel! This seems to me the part of the book in which the "autobiographical element"\textsuperscript{10} which F.R. Leavis notes is most embarrassing in its presence. Marian Evans herself was playing Whore to Agnes Lewes' Angel at the time; and in her condemnation of narrow-minded St. Ogg's we may legitimately see a sweet revenge being taken.

Yet the vituperation which St. Ogg's heaps on Maggie, unlike the ostracism to which her author was subjected, is unjust only because it is undeserved. The tribute which Lucy gives her, crowning her martyrdom ('Maggie', she said, in a low voice, that had the solemnity of confession in it, 'you are better than I am', VII iv p. 447) is allowable only because Maggie is still virgo intacta, as she herself is. Maggie's annihilation in the flood, and Lucy's survival to become Stephen's wife, is another externalization - an externalization of the significance of Maggie's return from Mudport. In The Mill on the Floss, as in Adam Bede, the Whore is sacrificed to the Angel.

\textsuperscript{10} Leavis, p. 51.
Maggie's rejection of Stephen, then, involves not one choice, but two - both of them between an etiolated Ideal and a sordid, unregenerate Reality, between two half-existences. A single act constitutes an acceptance of one sort of reality (the economic) and a rejection of another (the sexual). Maggie's temptation to the affluent life is thus confused with her urge towards sexual fulfilment. Sexual affirmation is associated with betrayal of past, family, and class: the two merge into a single crime, for which Tom is given power to punish her.

It may be that a desire to concentrate a great deal of punitive power in the hands of Tom forms an unconscious impulse behind George Eliot's ambiguous construction of Maggie's "Great Temptation". In Book VII of *The Mill on the Floss* there first appears in George Eliot's novels the curious motif which is to recur in others of her depictions of relationships between men and women: yielding on the woman's part (often in response to an insistent demand for such submission) followed by an expectation of punishment for both resistance and yielding. In this way too, Stephen and Tom represent the complementary halves of the masculine world: Maggie yields to Stephen, and is punished for it by Tom.

Tom is the prototype of the figure which, in the coming novels, is more typically a father or priest figure: he is a representation of the power of the patriarchy - cleansed of its sexual aspect. The double choice in a single act construction effectively engineers a separation between male domination and sexuality; in other words, it fragments the reality. But by using it, George Eliot makes her job easier.
for herself: she avoids having to tackle honestly the mighty, deep-reaching forces that constitute the patriarchy.

She simply divorces them. The domination is presented in Tom; the sexuality in Stephen. Stephen is represented as powerless - he has no ultimate coercive power over Maggie - and as such, is simply banished, left wandering on the Continent somewhere (another variation of the device of transporation employed in Adam Bede).

The compulsion Tom exercises over Maggie is presented as void of sexuality, as sheer punitive domination, a domination she now acknowledges as just:

She almost desired to endure the severity of Tom's reproof, to submit in patient silence to that harsh disapproving judgment against which she had so often rebelled: it seemed no more than just to her now - who was weaker than she was? She craved that outward help to her better purpose which would come from complete, submissive confession - from being in the presence of those whose looks and words would be a reflection of her own conscience.

"Tom," she said, crushing her hands together under her cloak, in the effort to speak again. "Whatever I have done, I repent it bitterly. I want to make amends. I will endure anything. I want to be kept from doing wrong again."

"What will keep you?" said Tom, with cruel bitterness. "I loathe your character and your conduct...I will sanction no such character as yours...You shall not come under my roof. It is enough that I have to bear the thought of your disgrace: the sight of you is hateful to me."

I was speaking of one way in which Maggie's self-division is expressed through an externalized mode of presentation, and here is another. We see, in these passages, that Maggie's inner conscience has the lineaments of Tom's countenance, and that Tom's evaluation of her ("I loathe
your character and your conduct") is Maggie's own self-evaluation. Tom is not a projection of Maggie, as Lucy is; rather, he is an invader, of Maggie's inner soul. This is a vital distinction. Lucy is a literary device; Tom, in his internalized existence within Maggie's soul, is an extraordinary creative achievement. It may be that, in excluding or suppressing the sexual aspect here, George Eliot has simplified her task. And she has certainly manipulated the plot in order to provide Tom's authority and Maggie's self-abasement before it with a validity which is, objectively, unwarranted. (This explains, I think, Coveney's and Steinhoff's uneasiness about this part of the book.) But within these limitations, George Eliot has produced a remarkably powerful expression of a woman's enslavement to patriarchal power. Perhaps, in some respects, it is a gratuitous achievement, but it is an authentic one nonetheless. In this manifestation, the "autobiographical element" has acted as a source of great strength.

Here, too, we have a Manichaeistic split: two irreconcilable halves. Brother and sister, male and female, are hopelessly polarized. One wonders at the vehement despair with which George Eliot probes the division between them. Over and over the point is driven home: they will be forever alienated. Nothing will serve to bring them together; not the memory of "their early childish love in the time when they clasped tiny fingers together", not "their later sense of nearness in a common duty and a common sorrow" (VII iii p. 437), nor Maggie's generous refusal of the joys wrung from crushed hearts - all these things drive them apart with a
more intense repulsion.

It is well that a catastrophic ending is at hand. Critics have universally found fault with the flood, but in a sense it is welcome: it relieves a stress which is becoming too severe, too harrowing altogether. Maggie and Tom are brought together in the end by a natural calamity, in the face of which "we are all one with each other in primitive mortal needs" (VII v p. 453). All that George Eliot can see, ultimately, as shared by male and female is a humanity reduced to the bare fact of common mortality. Death is the only point of conjunction; between them in life there is no communication, no sympathy. Only in death are Tom and Maggie not divided.
A polarized struggle between male and female pervades *The Mill on the Floss*, and is to be resumed in *Romola*. In between comes *Silas Marner*, a Sabbath of rest from strife. Here the outcasts of the patriarchy - the mild, passive man who loses his sweetheart to a more aggressive rival, and Squire Cass' unacknowledged daughter by his unacknowledged wife[^1^] - are permitted to enter the "calm and bright land" (Ch. 14 p. 132) of Raveloe, a matriarchal community from which the masculine element, so troublesome and threatening in the other novels, has been serenely excluded.

Women predominate in Raveloe. A specifically feminine occupation - spinning - is even the most prominent form of work. And, as mothers, they alone compose the community into which Silas is integrated. Men are very peripheral in Raveloe - obscurely present as husbands, parents, the grouped loungers in the Rainbow. Their work is not even depicted. It is customary to find resemblances between *Silas Marner* and *Adam Bede*. But the resemblances are less

[^1^] Silas Marner's depiction of the feminine Angel is worth noting. The virtuous Nancy Lammeter, Godfrey Cass' Angel-Wife, as Molly (the slave to the "demon Opium", Ch. 12 p. 110) is his Whore-Wife, is presented as spiritually narrow and physically barren. Nancy's barrenness is an interesting antecedent of the childlessness of Romola and of Gwendolen Harleth, both of whose husbands have children by other women.
striking than the contrasts, when we remember the contrality granted to work in *Adam Bede*, and the positive values found in it:

The strong fibers begin their accustomed thrill, and what was a moment before joy, vexation, or ambition, begin its change into energy. All assertion becomes strength when it has an outlet from the narrow limits of our personal lot in the labour of our right arm.

(AB Ch. XIX, p. 216)

His work, as you know, had always been part of his religion, and from very early days he saw clearly that good carpentry was God's will - was that form of God's will that most immediately concerned him.

(AB Ch. L, p. 498)

In Raveloe, the only masculine work depicted is Silas', and it is mechanized labour, work of a sort different from the rest of the community's - "unlike the natural cheerful trotting of the winnowing machine, or the simple rhythm of the flail" (Ch. 1, p. 18). And it could never be described as part of anyone's religion; it is "the unquestioning activity of a spinning insect" (Ch. 2, p. 29), a "tread-mill" (Ch. 1, p. 18) from which Eppie redeems him by diverting his attention from it:

Eppie called him away from his weaving, and made him think all its pauses a holiday, reawakening his senses with her fresh life.

(Ch. 14, p. 127)

Silas is not redeemed by taking instead to a pre-industrial form of masculine labour - the sort of work performed, off-stage, by the rest of the men of Raveloe. Rather, he is redeemed by becoming androgynous: taking on the role of mother, contracting an asexual, a sisterly relationship with Dolly Winthrop, and adopting the occupation of medicinal herbalist - a skill he has learnt from his mother and which associates him, in the Raveloe mind, with the Wise Woman of
It is a soothing solution; and it is no wonder that the atmosphere of Silas Marner is so relaxed in consequence. But the lull is only brief; Silas Marner is only a stray inspiration "that came across me in the midst of altogether different meditations" (GEL III 392), and in Romola she returns to the rather more strenuous, anguished conflict she explored in The Mill on the Floss.
F.R. Leavis says that "Silas Marner closes the first phase of George Eliot's creative life". But it seems to me more useful to think of the "first phase" as closing, not before Romola, but after it, for this novel has many features which link it to the earlier ones. It is set in a time which offers many analogues to the Industrial Revolution setting of the three previous novels - the Renaissance, with the old feudal world dissolving, being replaced by a more turbulent, competitive, and commercial-minded era, of which the religious expression is of necessity more emphatic, more aspiring and energetic, than the traditional form of religion. Savonarola's creed, in George Eliot's presentation of it, is similar to the non-conformism of Stoniton and Lantern Yard, and to the Evangelicalism of Milby in "Janet's Repentance". In some ways, Romola is like a version of "Janet's Repentance" done in Florentine fancy-dress.

In other ways, it is like The Mill on the Floss. Romola's staleness may seem to give it little in common with the bright, lively Mill. But Romola is the burnt-out residue of the fierce despair of the earlier novel: the attitude which informs them both is a despair of finding any aspect of experience common to man and woman.

Romola and Tito are irreconcilable opposites, as Tom and Maggie are. Between them there exists a "gulf" which "only gathered a more perceptible wideness from her attempts to

\[\text{Leavis, p. 60.}\]
bridge it by submission" (Ch. XLIV, p. 377), an "alienation" which occasionally erupts into "declared hostility" (Ch. XLVI, p. 395). Florence is split into Hecuba's world and Hector's; its public life is explicitly of the masculine gender, and antagonistic to the feminine:

"It is excusable in a woman, who is doubtless beautiful, since she is the wife of Messer Tito," said a Young French envoy, smiling and bowing to Tito, "to think that her affections must overrule the good of the State, and that nobody is to be beheaded who is anybody's cousin; but such a view is not to be encouraged in the male population."

(Ch. LX p. 482)

And, in Florence as in St. Ogg's, Hector's world is corrupt and corrupting, Machiavellian: it turns the soft, sensuous Tito Melema into an iron man, a man clothed in chain-mail, and it alienates him completely from his wife.

In Romola, the conflict between masculine head and feminine heart takes the form of a stylized debate, with the parties very nearly evenly matched:

With all his softness of disposition, he had a masculine effectiveness of intellect and purpose which, like sharpness of edge, is itself an energy, working its way without any strong momentum. Romola had an energy of her own which thwarted his, and no man, who is not exceptionally feeble, will endure being thwarted by his wife. Marriage must be a relation either of sympathy or of conquest.

(Ch. XLVIII p. 403)

The power-struggle between male and female which underlies the verbal debate is also stylized: check and counter-check. Tito, like Tom, uses his "masculine effectiveness" to win the struggle if not the argument - he taunts Romola incessantly her irrationality, her helplessness and ignorance, and, when necessary, resorts to physical compulsion to secure her obedience to his wishes.
In Romola the alienation between man and woman is even more severe than in The Mill on the Floss. Tom and Maggie are joined by a "great calamity" (MF, VII v p. 453), and as though in remembrance of this, Romola is at one point made to declare: "'Oh, God, I have tried - I cannot help it. We shall always be divided...Unless misery should come and join us!'" (Ch. XLVIII, p. 405). But it never does. The Tullivers are united in death at least; Romola and Tito are united in nothing. In this novel too death by water resolves the alienation; but this time the river brings death only to Tito; it brings to Romola, after a sea-voyage during which she feels that she is "in the grave" (Ch. LXI, p. 491), a new life in a different world.

Romola is the first novel of George Eliot's to present a close study of a marriage relationship. It is also (if we consider Tom and Maggie's drowning embrace as a sort of mystical marriage) the only novel of hers which doesn't end with a wedding. Instead, it ends with Tito's two wives setting up house-keeping together: a union of the Angel and the Whore.

He had an uneasy consciousness that behind her (Romola's) frank eyes there was a nature that could judge him, and that any ill-founded trust of hers sprang not from petty brute-like incapacity, but from a nobleness which might prove an alarming touchstone. He wanted a little ease, a little repose from self-control, after the agitation and exertions of the day; he wanted to be where he could adjust his mind to the morrow, without caring how he behaved at the present moment. And there was a sweet adoring creature within reach whose presence was as safe and unconstraining as that of her own kids...

He could not wish Tessa in his wife's place, or refrain from wishing that his wife should be thoroughly reconciled to him; for it was Romola, and not Tessa, that belonged to the world where all the larger desires of a man who had ambition and effective faculties must necessarily lie. But he wanted a refuge from a standard disagreeably rigorous, of which he could not make himself independent simply by thinking
it folly; and Tessa's little soul was that inviting
refuge.  
Ch. XXXIV, p. 295.  

Poor Romola, with all her self-sacrificing effort,
was really helping to harden Tito's nature by
chilling it with a positive dislike which had
beforehand seemed impossible in him; but Tessa
kept open the fountains of kindness.
Ch. L, p. 413.

In Adam Bede, virtue pertains to the Angel-figure,
practically without reservation, and vice to the Whore-figure.
In The Mill on the Floss, this same scheme obtains; though the
form it takes, a self-division within Maggie, is a significant
variation. But in Romola there is an important difference:
the virtuous wife is shown as provoking anxieties and needs
in the man for which he seeks satisfaction elsewhere. Thus
George Eliot modifies these two traditional stereotypes by
recognizing in them a symbiotic relationship in which the
Angel makes necessary the Whore. But this modification is not
by any means a substantial transformation, for George Eliot
will allow nothing that might challenge Romola's essential
"nobleness".

For example, Tessa is allowed no attitude towards Romola
but boundless, babyish, dependence and awe. Lydia Glasher and
Mirah Lapidoth, in Daniel Deronda, will be capable of feeling,
and expressing, resentment against the woman who possesses
the social dignity denied them. Tessa is permitted no such
abilities. The men, however, are allowed to voice some
criticism of Romola's untested virtue. "'Be thankful, my
daughter,'" says Savonarola, "'if your own soul has been
spared perplexity; and judge not those to whom a harder lot
has been given'" (Ch. LIX, p. 479); or, as Tito puts it more
directly, and sarcastically, "'You fair creatures live in the
clouds'" (Ch. XLVI, p. 396). But the men, too, are rendered innocuous. Sunk in moral turpitude as they are, they can be dismissed as having forfeited the right to make moral criticisms of this sort. And so their shafts merely glance off Romola's by now impregnable probity.

George Eliot's efforts to preserve her heroine's "nobleness" intact involve her in a suppression of critical faculty far more serious, I think, in Romola's case than in cases more often cited, such as Maggie Tulliver or Dorothea Brooke. No other female character of George Eliot's is so preposterously aggrandized as the Visible Madonna.

The impulse behind the aggrandizement is conservative rather than feminist. The aggrandizement goes along with, as we have seen, a thoroughly bleak picture of the masculine sphere of public life. In a sense, the bleak vision conditions the aggrandizement. Unable (or unwilling?) to see any springs of hope in the masculine sphere, George Eliot turns to Romola, in whose femininity she sees a contrast, a freedom from contamination, but equally something to be preserved. Thus George Eliot directs her endeavours towards securing Romola on her traditional pedestal.

So, even though the best part of the book, the marriage of Tito and Romola-Tessa, is a wholly condemnatory picture of marriage under the patriarchy, we are more likely to remember Romola, not as a statement of radical defiance of the existing order, but as a novel which gives a general assent to traditional values.

Romola seems to consist of two halves: a fracture in the form which corresponds to the division in George Eliot's
vision of the patriarchy, for Romola exhibits more strongly than The Mill on the Floss, a divorce between sexuality and power, and the desexualization of male domination by concentrating it in a priest or father figure. (And once again, the power of this figure involves punishing the woman for both yielding to, and resisting, another man's sexual attraction. Thus Savonarola castigates Romola for rebelling against Tito, and also for ignoring Fra Luca's vision and marrying him.)

One half of Romola is a firm indictment of the conjugal tie, the other is a largely uncritical celebration of the filial tie.

Old Bardo, Romola's father, is a selfish, insensitive, ungrateful man, who lays his hand on Romola's young life in much the same way as Casaubon will try - unsuccessfully - to grasp Dorothea's. Gnarled, glittery-eyed Baldassare, stalking his child through the novel with murder in mind, is only a more concentrated image of what Bardo is: the patriarch. Yet, Romola's submission to her father is depicted as her constituent virtue, the source from which her "nobleness" derives. Tito's degeneration, on the other hand, follows on from his filial impiety, an offence which turns out to be quite literally a mortal sin, for filial piety is the practical religion of Romola's world.

All authority in this world is a version of the power vested in the father; Romola's acknowledgement of Savonarola's authority, we may notice, proceeds upon her granting him "the title which she had never given him before" -"'My father'" (Ch. XL, p. 349). Romola's character gives the appearance of development, and her story is designed as a sort of humanist Pilgrim's Progress, but she actually never changes -
she merely changes the object towards which her unaltering filial reverence flows.

The only problem is that she can find no lasting repository for it. All the men towards whom she directs it are ultimately removed - and removed, in some way or other, by the masculine world itself. Bardo and Bernardo del Nero, the father-figures of the old world, are killed by newer men - Bardo by the defection of son and son-substitute, Bernardo by the new politics. Tito is alienated from Romola by his corruption; and ultimately Savonarola is too. Romola's climactic clash with her spiritual mentor over the condemnation of Bernardo del Nero follows the same lines as her confrontations with Tito. Again it is a conflict of heart and head: "she looked with the eyes of personal tenderness, and he with the eyes of theoretic conviction" (Ch. LXI, p. 488).

But this is a more severe crisis of the novel than any of the fights with Tito. Romola's first flight from Florence, away from her marriage, is arrested by Savonarola, who restores her to faith and submission. With his energy, his thirst for social justice and his regenerative influence on the lives of others, Savonarola embodies all the positive values of the patriarchal order. Romola's second flight from Florence, after she loses faith in him, is thus a much more serious matter than her earlier flight from Tito. It is an open acknowledgement of George Eliot's own loss of faith in the patriarchy: with Savonarola gone, there is nothing left, for Romola or her author either.

George Eliot's first motion, in this general collapse of established values, is, naturally, to preserve Romola. She
leaves her floating away on a boat for several chapters, giving herself the opportunity to tidy things up back in Florence, by killing Tito off and incarcerating Savonarola. Romola, re-born and beatified through her salvation of the plague-stricken village, may then return in triumph to a manless world.

The weary calm with which Romola ends hides a bleak hopelessness. Outside the small matriarchal realm in which Mamma Romola platitudinously presides, the masculine world, which corrupted or destroyed all the men she had ever loved, and which will undoubtedly seize upon the adolescent Lillo in the same way, is still going on, beyond Romola's control, influence, or participation. And even this peaceful enclosure affords no escape. There is still a Higher Nature and a Lower Nature in Romola's little realm, and the Higher Nature is the Angel-Madonna, the idealized mother not the real one. The male stereotypes of woman penetrate even here. Romola and Tessa may be quarantined off from the male world, but they do not escape being defined by it.

So the themes of The Mill on the Floss - the alienation of woman from man, the alienation of woman from herself - have been laboured over again, to no more satisfactory or encouraging a solution, and with the energy and passion of the earlier novel now spent and stale.
George Eliot said of Romola: "I began it a young woman, - I finished it an old woman". Now, in Felix Holt, we find her regaining her artistic energy through the creative discovery of this state.

Motionless in that way, her clear-cut features keeping distinct record of past beauty, she looked like an image faded, dried, and bleached by uncounted suns, rather than a breathing woman who had numbered the years as they passed.

(Ch. XXXIX p. 343)

The description is geological: this is the exploration of a territory, of a landscape. The land explored is that to which Hetty Sorrel was simply banished - the Antipodes, the "under world" of women's suffering and experience:

There is much pain that is quite noiseless; and vibrations that make human agonies are often a mere whisper in the roar of hurrying existence... The poets have told us of a dolorous enchanted forest in the under world. The thorn-bushes there, and the thick-barked stems, have human histories hidden in them; the power of unuttered cries dwells in the passionless-seeming branches, and the red warm blood is darkly feeding the quivering nerves of a sleepless memory that watches through all dreams. These things are a parable.

(Author's Introduction p. 8)

Maggie Tulliver and Mrs. Transome are inhabitants of the same country, though the terrain is seen here in its dry age, rather than in the upheavals of its youth. Felix Holt contains some of the most telling descriptions of the invisible "helpless bondage" (Ch. VIII, p. 103) which forms the common ground of all female experience, which was Maggie's state, and is to be
Dorothea's and Gwendolen's:

The finest threads, such as no eye sees, if bound cunningly about the sensitive flesh, so that the movement to break them would bring torture, may make a worse bondage than any fetters. Mrs. Transome felt the fatal threads about her.

(Ch. VIII p. 103)

Mrs. Transome, whose imperious will had availed little to ward off the great evils of her life, found the opiate for her discontent in the exertion of her will about smaller things. She was not cruel, and could not enjoy thoroughly what she called the old woman's pleasure of tormenting; but she liked every little sign of power her lot had left her. She liked that a tenant should stand bareheaded below her as she sat on horseback.

(Ch. I p. 26)

They never said anything like the full truth about her, or divined what was hidden under that outward life - a woman's keen sensibility and dread, which lay screened behind all her petty habits and narrow notions, as some quivering thing with eyes and throbbing heart may lie crouching behind withered rubbish.

(Ch. I p. 27)

Mrs. Transome's state is not one of enforced passivity, of being made to be, as Harold says, "'grandmamma on satin cushions'" (Ch. I, p. 17), or, as she herself more sharply puts it, "'as unnecessary as a chimney ornament'" (Ch. IX, p. 108). The passivity, as we see it, is only the surface; underneath is an intense inner activity necessitated by her state of dependency on the masters of her life: she must be alert to their every move. This activity has developed in her capacities no man in the novel possesses - her "intricate meshes of sensitiveness" (Ch. IX, p. 106). These "meshes" produce differences of behaviour between her and her menfolk which reach deep into the realm of perception and cognition, differences most clearly indicated in the breakfast party.
scene after Harold's arrival back at Transome Court:

Each of the party was preoccupied and uneasy. Harold's mind was busy constructing probabilities about what he should discover of Jermyn's mismanagement or dubious application of funds, and the sort of self-command he must in the worst case exercise in order to use the man as long as he wanted him. Jermyn was closely observing Harold with an unpleasant sense that there was an expression of acuteness and determination about him which would make him formidable. Mrs. Transome was not observing the two men; rather, her hands were cold, and her whole person shaken by their presence; she seemed to hear and see what they said and did with preternatural acuteness, and yet she was also seeing and hearing what had been said and done many years before, and feeling a dim terror about the future.

(Ch. II p. 33)

In this novel, too, the opposition between man and woman is irreconcilable. *Felix Holt* contains the only depictions in George Eliot's work (apart from the brief interviews between Daniel and his mother in *Daniel Deronda*) of the alienation between mother and son.

She threw herself into a chair, and sat with a fixed look, seeing nothing that was actually present, but inwardly seeing with painful vividness what had been present with her a little more than thirty years ago - the little round-limbed creature that had been leaning against her knees, and stamping tiny feet, and looking up at her with gurgling laughter. She had thought that possession of this child would give unity to her life, and make some gladness through the changing years that would grow up as fruit out of these early maternal caresses. But nothing had come just as she had wished. The mother's early raptures had lasted but a short time...And all the while the round-limbed pet had been growing into a strong youth, who liked many things better than his mother's caresses, and who had a much keener consciousness of his independent existence than of his relation to her: the lizard's egg, that white rounded passive prettiness, had become a brown, darting determined lizard.

(Ch. I pp. 19-20)

It is a fact perhaps kept a little too much in the background, that mothers have a self larger than their maternity, and that when their sons have become taller than themselves, and are gone from
them to college or into the world, there are wide spaces of their time which are not filled with praying for their boys, reading old letters, and envying yet blessing those who are attending to their shirt-buttons. Mrs. Transome was certainly not one of those bland, adoring, and gently tearful women. After sharing the common dream that when a beautiful man-child was born to her, her cup of happiness would be full, she had travelled through long years apart from that child to find herself at last in the presence of a son of whom she was afraid, who was utterly unmanageable by her, and to whose sentiments in any given case she possessed no key.

(Ch. VIII p. 103)

Felix Holt depicts too the alienation between a woman now aged and her ex-lover:

For years there had been a deep silence about the past between them: on her side, because she remembered; on his, because he more and more forgot.

(Ch. IX p. 106)

The process of hardening, which we have seen at work in Tom Tulliver and Tito Melema, has been prolonged in Jermyn's case; years of advancement in public life have "converted the handsome, soft-eyed, slim young Jermyn (with a touch of sentiment) into a portly lawyer of sixty, for whom life had resolved itself into the means of keeping up his head among his professional brethren, and maintaining an establishment" (Ch. XXI p. 205). Jermyn says of himself, with deeply impressive irony:

"I think, if you consider, you will see that you have nothing to complain of in me, unless you will complain of the inevitable course of man's life."

(Ch. IX p. 106)

And indeed the complaint, the protest, is made at this general level. In Felix Holt, as in The Mill on the Floss and Romola, the masculine world is again an arena of conflict, self-seeking,
and corruption - so much so that Mrs. Transome can in the end exclaim: "I would not lose the misery of being a woman, now I see what can be the baseness of a man" (Ch. XLII, p. 371).

**Felix Holt** is as close as this to the despair of *Romola* and *The Mill on the Floss* - the despair of finding any man worth loving, any man capable of love. And now *The Mill's* subterranean currents are surfaced, conscious; and *Romola's* tired serenity is transformed into unmitigating pain.

George Eliot slips from under this hopelessness - into the new generation, in which man and woman have "in common" "the ineffable sense of youth" (Ch. LI, p. 440). Esther Lyon, the woman of this generation, is Mrs. Transome in her springtime: a girl of high spirits, intelligence, wit, and social aspirations. But the man is, ostensibly anyway, a creature altogether different from the men of the old world.

It is not that this Arabella Lingon, given a second chance at life, makes the right choice this time; rather, there are possibilities open to her, in 1832, which the older woman did not have. **Felix Holt** - like *Middlemarch* which follows it - is a Reform Era novel; and this transient "time of hope" (Ch. XVI, p. 166) does not just provide a picturesque background to a static human condition of personal lives, but actively invades that condition, creating new hopes and possibilities in human life, and generating even a new kind of human personality: a New Man.

In **Felix Holt**, this new potential is embodied in Felix Holt; in *Middlemarch*, it is embodied in Ladislaw. Both these images of the New Man, we might say, demonstrate the deficiencies of their author's powers of social imagination;
but the contrast between them still serves, I believe, as something of an index of Middlemarch's superiority. For Felix is no more than an exaggerated version of a very traditional personality - one which is, in Mrs. Holt's phrase for it, "'masterful beyond everything'" (Ch. IV, p. 57).

Felix is supposed to represent the energy of the proletariat, the class which is the hope of the future, the "'family with more chances in it'" (Ch. XXVII, p. 245). Actually, the "sympathetic fibre" (Ch. XI, p. 121) which Felix claims to have with the Treby proletariat - the Sproxton miners - is fraudulent. Felix has nothing in common with them but his carefully annotated and emphasized mode of dress. George Eliot, indeed, cannot visualize the miners any more deeply than their physical appearance, in the mass. The closest look she takes at them is a scene at the Sugar Loaf with Felix, Mr. Chubb, and Mr. Johnson in focus, the miners a blurry chorus of guffaws. Two of them are allowed to open their mouths long enough to reveal that they beat their wives, and have contempt for women generally; this characteristic of theirs too is reproduced in Felix Holt, in suitably elevated from. Yet this is not enough, and nor is Felix's claim that he has "'the blood of a line of handicraftsmen in my veins'" (Ch. XXVII, p. 245) and belongs to the "'class'" of "'people who don't follow the fashions'" (Ch. V, p. 58) (a particularly heartless way of referring to the poverty-stricken). He is conspicuously isolated, friendless and kindless, an air-constructed freak.

The only feature of him that really links him to his fellows is his sex. His masculinity is aggressively emphasized. So Felix, ostensibly "'a demagogue of a new sort'" (Ch. XXVII, p. 245), is the agent of the oldest regime in human history.
Except for the gentle, sincere Tory, Philip Debarry, a minor character anticipatorily shunted off to Rome and early death, and the comically eccentric Rufus Lyon, George Eliot has been unable to find anything good in that order. It is imbecile in its upper classes (old Mr. Transome), vulgar in its middle classes (Jermyn), and blandly mediocre in the cross-breed of the two, Harold Transome. But she has depicted it as not just degenerate but desperately cruel too; and so her effort to inject new life into it through Felix seems even more puzzling.

The alternative would have been to in some way go beyond Mrs. Transome's stance of personal resistance to the patriarchy; and it is perhaps understandable that George Eliot could not take this course. I have called what prevented her a deficiency in social imagination; but perhaps it might more fairly be called an absence of the social experience that would have made possible such imaginings. In either case, the lack manifests itself, in the created product, as a deficiency in artistic imagination - the deficiency which readers have generally felt pervades the whole Felix Holt part of Felix Holt.

George Eliot endorses the patriarchy with great decision, and turns her back on all else. Mrs. Transome's suffering is countered by the unfeeling comedy of Mrs. Holt (tragedy is thereby confined to the upper classes - and this in a novel supposed to be written in compassion for the oppressed), and Esther is complacently sacrificed on the altar of Felix's ego.

Esther Lyon is the most unfairly treated character in all of George Eliot's novels. She is more unfairly treated than
Rosamond Vincy, which is really saying something. Considerable authorial hostility is directed at both girls, ostensibly on account of their selfishness and triviality. In both cases, I would maintain, a large portion of George Eliot's animosity is caused by something else about them: their failure to conform to a man-centred definition of what woman should be - man's helpmate, auxiliary to all his noble deeds.

We may notice, for example, how large this non-conformity looms in Felix's notions of what is wrong with Esther: "'You have enough understanding to make it wicked that you should add one more to the women who hinder men's lives from having any nobleness in them'" (Ch. X, p. 113); "'I can't bear to see you going the way of the foolish women who spoil men's lives'" (Ch. X, p. 115). Esther duly alters herself, after much bullying, to meet the specifications Felix has quite blatantly laid down for her:

"You might be that woman I was thinking of a little while ago when I looked at your face: the woman whose beauty makes a great task easier to men instead of turning them away from it."

(Ch. XXVII p. 244)

It may be argued that Esther the Great Task Easer is an improvement on Esther the elegant and frivolous, the "'bird trimming its feathers, and pecking about after what pleases it'" (Ch. X, p. 114). But it is fair to ask, I think, whether Esther is such a "'bird'"; or whether this description, which George Eliot herself is imposing on Esther through Felix, is not distorting as well as derogatory.

It is here, I think, that Esther is more unfairly treated than Rosamond Vincy. For Esther is not a leisured, well-heeled miss, like Rosamond - or like the Debarry girls in
this novel. She is a young woman condemned to poverty, the only occupation open to her a degrading and impecunious one, the only prospect before her that of life-long dependence — a prospect she sees clearly and bitterly from the start for what it is.

"A woman can hardly ever choose in that way; she is dependent on what happens to her. She must take meaner things, because only meaner things are within her reach."

(Ch. XXVII pp. 245-246)

She is, too, a woman of intelligence and refinement, trapped in what she sees (with justification, surely) as "ignoble, uninteresting conditions, from which there was no issue"

(Ch. VI, pp. 70-71).

She knew the dim life of the back street, the contact with sordid vulgarity, the lack of refinement for the senses, the summons to a daily task.

(Ch. LXIX p. 431)

Esther is, in fact, more like Maggie Tulliver than George Eliot will permit us to see. If Esther seems, as a character, a bit hazy and unconvincing, it seems to me that this is the result of George Eliot's attempts to restrain her from breaking free of the definition she is intent on imposing on her.

Esther's choice between Harold and Felix is the same as Maggie's: a choice of wealth or poverty. Esther, like Maggie, refuses the wealth. But, unlike Maggie, Esther is at the same time refusing to be an Angel — she rejects the "peculiar and supreme" (Ch. XLIII, p. 389) place in his life which Harold is offering her, a place which is to contrast with that occupied by Harry's mother, who "'had been a slave - was bought, in fact'" (Ch. XLIII, p. 389), and by his mistress (only mentioned once in the novel, and
that in passing), "a slow-witted large-eyed woman...whom
he had brought with him from the East" (Ch. XXXVI, p. 318).

So this time, the choice of poverty does not exclude the
heroine from sexual fulfilment. It doesn't free her of male
domination, either. Esther resists the "padded yoke" (Ch.
XLIII, p. 387), the "silken bondage" (Ch. XLIX, p. 431),
which Harold Transome offers her, but she rejects them not
because he is dominating but because he is not dominating
enough:

More than all, there was this test: she herself
had no sense of inferiority and just subjection
when she was with Harold Transome; there were even
points in him for which she felt a touch, not of
angry, but of playful scorn; whereas with Felix
she had always a sense of dependence and possible
illumination.

(Ch. XLIII p. 375)

With uncompromising fidelity to the power to which she has
given her endorsement, George Eliot has Esther choose -
choose freely - a bondage which is not silken, a yoke which
is unpadded. Evicted from her unnatural usurpation of
predominance in her father's household, she bows to a sub-
jection which promises to be even more complete than Mrs.
Transome's.

In Felix Holt, the masculine roles of priest and lover
are - finally - combined; the amalgamation of spiritual
guidance, chastisement, and sexual attraction thus obtained
producing disturbing overtones of sadism ("'A peacock!'
thought Felix. 'I should like to come and scold her every
day, and make her cry and cut her fine hair off'", Ch. V, p. 66).
One might say that recognition of sado-masochism as the
inevitable form of the relationship between man and woman
is the logical conclusion, once male domination and female
submission are accepted as right and proper attitudes; but it is unusual, even shocking, to see this conclusion in as exposed a state as it appears in Felix Holt. (We may now see that George Eliot's separation of the roles of priest and lover of authority and sexuality, in earlier novels, served to conceal this conclusion.)

The relationship between Felix and Esther could hardly be described as "mutual subjection of soul": the subjection is all on Esther's side. Felix is an extreme version of brute strength, a man who abuses Esther unjustly, and to whose abuse she bends (an experience which George Eliot describes as "the first religious experience of her life", Ch. XXVII, p. 247), who misunderstands her continually, suspects her to the last of foul designs upon his noble integrity, and whose hold over her is based on fear and awe.

"In all private quarrels," George Eliot writes in reference to the relationship between Mrs. Transome and Matthew Jermyn, "the duller nature is triumphant by reason of its dulness" (Ch. IX, p. 107). This is something of a theme in Felix Holt - here is another passage which resembles it, though this time the subject is Esther Lyon's domination of her father Rufus:

The stronger will always rule, say some, with an air of confidence which is like a lawyer's flourish, forbidding exceptions or additions. But what is strength? Is it blind wilfulness that sees no terrors, no many-linked consequences, no bruises and wounds of those whose cords it tightens? Is it the narrowness of a brain that conceives no needs differing from its own?...There is a sort of subjection which is the peculiar heritage of largeness and of love; and strength is often only another name for willing bondage to irremediable weakness. Ch. VI, p. 72.
This is used as a clue to many of the relationships of the novel, and even to its political life, which is seen as ruled by its most brutish element. Unfortunately it applies also to the one relationship to which George Eliot gives her approval.

The May wedding amidst the chestnuts seems, on reflection, rather a grisly end to this book. Mrs. Transome's bitter suffering continues (out of sight, on the Continent); so does Mrs. Holt's lonely bewilderment - which is shown to the last to be ridiculous, of course. The marriage itself shifts its level of significance, from the actual to the allegorical. It becomes a symbolical union of the heritage of the past and the dispossessed of the earth (like the marriage of Egremont and Sybil in Disraeli's Sybil).

But, back on the plane of the actual, it doesn't look as though any great change has taken place. The Reform Era has introduced new possibilities into the lives of men, but none into the lives of women. The terms of a woman's relationship with the New Man, it appears, are the same as with the old.

There is no private life which as not been determined by a wider public life. (Ch. III p. 45)

The example George Eliot uses to expand this assertion is the position of a milkmaid in a patriarchal Aryan tribe. It is an example which makes the meaning of the assertion clear. The tribe wanders, whither the men ordain to go; history is shaped, in ways that men decide. The woman's state of dependence, the external determination of her life, can

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2 She says in Theophrastus Such: "I am determined not to fetch my examples from races whose talk is of uncles and no fathers" - George Eliot's Works, Edinburgh, Blackwood (The Warwick Edition), 1901, Vol. xii, p. 43.
never change. In *Felix Holt*, Esther's fate is pronounced not only inevitable ("After all, she was a woman, and could not make her own lot", Ch. XLIII, p. 376) but excellent.
Section 1: Observation and Sentiment

In my discussion of *The Mill on the Floss*, I spoke of George Eliot as being freed from constraint by her revelation of her sexual identity. The freedom did not, as we have seen, last long. Indeed it was gone even before the end of *The Mill on the Floss*: Maggie Tulliver is transformed from an intrinsic being to an inessential, whose activities and existence must be justified in terms of the benefit derived from them by men. In subsequent novels, we have seen George Eliot give credence to female stereotypes and, eventually, grant her assent to male supremacy.

It could well be that no woman's novel yet written has been free of the constraints imposed on its author by the fact of being born female into a male world. And it could be that every woman's novel which seeks to be judged by absolute critical standards, and to avoid being relegated to the minor category of "women's fiction" (fiction for women), has been, in form even if not in fact, a male pseudonymous novel.

In 1852, G.H. Lewes had this to say of the literature produced by women (and the literature produced by women in the one hundred and twenty years since hasn't substantially altered the position):

The literature of women...has been too much a literature of imitation. To write as men write, is the aim and besetting sin of women; to write as women, is the real office they have to perform. ...To imitate is to abdicate. We are in no need of more male writers; we are in need of genuine
female experience. The prejudices, notions, passions, and conventionalisms of men are amply illustrated; let us have the same fulness with respect to women. Unhappily the literature of women may be compared with that of Rome; no amount of graceful talent can disguise the internal defect. Virgil, Ovid, and Catullus were assuredly gifted with delicate and poetic sensibility; but their light is, after all, the light of moons reflected from the Grecian suns, and such as brings little life with its rays. To speak in Greek, to think in Greek, was the ambition of all cultivated Romans, who could not see that it would be a grander thing to utter their pure Roman natures in sincere originality. So of women.1

I agree with what Lewes says here; but I think that it is more difficult than he thought for women to speak their experience in "sincere originality", without deferring to male standards. George Eliot herself, as we have seen, could not do it; and the conditions that prevented her I see as conditions shared by all women writers, indeed by all women.

To approach George Eliot as a woman writer gives a new slant on certain aspects of her form which critics have not (directly, anyway) thought of as connected with her sex. (The use of the term "feminine" to designate weaknesses in her must, I think, be considered as having been, to date, more a conventional derogatory usage of the term than a serious attribution of these features to the author's sex.) Lewes' article "The Lady Novelists", as a contemporary attempt to formulate a theory of female creativity, is a convenient starting point for an examination of George Eliot as a woman writer. The body of "The Lady Novelists" consists of specific accounts of a number of women writers. Lewes

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suggests that it is possible to "run through the list of female writers... contrasting them" in terms of the predominance in them of either "Observation" or "Sentiment". Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth, Fanny Burney, and Elizabeth Gaskell, for example, are novelists in whom Observation predominates; George Sand, Lady Morgan, Charlotte Bronte, are novelists of Sentiment.

The first part of the article attempts to establish Sentiment as a feminine quality. Lewes draws attention to woman's "greater affectionateness, her greater range and depth of emotional experience" and her greater experience of suffering ("the influence of Sorrow upon female literature" is, says Lewes, "a curious point in our subject") as likely causes for a predominance of Sentiment in novels written by women. "The peculiarly feminine quality of Observation", on the other hand, is introduced almost by the way in the course of the discussion of Maria Edgeworth, and no explanation is offered of why it should be regarded as a "peculiarly feminine quality".

Once introduced, however, Observation swiftly establishes itself as the most important distinguishing mark of the female writer. Not only do women writers not score well as writers of Sentiment, Sentiment appears not to be a female quality at all. The contrast Lewes makes between Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Bronte is particularly revealing in this regard.

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2 Lewes, p. 138.
3 Lewes, p. 132.
4 Lewes, p. 133.
5 Lewes, p. 137.
Of Elizabeth Gaskell he says:

The presence of observation is more apparent in "Mary Barton" than in "Jane Eyre", as it is possibly more predominant in the mind of the authoress; and this is why there never was even a momentary doubt as to the writer's sex. 6

The sex of the author of Jane Eyre, on the other hand, was in doubt precisely because of the power of emotion in it, and only the presence of elements of observation determines the issue:

The psychological and emotional tendency which prevails in "Jane Eyre" may have blinded some to the rare powers of observation also exhibited in the book; a critical examination, however, will at once set this right. 7

Lewes' article seems to refute, rather than sustain, his initial proposition that woman "is well fitted to give expression to the emotional facts of life" 8. The two interesting points to come out of it - that female writers are strong on Observation, and weak in Sentiment - are left unaccounted for. I think that Lewes is into something here: it is a pity he did not realize it and develop it more. At this point, I would like to turn from the general to the particular: from the qualities of female creativity to the qualities of George Eliot. Lewes' general categories - Observation and Sentiment - are still of use in such an examination. Where would George Eliot fit in Lewes' list?

Her own self-chosen role, in Middlemarch at least, is that of the novelist of Observation. She conceives of her authorial role as that of a scientist, of one who, "watching

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6 Lewes, p. 138-139.
7 Lewes, p. 139.
8 Lewes, p. 132.
keenly the stealthy convergence of human lots, sees a slow preparation of effects from one life on another" (Ch. II p. 122). The image of the scientist is repeatedly evoked. The author is one who moves in the company of scientists, who has "an eminent philosopher among my friends, who can dignify even your ugly furniture by lifting it into the serene light of science" (Ch. 27 p. 297). He also performs experiments of his own:

In watching effects, if only of an electric battery, it is often necessary to change our place and examine a particular mixture or group at some distance from the point where the movement we are interested in was set up. The group I am moving towards is at Caleb Garth's breakfast-table in the large parlour where the maps and desk were: father, mother, and five of the children. Ch. 40 p. 434.

He performs them, moreover, with the most modern scientific equipment:

Was there any ingenious plot, any hide-and-seek course of action, which might be detected by a careful telescopic watch? Not at all: a telescope might have swept the parishes of Tipton and Freshitt, the whole area visited by Mrs. Cadwallader in her phaeton, without witnessing any interview that could excite suspicion, or any scene from which she did not return with the same unperturbed keenness of eye and the same high natural colour. In fact, if that convenient vehicle had existed in the days of the Seven Sages, one of them would doubtless have remarked, that you can know little of women by following them about in their pony phaetons. Even with a microscope directed on a water-drop we find ourselves making interpretations which turn out to be rather coarse; for whereas under a weak lens you may seem to see a creature exhibiting an active voracity into which other smaller creatures actively play as if they were so many animated tax-pennies, a stronger lens reveals to you certain tiniest hairlets which make vortices for these victims while the swallowing waits passively at his receipt of custom. In this way, metaphorically speaking, a strong lens applied to Mrs. Cadwallader's matchmaking will
show a play of minute causes producing what may be called thought and speech vortices to bring her the sort of food she needed.  
(Ch. 6 p. 83)

But, though George Eliot seems to be deliberately presenting herself as a detached Observer, I think most critics would probably place her, in Lewes' list, in the same category as Geraldine Jewsbury, whom Lewes cites as:

one in whom Observation and Sentiment were about equal; but although she possesses, in an eminent degree, both qualities, she does not work them harmoniously together. Her keen womanly observation of life gives to her novels the piquancy of sarcasm, and her deep womanly feeling of life gives to them the warmth and interest of sentiment; but - there is a but! - the works seem rather the offspring of two minds than of one mind; there is a want of unity in them.9

Middlemarch, too, is often seen as the "offspring of two minds", one cool and distanced, the other warm and involved. F.R. Leavis, for example, states that in Middlemarch

We have an alternation between the poised impersonal insight of a finely tempered wisdom and something like the emotional confusions and self-importances of adolescence.10

Leavis' account, however, is not unanimously agreed with. Raymond Williams' judgment is the reverse of Leavis'. He has kinder things to say for the warm tone than Leavis does: it is, he says,

George Eliot thinking beyond, feeling beyond, the restrictions and limitations she has so finely recorded...giving her last strength, her deep warmth, to a hope, a possibility beyond what she had to record in a hardening clearly seen world.11

He admits, though, to sensing in George Eliot's warm tone "some anxiety, certainly - some registered qualified anxiety."12

9 Lewes, p. 138.
10 Leavis, p. 89.
11 Williams, pp. 93-94.
12 Williams, p. 93.
His condemnation of George Eliot's cool tone (which Leavis praises as "the poised impersonal insight of a finely tempered wisdom") is more unqualified:

It is a consciousness, a fictional method, that has been widely recommended. It is referred back to the cool 'impersonality' of Jane Austen; forward to the wrought observation of Henry James and thence to what is often called, in a sweeping indeed overbearing dimension, maturity...It is a method that when abstracted is a cold placing, a critic's fiction...As you'll have gathered, I don't really find it particularly mature...

I've pushed it that far, from its much more substantial, more affirmed existence in Middlemarch, as a way of registering a profound unease - an unease that of course goes along with respect - about the coldness, the picking, of those parts of the novel. I think it was inevitable. It is a dislocation, not of an overt kind but very deep and substantial: the dislocation in consciousness, 'the double change in self and beholder'. Middlemarch as a whole is a superb presentation, a superb analysis: that is its consciousness. As a way of seeing, it is so powerfully composed that it creates its own conditions, enacts and re-enacts its own kind of achievement. It has been so praised so often in just that sense that I don't need to add any other tributary adjectives. I want only to say that as a kind of consciousness it is really a portent:...a profoundly serious but also profoundly accepted alienation.\(^{13}\)

But though the judgment is reversed, Williams too perceives in Middlemarch an alternation, a contrast, between the coolness and the warmth - qualities very like, I would suggest, those Lewes has designated Observation and Sentiment. And more clearly than Leavis does, I think, Williams sees how the separation of the two qualities adversely affects both: how Observation, bereft of Sentiment, becomes distanced and disengaged, a reifying vision, and how Sentiment without reflective consciousness remains uncrystallized, unreduced, and confused.

\(^{13}\) Williams, pp. 90-92.
Perhaps we might endeavour to reach some conclusion about the origin of these two tones, and the lack of integration between them. In this endeavour, "The Lady Novelists" remains relevant; for Lewes sees these qualities as arising, in some way he only vaguely senses, out of the female condition. I think Lewes is on the right track here. I would like to go further, and suggest which aspect of the female condition it is that gives rise to these qualities. It is one which George Eliot herself saw, and presents as a theme in novel after novel: the double alienation of woman, from man and from herself.

We may see, firstly, how the alienation of woman from man produces separate tones: she uses the cool tone to describe the man's world, the warm, involved tone to describe her own. Raymond Williams describes the cool tone of Middlemarch as issuing from "a profoundly serious but also profoundly accepted alienation". This "alienation", as Williams means it, is the separation of the educated consciousness from the common life. We may see it as another form of alienation as well: the alienation of woman from the Real World and its inhabitants. Barred from participation, she can only look out upon it, from a distance. As Simone de Beauvoir says of the female condition in general:

> Being the Other, she (woman) remains exterior to man's world and can view it objectively...Woman is outside the fray: her whole situation destines her to play this role of concerned spectator.\(^\text{14}\)

Woman's artistic productions, by and large, reflect this sense of exclusion from the world - George Eliot's in

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particular reflect it. The authorial figure in Middlemarch seems, in the end, less like the proudly self-assumed persona of the scientist than like the lonely, isolated figure of Dorothea Brooke, looking out from her window upon a world from which she is in exile.

It is, perhaps, more readily seen that the female writer's vision of the male world would be an alienated one, than that her vision of woman's experience would also be alienated. Yet, in the case of George Eliot and other women writers, this is so. George Eliot's warm tone, as well as the cool tone, arises from "a profoundly serious but also profoundly accepted alienation". George Eliot's warm tone is characterized by confusion and self-importance (according to Leavis) and by anxiety (according to Williams). All these may be seen as modes of alienation: they take the place of steady, clarified self-understanding. This lack of self-understanding has a number of forms: the self-hatred evident in the cold, hostile portrayal of Rosamond Vincy; the warm self-defensiveness exercised on Dorothea's behalf; and a self-timidity which, in these last novels, finds expression in the dream of the male deliverer, in whom George Eliot places the faith she will not give to those of her own sex.

Simone de Beauvoir's explanation of why woman cannot understand and express her own experience is simple and basic - woman cannot be expressed because she does not yet exist:

She (woman) would be quite embarrassed to decide what she is; but this is not because the hidden truth is too vague to be discerned: it is because in this domain there is no truth. An existent is nothing other than what he does; the possible does not
extend beyond the real, essence does not precede existence; in pure subjectivity, the human being is not anything. He is to be measured by his acts.\textsuperscript{15}

The female writer, in seeking to depict women's experience, thus chooses an impossible task, for the self-determined literary creation of female experience cannot precede the self-determined social creation of it. George Eliot's warm tone is, I would suggest, characterized by prematurity rather than (as Leavis would have it) by immaturity. What George Eliot was, of necessity, attempting was an act, not just of creation, but of self-creation. She brought to the attempt great courage and intensity, but the endeavour was again, of necessity - doomed from the beginning: the art could not overshoot the life, without itself becoming alienated and unfleshed. The flaws critics find in Middlemarch have their origins, not just in George Eliot's own consciousness, but deep in the social reality in which she had her being.

There is one last thing to say. The following sections of my discussion deal with the alienation of woman from man, of woman from herself, of heart from head, not as qualities inherent in the form of Middlemarch, but as themes in it. For, suffering all the symptoms of the disease herself, George Eliot could still diagnose it. And so Middlemarch is not simply a reflection of this deep division in the reality with which it deals; it is also an expression of it. Middlemarch is a giant, as an achievement and as an effort too; and if the signs of strain are still visible, as testimony of the struggle, perhaps it is all the more moving a book for that.

\textsuperscript{15} de Beauvoir, p. 257.
Section 2: The Head and the Heart

In *The Mill on the Floss*, we were presented not just with a contrast between Hector's world and Hecuba's, but with a contrast between an integrated, pre-Industrial Revolution way of life, and the new, bifurcated world.

This second contrast occurs in *Middlemarch* too. Caleb Garth, the representative of the old way of life in this novel, is, in several respects, like Edward Tulliver of Dorlcote Mill. Caleb rules his affairs by "psychological argument" (Ch. 23 p. 264); and he suffers financially by it because the environment in which he acts is attuned to a different set of values; and his own values, as the old world rapidly merges into the new, are evident in the next generation primarily in women (as Tulliver's are in Maggie) - in his daughter Mary, for whom a man's occupation is an important consideration, and in Dorothea Brooke, with whom, across all barriers of sex and rank, he can make connection:

> Dorothea's confidence in Caleb Garth's knowledge, which had begun on her hearing that he approved of her cottages, had grown fast during her stay at Freshitt, Sir James having induced her to take rides over the two estates in company with himself and Caleb, who quite returned her admiration, and told his wife that Mrs. Casaubon had a head for business most uncommon in a woman. It must be remembered that by 'business' Caleb never meant money transactions, but the skilful application of labour.

> 'Most uncommon!' repeated Caleb. 'She said a thing I often used to think myself when I was a lad: - "Mr. Garth, I should like to feel, if I lived to be old, that I had improved a great piece of land and built a great many good cottages, because the work is of a healthy kind while it is being done, and after it is done, men are the better for it." Those were the very words: she sees into things in that way.'

Ch. 56 p. 596.
It is not only men in *Middlemarch* whose lives are shown to be integrated under the old scheme of things. We see Susan Garth, whose domestic and work lives are combined in the most thorough way:

She had sometimes taken pupils in a peripatetic fashion, making them follow her about in the kitchen with their book or slate. She thought it good for them to see that she could make an excellent lather while she corrected their blunders 'without looking,' - that a woman with her sleeves tucked up above her elbows might know all about the Subjunctive Mood or the Torrid Zone - that, in short, she might possess 'education' and other good things ending in 'tion', and worthy to be pronounced emphatically, without being a useless doll.

Ch. 24 p. 275.

And, despite her belief that women are "framed to be entirely subordinate" (Ch. 24. p. 275), she has considerable say in the Garth affairs. (Not that her theoretic belief in the "principle of subordination", Ch. 56, p. 596, is shown as innocent of cruelty: we see its effect upon her daughters, especially Letty, a character a lot like the little Maggie Tulliver, "whose life was much checkered by resistance to her depreciation as a girl" Ch. 57 p. 617.) Mrs. Vincy is another woman who was brought up in the old way of life: she runs her household as her parents ran their inn. Yet, married to a manufacturer, she is closer to the new world than to the old: her daughter has been educated in the new style, in a way once confined to gentlewomen. Rosamond, like Dorothea, is meant for domestic ornamentation only.

*Middlemarch* is set in the emerging new world. The major contrast round which it is built is not old and new, pre- and post-Industrial Revolution, but Hector and Hecuba: activity against feeling, head against heart, male against female.
The contrast, as a structural principle of the novel, is embodied in the opposition of a woman protagonist to the men who surround her.

Lloyd Fernando is right, I believe, to suggest that Dorothea Brooke is "George Eliot's portrait of what the emancipated woman could be like". She is female without being passively weak; more importantly, she is strong without being imitation-masculine. Her energy is of another kind: the power of the heart. It is an energy which outlasts the masculine form of energy: it continues on, in "fine issues" and in "channels which had no great name on the earth" (Finale p. 896), while the masculine powers of intellect and sure purpose are brought to a dead halt. But, so the novel begins and ends declaring, there is no real place for it in Middlemarch.

I shall deal only with the three oppositions between masculine and feminine modes of energy which seem to me most illuminating: the contrasts involving Farebrother, Casaubon, and Lydgate.

(i) Dorothea vs. Farebrother.

Clergymen remained a great interest for George Eliot throughout her fiction-writing career, a career which began with the publication of "Scenes of Clerical Life". Her interest was both sociological and humanist: she was seeking to define the clergyman's role in terms of his function in society, and she was implicitly speculating about who would fulfil this role once the institutionalized forms of

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16 Fernando, p. 89.
religion had passed away. 17

This speculation, it seems to me, is present in the recurrence, throughout her fiction, of situations in which a clergyman is disadvantageously compared with a lay-figure who performs his role for him. Sometimes, George Eliot uses men in this role. Felix Holt, for example, gives Esther Lyon "the first religious experience of her life" (FH Ch. XXVII p. 247), though she is a Rector's daughter; and Gwendolen Harleth seeks spiritual guidance from Deronda ("without the aid of sacred ceremony or costume, her feelings had turned this man... into a priest" DD Ch. 35 p. 485) rather than from her uncle, the worldly Gascoigne. (George Eliot's use of a male lay figure in this capacity seems to foreshadow the role played, in the popular imagination, by the psychiatrist in the twentieth century.)

But there is also a repeated situation in which it is a woman who shows up the official clergyman's spiritual destitution or well-meaning inadequacy. This is so in the very first of George Eliot's published works, "The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton", in which Amos Barton is shown as a hopeless failure in dealing with people, in contrast to his long-suffering, compassionate wife Milly. George Eliot's first novel, which was conceived as the fourth in the "Clerical Life" series, contains a female clergyman-figure, the Methodist preacher Dinah Morris. Dinah is shown as being better at the job than Irwine is: she shares the life of her flock, she offers practical help to Lisbeth Bede

17 I would suggest that there are traces in George Eliot's work of a genre which might be described as social science fiction. The speculativeness in her treatment of the role of the clergyman, and of the role of woman, are two examples of this. In Daniel Deronda, as we will see, the science fiction aspect of the work is more pronounced.
in her bereavement by helping out with the housework, she brings sisterly consolation to Hetty when Irwine cannot reach her. Similarly, Romola turns out to have more moral integrity than Savonarola and more practical compassion than the pievano of the plague-stricken village.

The contrast made between Dorothea and Farebrother is of this order - between a woman ardently in search of a life of compassion and spiritual succour, and a man who feels himself unsuited when such a life is required of him. The climax of this theme in the novel comes with the affair of Lydgate's disgrace: Dorothea's "ardent faith in efforts of justice and mercy, which would conquer by their emotional force" is tested and vindicated against Farebrother's "cautious weighing of consequences" (Ch. 72 p. 789). It is Dorothea, not Farebrother, who brings spiritual aid to Lydgate and saves him from despair. Farebrother admits: "'A woman may venture on some efforts of sympathy which would hardly succeed if we men undertook them'" (Ch. 72 p. 791).

This episode in Middlemarch resembles Esther's testimony at Felix Holt's trial, the significance of which is emphasized thus:

When a woman feels purely and nobly, that ardour of hers which breaks through formulas too rigorously urged on men by daily practical needs, makes one of her most precious influences: she is the added impulse that shatters the stiffening crust of cautious experience.

EH Ch. XLVI p. 414.

18 There is another contrast along the same lines, though a much more subdued one, between Dorothea and Fred Vincy, who is also an eligible but unsuitable clergyman. Fred ends up an estate manager; and, perhaps significantly, this too is an occupation Dorothea would have liked for herself.

'I should like to take a great deal of land, and drain it, and make a little colony, where everybody should work, and all the work should be done well. I should know every one of the people and be their friend.'

Ch. 55 p. 794.
There are differences worth noting. Esther's is an isolated performance: the impression thus left is that it is best that women's influence be but fitful, and that it be exercised (as Esther's is) under the inspiration of, and for the benefit of, an adored man. Dorothea's rescue of Lydgate isn't, for one thing, prompted by her "woman's passion" (FH Ch. XLVI p. 414); and though it too is an isolated performance, a single act without sequel, its isolation is explicitly deplored - the absence of a "constant unfolding of far-resonant action" (Prelude, p. 25) in Dorothea's life is mourned. Both episodes, however, share the self-indulgent quality which F.R. Leavis criticizes in Middlemarch; of both it can be said that

the situations offered by way of 'objective correlative' have the day-dream relation to experience - they are generated by a need to soar above the indocile facts and conditions of the real world. They don't indeed, strike us as real in any sense; they have no objectivity, no vigour of illusion.19

I agree with this; and the origin of the fault, I think, lies in the lack of social experience more than in the deficiencies of George Eliot's imagination. To conceive of a worthwhile, self-confirming act for a woman to perform, an author would indeed have to "soar above the indocile facts and conditions of the real world". Almost inevitably, therefore, George Eliot idealizes Dorothea; and part of the idealization is the suggestion of the role of secularized clergyman as an appropriate occupation for the emancipated woman.

19 Leavis, p. 93.
But it would be unfair to George Eliot not to add that she does not persist in her make-believe. Idealized and real world collide in *Middlemarch*: there is no "medium" for Dorothea in which her deeds can take shape, and she remains

...foundress of nothing, whose loving heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centring in some long-recognizable deed.

(Prelude p. 26)

(ii) Dorothea vs. Casaubon

The terms of the contrast between Farebrother and Dorothea are pragmatism and "emotional force". With Dorothea and Casaubon, emotion is opposed to another masculine attribute - the intellect. The contrast is so marked in this instance that it is almost an allegorical representation.

Casaubon is an extreme type of the arid pedant. George Eliot's description of him at his labours is magnificent:

Poor Mr. Casaubon himself was lost among small closets and winding stairs, and in an agitated dimness about the Cabeiri, or in an exposure of other mythologists' ill-considered parallels, easily lost sight of any purpose which had prompted him to these labours.

With his taper stuck before him he forgot the absence of windows, and in bitter manuscript remarks on other men's notions about the solar deities, he had become indifferent to the sunlight.

(Ch. 20 pp. 229-230)

Casaubon is all cerebral. He is suffering - in a physical sense which symbolizes his spiritual state - from degeneration of the heart; he is to die of heart-failure. Dorothea, on the other hand, is all heart. She is certainly - it is the thing said of her in her social circle - "clever"; but it is an intelligence of a different kind, one in which, as Will Ladislaw (the one person who understands and shares it) says, "'Knowledge passes instantaneously into feeling,
and feeling flashes back as a new organ of knowledge’” (Ch. 22 p. 256). But having been subjected to the trivialized education of a girls’ finishing school, and aware of her own ignorance, Dorothea thirsts for wisdom - not, though, as the self-generating development of her own capacities, but as the acquisition of an extrinsic body of learning.

It was not entirely out of devotion to her future husband that she wished to know Latin and Greek. Those provinces of masculine knowledge seemed to her a standing-ground from which all truth could be seen more truly. As it was, she constantly doubted her own conclusions, because she felt her own ignorance…Perhaps even Hebrew might be necessary - at least the alphabet and a few roots - in order to arrive at the core of things, and judge soundly on the social duties of the Christian. And she had not reached that point of renunciation at which she would have been satisfied with having a wise husband; she wished, poor child, to be wise herself. Miss Brooke was certainly very naive with all her alleged cleverness. Celia, whose mind had never been thought too powerful, saw the emptiness of other people’s pretensions much more readily. To have in general but little feeling, seems to be the only security against feeling too much on any particular occasion. (Ch. 7 p. 88)

George Eliot is here mocking not Dorothea but the “provinces of masculine knowledge” she yearns for. Long inhabitation of these provinces has ossified Casaubon; they have nothing to give Dorothea. Dorothea’s education is to be of another kind: Maggie Tulliver’s kind - the education of the feelings through experience. Dorothea never does conquer the “provinces of masculine knowledge”. On the morning she and Will decide to marry, she is still unsound on such a weighty matter as the whereabouts of Paphlagonia. That same morning, she makes a choice of mate which is venture-some and daring, but in no sense rash: it is, rather, a choice based on commitment and understanding - and on hope.
Dorothea’s acceptance of Will Ladislaw is her diploma, as it were, in the education she has undergone (as Maggie’s rejection of Stephen is in hers).

I don’t think it is ever in doubt which kind of learning, Casaubon’s or Dorothea’s, George Eliot endorses. But there is one question which raises very dramatically: which kind of learning is the tougher? Which the more likely to give mastery to its possessor?

She raises this in the sequence of events immediately preceding Casaubon’s death. It is worth rehearsing this sequence in some detail. Casaubon requires of Dorothea that she promise to "avoid doing what I should deprecate, and apply yourself to do what I should desire" (Ch. 48 p. 518).

Dorothea was not taken by surprise: many incidents had been leading her to the conjecture of some intention on her husband’s part which might make a new yoke for her. She did not answer immediately.

'You refuse?' said Mr. Casaubon, with more edge in his tone.

'No, I do not yet refuse', said Dorothea, in a clear voice, the need of freedom asserting itself within her; 'but it is too solemn - I think it is not right - to make a promise when I am ignorant what it will bind me to. Whatever affection prompted I would do without promising.'

'But you would use your own judgment: I ask you to obey mine; you refuse.'

(Ch. 48 pp. 518-519)

The terms of conflict are thus precisely set. Casaubon is prompted to his demand by a desire to extend his power over Dorothea beyond his death. It is clear from his soliloquized account of his motives in Chapter 42 that he uses the idea of his own superiority in erudition, and Dorothea’s ignorance, to justify his conduct towards her.

Dorothea, however, is not ignorant; she has already reached that significant stage of knowledge at which
she had begun to see that she had been under a wild illusion in expecting a response to her feeling from Mr. Casaubon, and she had felt the waking of a presentiment that there might be a sad consciousness in his life which made as great a need on his side as on her own.

(Ch. 21 p. 243)

Yet it is precisely because Dorothea has more understanding than Casaubon that she submits - for fear of wounding him. It is an act of courage on George Eliot's part that she does not shrink from depicting this debilitating effect of the education which she is advocating as the more valid one. Here is her account of Dorothea's eventual response to her husband's exorbitant demand of her:

She had been sitting still for a few minutes, but not in any renewal of the former conflict: she simply felt that she was going to say 'Yes' to her own doom: she was too weak, too full of dread at the thought of inflicting a keen-edged blow on her husband, to do anything but submit completely...Neither law nor the world's opinion compelled her to this - only her husband's nature and her own compassion, only the ideal and not the real yoke of marriage. She saw clearly enough the whole situation, yet she was fettered: she could not smite the stricken soul that entreated hers. If that were weakness, Dorothea was weak.

(Ch. 48 pp. 522-523)

This is a moment of real suspense in the novel. Dorothea hesitates among the yew-trees before going to give the promise that will put her life in bondage. At the other end of the garden, although she, and we, do not know it, Casaubon is forcing his failing heart to serve him a few minutes more, until he shall have extracted the words that will give his will a perpetual slave. The resolution is sensational, melodramatic almost: Casaubon's heart does not serve him long enough, it silts up and stops. Casaubon's death is Dorothea's release. There is no rebellion, no enforced
choice between compassion and legitimate self-affirmation. It always seemed odd to me that George Eliot should introduce the matter of the promise at all, if she was merely going to resolve it by a lucky hesitation and a convenient death. What I discern in her is a reluctance to ignore the problems involved in resistance and submission, especially when she seems so to favour submission as a moral attitude, and an accompanying reluctance to have goodness permanently defeated and under a yoke. The course she adopt is that of controlled experiment. Casaubon is to be defeated, and Dorothea freed: no matter how close to crisis the situation comes, the magic solution is always there to ensure this issue. The terms of the initial opposition between Dorothea and Casaubon are partly allegorical - the terms of its resolution are wholly so: Dorothea, and the forces she represents, are triumphant by virtue of their blooming health, their aliveness; Casaubon, representing the greedy powers of the patriarchy, is not overthrown, he is simply destroyed by his own internal decrepitude.

(iii) Dorothea vs. Lydgate

The contrast between Dorothea and Casaubon is simple and schematic. But the opposition between Dorothea and Lydgate is, in structural terms, the major opposition of head and heart in the novel, and it is wrought to a high degree of complexity and realism. This opposition has been dealt with before - most notably, perhaps, by U.C. Knoepflmacher. An aspect which Knoepflmacher does not bring out, however,
is the contrast between Dorothea and Lydgate as a contrast between masculine and feminine modes of knowledge and action. This is the aspect I want to explore.

George Eliot always greatly respected certain qualities associated with masculinity - resolution, energy, onward drive and clear sense of purpose. One could say she admired them too much. Felix Holt, Savonarola, and most of all Zarca, the fierce old patriarch of "The Spanish Gypsy", stand as testimony of the disastrous sway which the forceful masculine type held over her imagination. Moreover, the belief she held in one province of masculine learning - science - and the hopes she entertained for human advancement through it may now seem naive or at least too sanguine.

But, even with these reservations as to the commenda-bility of all that George Eliot finds unmixedly admirable in the masculine type, one would still want to say that Lydgate is a complex and thought-provoking masculine portrait, because the masculine qualities presented in him are thoroughly worthwhile ones. He cannot be, as Casaubon is, mocked, accounted for, pitied, and dismissed. With Dorothea and Casaubon, the heart is obviously favoured over the head. With Lydgate and Dorothea, there is no such readily perceived emphasis.

Part of Lydgate's complexity as a character is that he is not presented as a cerebral shell: he is a passionate man. Like Dorothea, he possesses both intellect and emotion. The way they work in him is the opposite of the way they work in her. Dorothea's strength is in her emotions, which her intelligence serves; Lydgate's emotions are directed into his
intellectual work. The imagery of emotional involvement is used to describe his attitude to his research:

We are not afraid of telling over and over again how a man comes to fall in love with a woman and be wedded to her, or else be fatally parted from her. Is it due to excess of poetry or of stupidity that we are never weary of describing what King James called a woman's 'makdom and her fairnesse', never weary of listening to the twanging of the old Troubadour strings, and are comparatively uninterested in that other kind of 'makdom and fairnesse' which must be wooed with industrious thought and patient renunciation of small desires? In the story of this passion, too, the development varies: sometimes it is the glorious marriage, sometimes frustration and final parting.

(Ch. 15 p. 173)

Dorothea is intellectually ignorant; Lydgate is emotionally ignorant:

He went home and read far into the smallest hour, bringing a much more testing vision of details and relations into this pathological study than he had ever thought it necessary to apply to the complexities of love and marriage, these being subjects on which he felt himself amply informed by literature, and that traditional wisdom which is handed down in the genial conversation of men.

(Ch. 16 p. 193)

The tragedy brought down on him by his ignorance is looked at more closely in my next section. Its importance for my present discussion is its effect in showing - as with Casaubon - the heart favoured over the head. Dorothea is granted some degree of rescue from the predicament her ignorance gets her into: Lydgate is not. As U.C. Knoepflmacher puts it:

In the general "march" of the novel, Lydgate's progress is blocked. Dorothea's stream of influence, albeit a mere "brook" or "channel of no great name", is allowed to flow on, "incalculably diffusive"... In her over-all balance, George Eliot very definitely favors the "heart" over the "mind".

21 Knoepflmacher, pp. 82-83.
But this is not all there is to it: the "heart" is not unreservedly approved. The sense of incompleteness is there to the end with Dorothea - and she feels herself that "there was always something better which she might have done, if she had only been better and known better" (Finale p. 893).

I have already brought up one of George Eliot's implicit, as it seems to me, suggestions as to what this "something better" might be - the role of secularized priest. I think she is suggesting, in the same implicit way, that medicine would provide a suitable channel for women's energies. Dorothea's desire is for "action at once rational and ardent" (Ch. 15 p. 173) and, by Lydgate's account of it in the next chapter, "there is nothing like the medical profession for that":

'I should never have been happy in any profession that did not call forth the highest intellectual strain, and yet keep me in good warm contact with my neighbours.' (Ch. 16 p. 194)

I have already drawn attention once to George Eliot's review of Fredrika Bremer's *Hertha*, and the opinion she expresses therein on the subject of women in medicine.

Women have not to prove that they can be emotional, and rhapsodic, and spiritualistic; every one believes that already. They have to prove that they are capable of accurate thought, severe study, and continuous self-command.22

By the time she wrote *Middlemarch*, George Eliot has become more favourably disposed towards "emotional, and rhapsodic, and spiritualistic" qualities than she shows herself here. Yet some of the attitude persists, or else is rising to the surface again. George Eliot's approval of the "heart" is

22 Pinney, p. 334.
not without stringent qualifications. Dorothea's ardour is
dissipated because she lacks training or intellectual
discipline.

This tragedy is accompanied by a worse one - the
crippling of Lydgate's intellect by his sentimentality, his
undisciplined emotions. I do not think that George Eliot is
attempting to show, in these matching tragedies, that if
Lydgate and Dorothea had got married, everything would have
been all right; though many critics (and readers) have
attributed such an intention to her. I think it is clear
that George Eliot does not have the complementation of the
sexes in mind as an ideal at all - Middlemarch contains, in
the Casaubon and Lydgate marriages which I deal with in the
next section, a magnificent account of the grim estrangement
which proceeds from the development of contrasting (theoretically complementary) qualities in men and women.

Instead of an ideal of complementation, there is in
Middlemarch an ideal of integration, of masculine and fem-
inine emphases united within each individual person. It is
an ideal unrealized: Middlemarch is a tragic novel in that
sesne. Lydgate and Dorothea both fail to achieve that
totality which would be an integration of intellect and
emotion, of action and human relationship. The hardening
world in which they must live and act is designed to fragment
and thwart precisely such totality, and to thwart it so
thoroughly that even they, the flower of their generation,
can only partially conceive of it, let alone achieve it.
In some ways, Dorothea Brooke is a sister-heroine of Romola and the regenerate Esther Lyon. In my discussion of Dorothea and Farebrother, I brought out what seems to me a close resemblance between Dorothea and Esther: both women, as "the added impulse that shatters the stiffening crust of cautious experience", have a role which depends for its efficacy upon their possession of "inspired ignorance" (in Felix Holt's inspired phrase for it) of the world - that is, upon their exclusion from the world. With Dorothea in relation to Casaubon, Romola comes to mind as an appropriate comparison. There is the same moral confrontation between a woman of noble simplicity and a vitiated man, and the same solution too - Casaubon drops dead, the men of Romola are killed off one by one. Thus Dorothea is, in some ways, another stereotype of idealized womanhood.

But there is a facet to Dorothea which neither of those heroines possesses, and which, I think, indicates one important way in which Middlemarch surpasses those other novels. This is the facet revealed in her relation to Lydgate: the concern with vocation. The persistent feeling that there was "something better" she might have done distinguishes Dorothea from her sister heroines, gives her an extra dimension. And it distinguishes Middlemarch too: in it a nerve is still active through to the finish, where the earlier books lapse in the end into complacency.

It is through the concern with vocation in the relation between Dorothea and Lydgate that the estrangement between man and woman is convincingly transcended. The affirmation of the common human condition made in these terms is surely
a very moving one:

'Oh, you are a wise man, are you not? You know all about life and death. Advise me. Think what I can do. He has been labouring all his life and looking forward. He minds about nothing else. And I mind about nothing else -'

For years after Lydgate remembered the impression produced in him by this involuntary appeal - this cry from soul to soul, without other consciousness than their moving with kindred natures in the same embroiled medium, the same troublous fitfully-illuminated life.

(Ch. 30 p. 324)

In *The Mill on the Floss*, the only thing that made the natures of man and woman kindred was the fact of death. Here the condition which is common is life as well as death - not only a shared mortality, but also the shared necessity of endurance and struggle, of aspiration and defeat.
Section 3: Creatures of Different Species

Man and woman, the "kindred natures in the same embroiled medium", are shown elsewhere in the novel, in an equally memorable moment, as "creatures of different species and opposing interests" (Ch. 58 p. 641). In delineating the estrangement of male and female, George Eliot makes use of the method she had employed before in Romola for the same purpose - a close study of the marital relation.

In Middlemarch, however, the focus of the theme is two couples, not just one; and the treatment is more flexible - as well as more subtle and penetrating. The Casaubon and Lydgate marriages would undoubtedly rank among George Eliot's finest achievements. Each has become a classic exposition of its own particular marital situation, and has come to lead a life in our culture outside the novel itself. In the process, each marriage has been taken out of the context of the other. They are designed as a pair; and it is, I think, worthwhile to look at them as such.

In the Casaubon marriage, Dorothea grows and changes, while her husband remains "fixed and unchangeable as bone" (Ch. 20 p. 230). In an incident which typifies their whole relationship:

She went towards him, and might have represented a heaven-sent angel coming with a promise that the short hours remaining should yet be filled with that faithful love which clings the closer to a comprehended grief. His glance in reply to hers was so chill that she felt her timidity increased; yet she turned and passed her hand through his arm.

Mr. Casaubon kept his hands behind him and allowed her pliant arm to cling with difficulty against his rigid arm.

(Ch. 42 p. 462)
Of the Lydgates, however, it is Rosamond whose nature is "inflexible in proportion to its negations", and Tertius whose life is worn out "accommodating himself" (Ch. 65 p. 718) to it. In one marriage, it is the wife who is subdued by compassion for an obdurate partner; in the other, the husband. The Casaubon and Lydgate marriages are thus antithetical in all but one respect, and it the determining one: both (like the marriage between Romola and Tito too) are power-structures in which the man is master and the woman slave.

George Eliot describes the relations between husband and wife in political terms - she uses the imagery of domination, submission, and resistance. Casaubon and Lydgate are both masters. It doesn't matter, in the end, that one is a bad master, and the other a good master, in whom the exertion of power alternates with sympathy and protectiveness. Both are doomed, finally, by virtue of their mastery. Their fates are appropriate: Casaubon dies of heart-failure, Lydgate of suffocation.

George Eliot is less interested in them than in the women. Her accounts of Casaubon's inner state are often mechanically introduced set-pieces, motivated (or so it seems) merely by a desire to be fair, and even up the emphasis on Dorothea. Lydgate receives somewhat more animated attention; but I think that to George Eliot his domestic situation is mostly just instrumentally important, for its effect upon his professional life, which is the focus of her real interest in him.
The women's experience is the centre of attention. As it is the climax of the vocational theme when Lydgate and Dorothea recognize their "kindred natures", so it is the climax of the marriage theme when Dorothea, "speaking from out the heart of her own trial to Rosamond's" (Ch. 81 p. 853) makes contact:

Rosamond, with an overmastering pang, as if a wound within her had been probed, burst into hysterical crying. (Ch. 81 p. 853)

The recognition of the common situation, however, is long delayed by the insistent contrast George Eliot makes between Dorothea and Rosamond. One wonders, actually, at the strength of George Eliot's insistence on the contrast - an insistence which amounts to an exaggeration of both characters for the sake of establishing a polarity between them. It may seem new to suggest that Rosamond is exaggerated. F.R. Leavis, for example, thinks that Dorothea is exaggerated, but he finds Rosamond so real that "the reader certainly catches himself, from time to time, wanting to break that graceful neck"23 - a statement which must be taken as a tribute to George Eliot's powers of concretion rather than as a revelation of the hypothetical reader's misogyny. But when there occur paired statements of this sort:

(Dorothea) The entire absence from her manner and expression of all search after mere effect

(Rosamond) Being from morning till night her own standard of a perfect lady, having always an audience in her own consciousness

(Ch. 10 p. 114)

(Ch. 16 p. 196)

(all my emphases)

23 Leavis, p. 81.
it seems to me that both are designed to enforce a polar opposition, and that the second is as extreme as the first. The impression of Rosamond as the eternal actress is only sustained by craft. Rosamond does break down once (in Will Ladkswal's arms) but on that occasion we aren't permitted to be present. Instead, we enter upon the scene with Dorothea, and have our sympathies so taken up with her distress and Will's shame that it seems all right that Rosamond should be made the scapegoat for the whole incident. (Few - if any - critics have seen anything wrong with this. About the only good thing Leavis can find to say about Will Ladkswal is that he treats Rosamond with "appropriate ruthlessness".)

Even things which Dorothea and Rosamond have in common - a disagreement with their husbands over money matters, subservience to their husbands' ambitions, even the love they both have for Will Ladkswal - are exploited in the interests of establishing between them a polar opposition of virtue and vice. The effect is so striking, and so strived for, that it prompts investigation.

The explanation seems simple: Dorothea and Rosamond are the Virtue-Vice figures of a tuistic morality - a pairing of egoist and altruist such as George Eliot is so fond of. But, as I have suggested, this pairing is not as simple as it looks. In Adam Bede, we found under the tuistic moral categories a far older contrast of womanly types, the Angel and the Whore, with altruism coinciding with ethereality, egoism with sensuality; and it was from this contrast that the surface one gathered its force and particular vehemence.

24 Leavis, p. 90.
I initially wondered, therefore, if the same thing was going to happen in *Middlemarch*. But clearly it does not. If anything, the position is reversed, and egoism is associated with sexual unresponsiveness (that must be part of what Lydgate means by Rosamond's negativeness), altruism with (the word is used over and over again of Dorothea) ardour. Even physically the associations are reversed: Dorothea is brunette, Rosamond blonde.

But there is more here than a simple reversal. Dorothea is clearly not a Whore, even though she ends up with the reputation of being not "'a nice woman'" (Finale p. 896). On the other hand, she isn't (like Maggie Tulliver, who ends up with a similar reputation) an Angel unkindly misconstrued. In fact, she isn't an Angel at all. George Eliot doesn't desexualize Dorothea, and nor does Will, despite the imagery of enthronement and adoration used of his attitude to her. Certainly, the relationship between Will and Dorothea has its own peculiarities, which I look at in my next section. But any attempted desexualization of Dorothea is done not by him but by Sir James Chettam, who rightly suspects Will all along of wanting to do something else with Dorothea than render homage from a distance. Sir James's attitude is the truly chivalrous one: with a real wife, Dorothea's down-to-earth little sister Celia, for the satisfaction of his actual needs, he tries to elevate Dorothea to a pedestal upon which she can be venerated but on which she can be, just as surely, controlled. But Dorothea refuses to be put up there in that rarefied air; and "the devout Sir James" (Ch. 54 p. 580) is scandalized,
befuddled - and defeated.
This is one of the real triumphs of Middlemarch, for it means that George Eliot has managed, with all the literary and social conventions working against her, to transcend the Angel-Whore dichotomy altogether, and to depict - convincingly - a woman both virtuous and sensual. She had only tried that once before, with Maggie Tulliver. (In the case of Esther Lyon and Romola, the sexual issue is rather suppressed, though we do know of Romola that "in the sultry afternoons of her early girlhood" she had dreamed of "repose in mere sensation", Rom. Ch. LXI p. 489, and that she is physically attracted to the man she marries. It is doubtful if even this could be said of Esther Lyon, whose attraction to Felix Holt seems to be quasi-religious rather than sexual.) And with Maggie Tulliver, she failed. She succeeded with Maggie - and I don't want to underestimate that achievement - in indicating in her not only sexual arousal, but sexual frustration too. That is, she succeeded in depicting Maggie as not-an-Angel. But when it came to depicting her as not-a-Whore (that is, as capable of exercising moral choice) George Eliot succumbs to the dichotomy, where she doesn't with Dorothea. Both Maggie and Dorothea are presented with a choice that tests their moral integrity; and the resemblance goes closer than that, for the choice in both cases involves rejection of riches and acceptance of poverty.

In The Mill on the Floss, the circumstances of the choice are such that, in choosing poverty, Maggie chooses also sexual repression and submission to the patriarchal authority
invested in her brother. (Esther's choice of poverty also involves submission to patriarchal authority - invested in husband rather than brother.) In order to show Maggie not a Whore, she has to be turned into an Angel. In Middlemarch, a fresh alternative is created: for Dorothea, in choosing poverty (well, comparative poverty), chooses also, in moral integrity, sexual fulfilment and liberation from Casaubon's control, from the grasp of his dead hand. The creation of this alternative is one of George Eliot's finest achievements.

So. The contrast between Dorothea and Rosamond is not a disguised Angel-Whore polarity. Does this mean that we have to accept it as a straightforward egoist-altruist contrast, and take the peculiarly strong insistence with which it is put forward as evidence of how much George Eliot hated egoism, and how thoroughly she approved of altruism? I don't think so, but in order to probe the deeper layers of the contrast we must return to our starting-point: Dorothea and Rosamond's common position in the power-structure of marriage.

Casaubon and Lydgate conceive of themselves as essential, of women as inessential. For Casaubon, a wife is meant "to supply aid in graver labours, and to cast a charm over vacant hours" (Ch. 5 p. 66). For Lydgate, adornment alone holds "the first place among wifely functions" (Ch. 11 p. 122). For both men, women are the dependent auxiliaries by their own existence and purposes. That Lydgate's purposes are worthwhile, and Casaubon's futile, is here irrelevant: the point is that both expect that the woman's existence will be
adapted to suit their demands. Both are horribly surprised, for the wives they get have - inevitably - wills and minds of their own. (As George Eliot says at the end of the first chapter of Middlemarch: "Is there any yoked creature without its private opinions?" Ch. 1 p. 37.)

The negation of their essentiality constitutes Dorothea and Rosamond's common situation. What differentiates them - a difference sharpened to the point of opposition - are their responses to it. Dorothea submits to Casaubon; Rosamond does not submit to Lydgate, and George Eliot can't forgive her for it. Dorothea, on the other hand, is warmly defended. I feel it is round the issue of submission, not of egoism, that the polarization of Dorothea and Rosamond occurs.

George Eliot does endorse Dorothea's right to resist Casaubon's authority. When he is safely dead, she has her write a little declaration of independence: "Do you not see now that I could not submit my soul to yours?" (Ch. 54 p. 583). But when he is alive, it's another story. Then, Dorothea's submission isn't simply excused, it is praised as moral generosity:

She saw clearly enough the whole situation, yet she was fettered: she could not smite the stricken soul that entreated hers. If that were weakness, Dorothea was weak.

(Ch. 48 p. 523)

Dorothea refuses, that is, to negate Casaubon as he has negated her. It is an important and complex issue, and one that George Eliot can only resolve by killing Casaubon off; for it means that Dorothea's submission is the outcome of her resistance to him, of her inward refusal of the
definition he places on her. Forced to "shut her best soul in prison, paying it only hidden visits, that she might be petty enough to please him" (Ch. 43 p. 464), she still keeps that "best soul" alive, still affirms its existence against all the pressures brought to bear - not just by Casaubon - for its suppression.

Rosamond never rebels openly against Lydgate; instead, she has "that victorious obstinacy which never wastes its energy in impetuous resistance" (Ch. 58 p. 630), and works by subterfuge and by manipulation of her own dependancy. Of her, the impression is strongly given that there was no "best soul" there to begin with, only that quenched "combination of correct sentiments, music, dancing, drawing, elegant note-writing, private album for extracted verse, and perfect blonde loveliness, which made the irresistible woman for the doomed man of that date" (Ch. 27 p. 301). Perhaps in this we have the initial judgment of her - the judgment, I mean, that allows the hostility to flow unimpeded. (It is because she has no "best soul" that we feel she has no right to exert her will against Lydgate's). We see Mrs. Lemon's favourite pupil as an achieved effect, not as a process of moulding; so that if there were any suppression of Rosamond's young spirit to be done, we do not see it, and so do not have our animosity towards her troubled by it.

This choice, depicting the product rather than depicting the process, governs the whole conception of her. I have already suggested an explanation for this choice: George Eliot's inability to see Rosamond as a process is linked to
her alienation from female experience. The alienation is manifested in other ways too: for in the depiction of Rosamond, George Eliot is addressing men, indeed assuming a male identity herself. In the descriptions of Rosamond, a particular tone creeps in. Rosamond is called "that agreeable vision" (Ch. 11 p. 123), and "that combination of correct sentiments (etc.)" (Ch. 27 p. 301); she has "that radiance, that distinctive womanhood..., that sort of beauty" (Ch. 16 p. 913); and she makes Lydgate feel "that half-maddening sense of helplessness" (Ch. 65 p. 716). The authorial tone here is one of confident appeal ("You know, she's that type"). It has the ring of a certainty of being understood, since what is being delineated is something generally agreed to, and immediately recognizable.

The audience to whom such an appeal can be so confidently directed is one composed of habitual (and probably quite genial) misogynists, who would readily agree that women were alluring, trivial, treacherous creatures - who conceive of woman as a siren stereotype. For not only does Rosamond correspond to a traditional masculine conception of woman, but her envelopment of Lydgate, a domestic horror story complete with nightmare metamorphosis ("a creature who had talons, but who had Reason too", Ch. 58 p. 641; "creatures of different species and opposing interests", Ch. 58 p. 643; "that excited narrow consciousness which reminds one of an animal with fierce eyes and retractile claws", Ch. 66 p. 724), is the verificatory working-out of a common masculine fear - the fear, which Felix Holt pronounces so patly, of "'foolish women who spoil men's lives'":
"Men can't help loving them, and so they make themselves slaves to the petty desires of petty creatures. That's the way those who might do better spend their lives for nought - get checked in every great effort - toil with brain and limb for things that have no more to do with a manly life than tarts and confectionery. That's what makes women a curse; all life is stunted to suit their littleness."

(FH Ch. X p. 115)

The tragedy of Lydgate and Rosamond proceeds with a compelling ease. As an exposition of how a slave enslaves the master it is so obviously accomplished and convincing that it seems querulous to challenge it. But I think it can at least be asked whether this part of the book does not gain its ease and confidence from employing certain conventional assumptions - such as Felix's above, about the pettiness of women and the superiority of the "manly life" - which will not bear a close examination.
Section 4: The Growing Good of the World

In George Eliot's earlier novels, the Industrial Revolution is a dark, destructive agency. But in Middlemarch, as in Felix Holt before it, the ascendent aspects of change are its liberating ones - the loosening of constrictions, the opening-up of new possibilities. The old world, which had been ordered by the "distinction of ranks" (Ch. 10 p. 115), is passing: and many characters in Middlemarch feel the ties of rank getting looser - whether this means, as in Lydgate's case, a fragmenting confusion, or, as for Dorothea and Ladislaw, a freedom to move beyond the definitions imposed on them by their birth.

George Eliot explains in Middlemarch that in dealing with changes in "old provincial society" (Ch. 11 p. 122) she is like Herodotus, "who also, in telling what had been, thought it well to take a woman's lot for his starting point" (Ch. 11 p. 123). Woman is the most susceptible point, the point where the effects of change are most sensitively registered. Shifts of power in the male world invade her own condition, making possible the recognition of it, and the hope of change in it. In Middlemarch, as in others of her novels, George Eliot's articulation of the suppressed condition of womankind is magnificent indeed: we see luminously what seems to Casaubon "most unaccountable, darkly-feminine" (Ch. 20 p. 232), we hear distinctly "that roar which lies on the other side of silence" (Ch. 20 p. 226). Her use of biological description, in the depiction of Dorothea's emotional states, is brilliantly evocative; so is her accumulation of mood associations round certain
settings - like Lowick library, the Grange library, the blue-green boudoir - where Dorothea's life, outwardly contracted but inwardly tumultuous, is passed. It is not necessary, perhaps, to praise this aspect of the novel when it is so apparent.

In many of the novels, as I have pointed out as my discussion proceeded, George Eliot's attention is turned to the evocation of women's experience, of their tribulations and struggling self-affirmation. We may deduce from this considerably more interest in, and sympathy with, feminism than is evident in her letters and other writings - indeed, the novels have been seen, and legitimately so, as a cultural contribution to the feminist struggle. And yet, as has also become clear in my discussion, her overall response to the patriarchy has not been consistent with her evident sympathy with women.

The response she gives, in *Adam Bede* and again in *Felix Holt*, is capitulation: the patriarchy is given, finally, the seal of approval, and the chief women characters made, against all we know of them to bow under it. The final images of the plump matron Dinah Bede and the bride Esther Holt are so designed that we shall forget the silencing of the first and the subjugation of the second. But in *Middlemarch*, the patriarchy is not endorsed; George Eliot's moral scheme does not find satisfaction in authority figures. The authority figures of *Middlemarch* are all, in some way, dethroned: Casaubon is discredited; Bulstrode, whom both his wives look up to with religious reverence, is brought low; and even Farebrother, the mildest priest-figure of all
these, is turned down in favour of an unprepossessing youth.

Nor does Middlemarch share the despair in which The Mill on the Floss and Romola come finally to rest. In the previous sections of my discussion of Middlemarch, I have shown one way in which George Eliot has transcended this despair: in affirming, through the terrible clarity with which she sees the estrangement of man and woman, a common condition of human yearning and human frailty. But she puts forward in Middlemarch a much brighter hope than this: the possibility of the estrangement ending, of there being men capable of affinity with women. In The Mill on the Floss there was such a man, Philip Wakem: but his presence in that book ministers to its all-pervasive despair, for his affinity with women is attendant upon a physical debility which makes him an unsuitable sexual mate. The nature of Middlemarch, in terms of its attitude towards the patriarchy, is determined by the presence in it of two male characters who, in health and strength, dissent from the masculine norm.

Fred Vincy is one such man. But he is of the old world, raised in a family "which lived...according to the family habits and traditions" (Ch. 23 p. 262); and it is in the old world, which he refuses to leave, that he finds his peace with Mary Garth, the girl whose childhood he has shared. The other such man is Will Ladislaw. Fred and Mary, and Dorothea and Will, form a pair of counterpointed couples, as the Casaubons and the Lydgates do. Both couples are companionships which gradually turn into love (in contrast to the other pair, marriages formed on flimsy pre-marital acquaintance); and both have the dead grasp of an old man
upon them - Featherstone's in one case, Casaubon's in the other - a grasp which is eventually happily escaped from. Moreover, the two men involved are rather similar in temperament and situation, having affectionate natures, a liking for the company of women and children, a disinclination to work, and a less attractive tendency to irresolution and self-pity.

The women involved, however, are not at all alike. Mary and Dorothea provide a different contrast of feminine types from that presented by Dorothea and Rosamond. In this case, the terms of the contrast can be precisely stated, for Dorothea and Mary may be thought of as embodying the two qualities G.H. Lewes postulated as characteristic of women novelists. Dorothea is Sentiment; Mary is Observation. Mary is described as a "small plump brownish person of firm but quiet carriage, who looks about her, but does not suppose that anybody is looking at her" (Ch. 40 p. 443); her eyes are "nothing more than clear windows where observation sate laughingly" (Ch. 14 p. 167). Mary's position is that of the perpetual watcher, the perpetual non-participant. The negativeness of Mary's moral code reflects this sense of exclusion:

She had already come to take life very much as a comedy in which she had a proud, nay, a generous resolution, not to act the mean or treacherous part.

(Ch. 33 p. 349)

Mary Garth is the embodiment of the moral rectitude women may attain, even in their state of exclusion from the world. Dorothea, on the other hand, is in rebellion against being excluded. In the recurring scenes in which she watches from
windows, her emotion is not amused detachment but yearning exile; and eventually she does find a way in which she can feel "a part of that involuntary, palpitating life" (ch. 80 p. 846).

Mary's moral activity, like her moral code, is also negative. It consists of a series of denials. She refuses to open Featherstone's chest for him, she rejects Farebrother, she refuses Fred until he has proved himself. In this last instance, the contrast with Dorothea is quite explicit, for Dorothea accepts Will Ladislaw when, as he says of himself: 'It is a mere toss up whether I shall ever do more than keep myself decently, unless I choose to sell myself as a mere pen and a mouthpiece. I can see that clearly enough. I could not offer myself to any woman, even if she had no luxuries to renounce.' (Ch. 83 p. 869)

Mary's conduct is guided by traditional standards and staunch negativeness; Dorothea is moving into the world, into a new world, with no guide but her refined feeling. This is the contrast between Fred and Will too: Fred belongs to the old world, and stays where he is; Will belongs to the new. The greater importance of Will is that he carries the burden of the future with him.

Will Ladislaw is important to my discussion not simply because of his position in Middlemarch but because he is the forerunner of Daniel in Daniel Deronda. A particular constellation of attributes - foreignness, effeminacy, and disinheritedness - characterizes both Will and Daniel. In this, they are quite different from an earlier embodiment of the hope of the future, Felix Holt, who, though disinherited like them, is aggressively masculine and unadulteratedly English.
In her last two novels, then, a combination of foreignness and effeminacy has come to have a special appeal for George Eliot's imagination. Why?

It is appropriate to refer, at this point, to Shulamith Firestone's theory of the connection between patriarchal and racial power-structures. Firestone maintains that the association of non-European racial origin with effeminacy (or with childlikeness, or more accurately with those characteristics, such as emotionality, passiveness, dependence, etc., which women and children may be said to have in common) is a widespread cultural phenomenon. This association is neither mythical nor unaccountable. The reason for it, Firestone suggests, is that the patriarchy forms the model of the racial power-structure - the racial power-structure is the patriarchy magnified, "a macrocosm of the hierarchical relations within the nuclear family. Thus it is only to be expected that the groups oppressed by either (women, children, non-Europeans) should have common or similar psychological characteristics.

There is more to it than this, however; the theory gives rise to an interesting interpretation of the position of the white woman, especially with regard to her feelings for the non-European man, towards whom she stands (according to the metaphor of the patriarchal model) in the position of mother:

They (the white female and the black male) have a special bond in oppression in the same way that the mother and child are united against

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26 Firestone, p. 122.
the father.

This accounts for the white woman's frequent identification with the black man personally, and in a more political form, from the abolitionist movement (cf. Harriet Beecher Stowe) to our present black movement. The vicarious nature of this struggle against the white man's dominion is akin to the mother's vicarious identification with the son against the father.27

We may apply this interpretation to Middlemarch in at least two ways. First, George Eliot herself takes on the role of mother. Her vicarious involvement in the real world, through a male character she can identify as a son (Ladislaw in Middlemarch, Daniel in Daniel Deronda), we may see as a special form of the alienation which, I have suggested, characterizes George Eliot's vision of the world. (And, by describing the authorial figure of Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda as a mother-persona, I think we might come close to defining and accounting for that brooding presence that seems to hover over these final two novels, worrying, guarding, and incubating.)

Second, George Eliot uses Ladislaw as a vicarious solution to Dorothea's problems, and the relationship between them is presented as that of mother and son. Dorothea and Will are both under the authority of the same man, Casaubon - who is Dorothea's husband and Will's patron. The sympathy between them grows out of this shared oppression. Much of the conversation between them deals with this and their differing responses to it - for example, their discussion in Tipton Grange Library (Chapter 39), in which Dorothea explains to Will the beliefs that sustain her in her "'imprisonment'", and Will replies: "'I am a rebel: I don't feel...

27 Firestone, p. 123.
bound, as you do, to submit to what I don't like'" (Ch. 39 p. 427).

The incestuous overtones of the relationship between Will and Dorothea are so apparent that it is hard not to believe they were intentional. The first hints appear early, in Naumann's facetious remarks:

'This is serious, my friend! Your great-aunt! "Der Neffe als Onkel" in a tragic sense - ungeheuer!'
'You and I shall quarrel, Naumann, if you call that lady my aunt again,'
'How is she to be called then?' (Ch. 19 p. 222)

The overtones are present throughout the novel: for example, Dorothea's reaction when she finds Will with Rosamond the first time, singing in the Lydgate's drawing-room, is quite similar to Mrs. Morel's attitude to Paul's first girlfriends in *Sons and Lovers*. And the incestuous aspect of the relationship is explicitly alluded to in the last mention the book makes of it:

She was spoken of to a younger generation as a fine girl who married a sickly clergyman, old enough to be her father, and in a little more than a year after his death gave up her estate to marry his cousin - young enough to have been his son.

(Finale p. 896)

Will's sonship is stressed in order to emphasize his difference from the men presently in power, but what this emphasis inadvertently makes clear is the vicariousness of the solution he embodies. Leavis calls Will a "day-dream self-indulgence"²⁸, and he's right. One of George Eliot's own creations, Mrs. Transome, could have told her that sons grow up estranged from their mothers, and come to resemble

²⁸ Leavis, p. 91.
their fathers. But this is something too unbearable to face; anxiously, George Eliot puts her trust in Will not to forget the identifications he made before he came into his power. The alternative, choosing the woman, not the man, as champion of change, is too terrifying altogether. As in *Felix Holt*, George Eliot shows a paralyzing timidity at the prospect of woman's self-determined struggle - a timidity that impoverishes her imagination and her art.  

Dorothea, who embodies in her very nature an explosive and dangerous force, must in the end be buried. The last thing said of her, that "her full nature, like that river of which Cyrus broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth" (Finale p. 896) recalls an early remark of Mr. Brooke's:

'I had it myself - that love of knowledge, and going into everything... though that sort of thing doesn't often run in the female line; or it runs underground like the rivers in Greece, you know - it comes out in the sons.'

(Ch. 5 p. 69)

It is in the underground which she has struggled so bravely to emerge from that we leave Dorothea. Woman's lot is not, in *Middlemarch*, pronounced excellent, but it is pronounced inevitable. From *Adam Bede* to *Middlemarch*, for all the

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29 Since writing this passage, I have been glad to discover a critic who substantially shares my conclusion on this. Lee R. Edwards ("Women, Energy, and Middlemarch", *The Massachusetts Review* Vol. XIII Nos. 1 & 2 pp. 223-238) describes George Eliot in *Middlemarch* as "stopping short of a full exploration of a world which would have had its birth not in reality's mirror but in the artist's will". (p. 236), and suggests that this stopping short "prevents George Eliot from arriving at a radical solution - or indeed, any solution - to the problems of female energy the book proposes. She can only struggle to contain the energy, force the new wine back into the old bottles, as she does with Dorothea, or condemn its egotism as most hostile to the community she loves" (p. 237).
differences in scope, setting, and philosophical emphasis, there is still only one fate for the female protagonist: banishment to the Antipodes.

Section I: Meeting Scrooge

Daniel Deronda is often read, and judged, as a realistic novel, and as such pronounced a failure. The action is cluttered with coincidences and improbabilities; many of the characters seem to be not properly realized, not fleshed out. The deviation from realist principles in Daniel Deronda is, it seems to me, deliberately done. Not in anything new in George Eliot’s fiction, but to find its precedent, we must look back to her very early fictional writing.

"Emma of Clevedon Vale," published in 1850, and "Sally Quaritch," which was based on the story, is not Charles Dicken’s Life model, presumably but shows a potential to handle the huber relation.

Perhaps I am doing a harm to her to become attached to the sympathy on behalf of a novel that was axed in its very interesting remarkable. I will remind you of the many scenes, and who had no difficulty, with the ills of his blood; who had not the slightest doubt, having a fortune or fortune in marry into that family.

"Depend upon it, you would just be surprised if you would learn told me to see some of the poetry and the picture of the country and the comedy, dying of the existence of a house, so that looks out through this over paper, and then spook in a tangle of another hat is invisible. In that sense, I should have to stand to hear the air and care to know and to think about what was going on Barton, as if you had asked for words, details have to fall at the married one. After you, it is, you can, before you please, I hope to reach my story (mains), and you must every tired, and I know more is your books, which is found from the other papers that many reprehensible societies, still of
Daniel Deronda is often read, and judged, as a realist novel, and as such pronounced a failure. The action is riddled with coincidences and improbabilities; many of the characters seem to be not properly realized, not fleshed out. The deviation from realist principles in Daniel Deronda, is, it seems to me, deliberately done. Nor is it anything new in George Eliot's fiction; but to find its precedents, we must look back to her very early fictional writings.

"Scenes of Clerical Life" (published 1857) and Adam Bede (1859), which was begun as the fourth in the Clerical Life series, pronounce and largely practice an aesthetic of sober realism:

Perhaps I am doing a bold thing to bespeak your sympathy on behalf of a man who was so very far from remarkable, - a man whose virtues were not heroic, and who had no undetected crime within his breast; who had not the slightest mystery hanging about him, but was palpably and unmistakably commonplace. . .

Depend upon it, you would gain unspeakably if you would learn with me to see some of the poetry and the pathos, the tragedy and the comedy, lying in the experience of a human soul that looks out through dull grey eyes, and that speaks in a voice of quite ordinary tones. In that case, I should have no fear of your not caring to know what farther befell the Rev. Amos Barton, or of your thinking the homely details I have to tell at all beneath your attention. As it is, you can, if you please, decline to pursue my story farther; and you will easily find reading more to your taste, since I learn from the newspapers that many remarkable novels, full of
striking situations, thrilling incidents, and eloquent writing, have appeared only within the last season.

("Amos Barton" Ch. 5 pp. 66-68)

I turn, without shrinking, from cloud-borne angels, from prophets, sibyls, and heroic warriors, to an old woman bending over her flower-pot, or eating her solitary dinner...

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 only fit a world of extremes. Therefore let Art always remind us of them; therefore let us always have men ready to give the loving pains of a life to the faithful representing of commonplace things.

("AB" Ch. XVII pp. 180-182)

"Art must be either real or concrete, or ideal and eclectic", she wrote to John Blackwood, her publisher. "Both are good and true in their way, but my stories are of the former kind" (GEL II 362).

Yet in the very same year as the publication of Adam Bede, she wrote a story that by no means confined itself to the faithful representation of the commonplace. This work, "The Lifted Veil", which was published anonymously in Blackwood's Magazine, and not acknowledged by George Eliot till 1877 (the year after the publication of Daniel Deronda) has some remarkable similarities with that last novel. The action of the tale is full of coincidence and improbability. There are also similarities of characterization: the heroine, the witty, sarcastic Bertha, who dresses in green and silver, and plans to murder her husband, is obviously a prototype of Gwendolen Harleth, and the hero, Latimer, is a sickly

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visionary – like Mordecai in *Daniel Deronda*.

It is through the character of Latimer that the coincidences of the action are to be explained. For Latimer is gifted – blighted, rather – with abnormally acute sensory faculties.

It was like a preternaturally heightened sense of hearing, making audible to one a roar of sound where others find perfect stillness.²

These faculties not only make it possible for him to read other people’s thoughts and emotions, but also cause him to have premonitory hallucinations of places, incidents, and people, which obtrude themselves upon his waking reality. He first sees his future wife Bertha in this way – as a hallucinated image of a "Water-Nixie", "a birth from some cold sedgy stream, the daughter of an aged river."³

U.C. Knoepflmacher, one of the few critics who have found "The Lifted Veil" worthy of attention, describes it as a "fantasy tale."⁴ Its genre is science fiction, however, rather than fantasy. I am not referring to the medical science fiction aspect of it (the incident of Mrs. Archer’s resuscitation by blood transfusion) so much as to the psychological interest. It seems to me that George Eliot is investigating, through a fictional form, the interrelationship of reality and perception, and the dimensions and powers

³ *The Lifted Veil*, p. 187.
⁴ Knoepflmacher, p. 138.
of the human mind. In particular, she is exploring its capacity to generate and project images: its imagination.

At this early stage of George Eliot's career, "The Lifted Veil" and the "Clerical Life" appear as productions of contrasting modes, and as indications of two opposing directions which her art might take. Clearly, the sociological realist tendency apparent in the "Scenes of Clerical Life" won. It is easy to see why. Theoretic considerations may have prompted her adoption of the sociological-realist mode, but she must also have been influenced by its success. "Scenes of Clerical Life" and Adam Bede were immediately acclaimed by the literary world. On the other hand, "The Lifted Veil", the "slight story of an outré kind" (GEL III 41), as its author modestly described it, made a dubious impression, insofar as it made any at all. ("I think you must have been worrying and disturbing yourself about something when you wrote", John Blackwood suggested, GEL III 67.)

Thereafter, the "Clerical Life" mode is uppermost in George Eliot's fiction. There are only hints of the "Lifted Veil" tendency here and there in the subsequent novels. In Middlemarch, however, we see the tendency reviving. The descriptions of Dorothea's consciousness often reveal a quite intense preoccupation with such psychological phenomena as the interaction of mood and perception. The account of the effect Rome has on her (significantly, George Eliot's only fictional foray outside England, apart from Romola, between "The Lifted Veil" and Daniel Deronda) has the surrealist quality that characterizes Latimer's vision of Prague:
The dimmer but yet eager Titanic life
gazing and struggling on walls and ceilings;
the long vistas of white forms whose marble
eyes seemed to hold the monotonous light of
an alien world: all this vast wreck of
ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual,
mixed confusedly with the signs of breathing
forgetfulness and degradation, at first jarred
her as with an electric shock, and then urged
themselves on her with that ache belonging
to a glut of confused ideas which check the
flow of emotion. Forms both pale and glowing
took possession of her young sense, and fixed
themselves in her memory even when she was not
thinking of them, preparing strange associations
which remained through her after-years. Our
moods are apt to bring with them images which
succeed each other like the magic-lantern
pictures of a doze; and in certain states of
dull forlornness Dorothea all her life con-
tinued to see the vastness of St. Peter's, the
huge bronze canopy, the excited intention in the
attitudes and garments of the prophets and
evangelists in the mosaics above, and the red
drapery which was being hung for Christmas
spreading itself everywhere like a disease of
the retina.

(Marx Ch. 20 pp. 225-226)

And in the effect of Dorothea on Will we see the power
of vision to quite literally transform the reality it
perceives.

In Daniel Deronda this power is announced as a theme:
"'Visions are the creators and feeders of the world'" (Ch. 40
p. 555). In this last novel, I would suggest, the "Lifted
Veil" mode is reconciled with the realist aesthetic. It is
transformed into a form of psychological realism which
attempts to capture the truth of the human mind, as the
sociological realist mode attempts to express the truth of
human society.

Many of the characters in this novel exist, partially or
entirely, as "'ghosts upon the daylight'" (Ch. 51 p. 699) -
a phrase Alcharisi, Daniel's mother, uses to describe her
long-dead father's coercive power over her. And the
technique of presenting the characters as "'ghosts'" - as semi-symbolical figures rather than fully-fleshed embodiments - may be seen as an attempt to render an important dimension of their being: the powerful existence they have in the imagination of others. For not only do characters exist in this novel as ghosts upon the daylight, they also see ghosts upon the daylight. Gwendolen, for example, has an image of Lydia perpetually present in her consciousness, and Deronda has an image of his lost mother - which he projects outwards, for example, upon Mirah, in a way that governs his attitude towards her - present in his. And sometimes, this capacity to see ghosts upon the daylight has what seems to be a determining effect upon the reality. Mordecai's visionary anticipation of Daniel is the most blatant example of this; a subtler and more interesting case is the image of the white dead face which so haunts Gwendolen's consciousness and which eventually coincides with Grandcourt's drowning features.

The mind's capacity to generate and project images, images of sometimes transforming power, is thus seen, in Daniel Deronda, as an important part of reality. Referring to one of Deronda's protracted inner debates, George Eliot comments:

These fine words with which we fumigate and becloud unpleasant facts are not the language in which we think. Deronda's thinking went on in rapid images of what might be.

(Ch. 19 p. 247)

It is significant that these "rapid images" are actually a succession of human figures. George Eliot also describes Grandcourt's rumination thus:
Grandcourt's thoughts this evening were like the circlets one sees in a dark pool continually dying out and continually started again by some impulse from below the surface. The deeper central impulse came from the image of Gwendolen. (Ch. 28 p. 364)

The symbolical mode in Daniel Deronda may therefore be seen to be a realist technique of a quite valid kind: an attempt to render the "language" of thought and the operation of the human imagination. The characters are not, and are not meant to be, the stable embodiments we are accustomed to look for in realist fiction. Rather, they are fluid entities that metamorphose between symbol and substance, image and embodiment. If we look at the novel without the usual realist expectations, I think we may see that the method it employs is an artistically valid one: it is even one which produces some powerfully impressive and original effects. But even if we do look at the novel freed of these expectations, George Eliot's execution still appears uneven. Deronda and Mirah, in particular, seem to alternate between woodenness and abstractness, instead of possessing the sort of mobile coherence I have suggested George Eliot was aiming at. But the judgment of achievement and failure can only be made later on, in the course of a more detailed examination of the novel.

(ii)

The structure of Daniel Deronda is strongly antithetical. Jew and Gentile, light and dark: that pattern of contrasts is unmissable. I have been tracing through George Eliot's novels the incidence of another structural
The antithesis: that of male and female. In Daniel Deronda, the antithesis of male and female intersects with the pattern formed by the contrast of Jew and Gentile, light and dark, to form two sorts of tableaux: a woman between a fair man and a dark, and a man between a fair woman and a dark.

Two such triangles, the major ones, are obvious enough: Gwendolen between Grandcourt and Deronda, Deronda between Gwendolen and Mirah. There are others too. Gwendolen and Mirah form a contrasting pair not just for Daniel but for Klesmer; Grandcourt is poised between Gwendolen and the dark-eyed Lydia Glasher ('It's rather a piquant picture,' said Mr. Vandernoodt - 'Grandcourt between two fiery women' Ch. 36 p. 487); Mirah between Daniel and Hans. And at the Archery meeting, Gwendolen sees Catherine Arrowpoint between Klesmer and Grandcourt:

Klesmer... was speaking with animation - now stretching out his long fingers horizontally, how pointing downwards with his forefinger, now folding his arms and tossing his mane, while he addressed himself first to one and then the other, including Grandcourt, who listened with an impassive face and narrow eyes, his left fore-finger in his waistcoat-pocket, and his right slightly touching his thin whisker.

'I wonder which style Miss Arrowpoint admires most,' was a thought that glanced through Gwendolen's mind while her eyes and lips gathered rather a mocking expression. (Ch. 11 p. 149)

Barbara Hardy says of the structure of Daniel Deronda, after referring to George Eliot's own dictum that "aesthetic teaching" must not lapse anywhere "from the picture to the diagram" (GEL IV 301), that "the diagram is there, within the picture". This is true; but the diagram is neither

5 Hardy, p. 114.
simple nor rigid, and to discern it is to perceive richer significances in the picture. The structure of Daniel Deronda reveals a drama of four figures, the interstices of the antithetical patterns of light and dark, male and female: the fair man, the fair woman, the dark man, the dark woman.

In the last section of my discussion of Middlemarch, I made use of an idea of the racial power-structure as a macrocosm of the patriarchal power-structure. My interpretation of Daniel Deronda involves a far more extended use of this idea; but the microcosmic model I am employing here is not the relations between father, mother, and child, but the relations between the Family and the Whorehouse, the complementary components of the patriarchal power-structure.
Section 2: The Empire of Fear

The Fair Man

Henleigh Mallinger Grandcourt is George Eliot's supreme study of the master. He is a creation both extraordinarily convincing and extraordinarily simple. The monolithic aspect is an intrinsic part of the conception of him, for, like Rosamond Vincy, he is an illustration of how unchangeability of character may become a source of power over others. Some of the same images are used of both Rosamond and Grandcourt - the pincers effect and the torpedo-touch, for example. (Though I don't think even Rosamond approaches the imperturbability of the "boa-constrictor which goes on pinching or crushing without alarm at thunder", Ch. 35 p. 477.) I do not feel that, in this case, the simplicity detracts from the convincingness of the characterization. Rather, it increases it, for, unlike Rosamond, the final effect is fully accounted for. The account is as grimly brief as it is full:

'Tis a condition apt to befall a life too much at large, unmoulded by the pressure of obligation.  
(Ch. 25 p. 322, Epigraph)

He acquitted himself with all the advantage of a man whose grace of bearing has long been moulded on an experience of boredom.  
(Ch. 30 p. 394)

In my writing of this section, I sought inspiration from theories of the interrelationship of sex and race in the following books (as well as Firestone):
Grandcourt's nature is the finished product of the corrupting influence of the possession of power.

The most forcefully suggested quality of Grandcourt's power, and of the "grace of bearing" that attends upon it, is its utter deadness. The image in which the power, the refinement, and the corpse-likeness fuse is the image, a recurring one, of Grandcourt's whiteness:

He lingered over his toilet, and certainly came down with a faded aspect of perfect distinction which made fresh complexions, and hands with the blood in them, seem signs of raw vulgarity.

(Ch. 25 p. 321)

And this is a novel in which it is impossible to forget that the association of power and refinement with whiteness of skin is actual as well as metaphorical, and that Grandcourt's "empire of fear" (Ch. 35 p. 479), as George Eliot calls his marriage with Gwendolen, is one on which the sun never sets.

The British Empire is much to the forefront of Daniel Deronda's concerns. The date of the novel's action, 1864-1866, coincides with Gordon's rebellion in Jamaica, with an important stage of the unification of Italy, and with the American Civil War. The upsurge of nationalist consciousness in the mid 1860s is for this novel what the Reform Era is for Felix Holt and Middlemarch: not a simple background, providing a topical allusion here and there, but an important ingredient of the action.

Within Europe - the territory to which the action, though not the concerns, of the novel is confined - imperialism and colonial exploitation are apparent in the relation of Gentile and Jew:
'Hooted and scared like the unowned dog, the Hebrew made himself envied for his wealth and wisdom, and was bled of them to fill the bath of Gentile luxury...The Gentile said, "What is yours is ours, and no longer yours."

(Ch. 42 p. 591)

This exploitation, as Daniel Deronda presents it, is cultural far more than material: "The learning of all Germany is fed and fattened by Jewish brains" (Ch. 60 p. 790) says Joseph Kalonymos, but the form in which the novel shows the exploitation is artistic rather than intellectual - the expropriation of Jewish musical talent as Gentile entertainment. The oppression of Jew by Gentile thus forms an image of Europe's relation to her colonies.

Similarly, Grandcourt's exercise of power in his domestic empire - over wife, lackey, and dogs - forms an image, a very vivid one, of his exercise of it upon a larger territorial scale.

For instance, Grandcourt never soils those exquisite white hands of his: any dirty work that needs to be done is performed by Lush, Grandcourt's "prime minister in all his more personal affairs" (Ch. 12 p. 164), a "half-caste among gentlemen" (Ch. 45 p. 618). Indeed, it is suggested that it would be appropriate for all Grandcourt's faculties to be exercised by underlings:

'The fact is, somebody should invent a mill to do amusements for you, my dear fellow,' said Sir Hugo, 'as the Tartars get their praying done.'

(Ch. 15 p. 199)

(Gwendolen is disastrously fooled by this separation of ruler and agent into thinking that Grandcourt is no more than an "inert specimen", Ch. 35 p. 480, whom she will easily get
to do what she likes. She has "no sense", George Eliot tells us, that Grandcourt and Lush "were dark enigmas to her" Ch. 11 p. 159.

Moreover, Grandcourt is a master of the art of manipulating the mutual jealousy of his dependants for his own benefit (it is Lydia, we see, who keeps Gwendolen's rebelliousness suppressed), and of the strategic deployment of the whole tradition of legitimacy and right which underscores his power - which forms, as Gwendolen knows, a "ghostly army at his back, that could close round her wherever she might turn". (Ch. 36 p. 503)

Not only is Grandcourt's domestic behaviour made to suggest that of the public ruler, but the behaviour of the public ruler is made to suggest Grandcourt's domestic despotism.

Potentates make known their intentions and affect the funds at a small expense of words. So, when Grandcourt...incidentally pronounced that resort of fashion a beastly hole worse than Baden, the remark was conclusive to Mr. Lush that his patron intended straightway to return to Diplow.

(Ch. 25 p. 322)

If this white-handed man with the perpendicular profile had been sent to govern a difficult colony, he might have won reputation among his contemporaries.

(Ch. 48 p. 655)

Truly it might be said of the imagery that captures the nature of Grandcourt's mastery that it "thrills from the near to the distant, and back again from the distant to the near" (Ch. 19 p. 245).

Grandcourt is displayed as, in all spheres, the omnipotent lord. No-one could try to wrest his power from him - it is impervious to either open rebellion or subversion.
Lydia and Lush can only extract favours from him on occasion; he holds Gwendolen quite bound. But, like Casaubon's, Grangcourt's is a power doomed from within - the blood old, the flesh calcified. Death brings deliverance, where other devices fail.

What I said of the manner of Casaubon's death in my section on Middlemarch applies equally to Grandcourt's drowning. In both cases, the death of the master abruptly cuts short a penetrating, thoughtful analysis of the problem of rebellion and submission, in such a way that we are led to doubt the seriousness of George Eliot's intent in it. In this case, the analysis involves the question of murder; and so the resolution by accidental but desired death seems particularly contrived, even dishonest. And yet, like Casaubon's, Grandcourt's death has a rather alluring symbolic appropriateness: the image of the white dead face, that gathers intensity throughout the novel, and in which, as we have seen, so many significances fuse, is finally made real.

Grandcourt is, quite explicitly, "the extreme type of the national taste" (Ch. 35 p. 467). What of the less extreme types, the men with whom he shares the eminence of his imperial throne? They are all lesser men than he. Gascoigne has more vigour, and less breeding. Lord Brackenshaw, "a middle-aged peer of aristocratic seediness in stained pink" (Ch. 7 p. 103), the bumbling Sir Hugo Mallinger, even the philistine Mr. Bult, who "had the general solidity and suffusive pinkness of a healthy Briton" (Ch. 22 p. 283),
fall short of him in ruling ability insofar as they surpass him in humaneness (and ruddiness of complexion).

Yet he has a double in the Count of Mirah's narrative, the Count to whom her father tries to sell her:

I now began to feel a horrible dread of this man, for he worried me with his attentions, his eyes were always on me: I felt sure that whatever else there might be in his mind towards me, below it all there was scorn for the Jewess and the actress. And when he came to me the next day in the theatre and would put my shawl round me, a terror took hold of me; I saw that my father wanted me to look pleased. The Count was neither very young nor very old: his hair and eyes were pale; he was tall and walked heavily, and his face was heavy and grave except when he looked at me. He smiled at me, and his smile went through me with horror.

(Ch. 20 pp. 258-259)

This is the same figure as Grandcourt - rendered in a different mode. Grandcourt is a fully realized character; the Count is an atmospheric presence. Together they form a single image: the milord, the Gentile, the despot of the earth. The technique of double rendering, as substance and symbol, is used in the presentment of other figures of the drama too.

The Fair Woman

The image of whiteness is also used of Gwendolen. It makes her Grandcourt's match, as the plebs at her wedding observe:

Of her it was agreed that as to figure and carriage she was worthy to be a 'lady o' title:' as to face, perhaps it might be thought that a title required something more rosy; but the bridegroom himself not being fresh-coloured - being indeed, as the miller's wife observed, very much of her own husband's complexion - the match was the more complete.

(Ch. 31 p. 400)
And as the loungers on the Genoa quay remark too, on the afternoon of Grandcourt's death:

The scene was as good as a theatrical representation for all beholders. This handsome, fair-skinned English couple manifesting the usual eccentricity of their nation, both of them proud, pale, and calm, without a smile on their faces, moving like creatures who were fulfilling a supernatural destiny - it was a thing to go out and see, a thing to paint.

(Ch. 54 p. 745)

Through Gwendolen, in Gwendolen, George Eliot explores the situation of the white woman, of the lady.

Ladyhood is shown to be not a self-determined social position but a particularly precarious state of dependence. Gwendolen's delicately-tuned psychological nature - excitable, agrophobic, susceptible to changes in the light and subject to "fits of spiritual dread" (Ch. 6 p. 94) - the nature which George Eliot lays open so thoroughly and superbly - reflects (even, I believe, is depicted as the product of) this sense of precariousness. As she instinctively knows how precarious she is, so too she instinctively knows she is dependent on men to get what she wants: witness her "sense of empty benches" (Ch. 11 p. 150) when left in exclusively female company: women can give her nothing. What she wants is access to power: and she knows she cannot get that except through a man. Her one brief moment of aspiring to "achieve substantiality for herself and know gratified ambition without bondage" (Ch. 23 p. 295) - that is, without marriage - is fairly brutally put an end to by Klesmer's candour about her prospects in that line of endeavour.

Let us look at three of the episodes through which George Eliot explores the lady's state of dependence and its
precariousness: the financial ruin of the Armyn sisters (Mrs. Davilow and Mrs. Gascoigne), Rex’s courtship, and the prelude to Gwendolen’s acceptance of Grandcourt.

(1) Mrs. Davilow and Mrs. Gascoigne derive their income from capital investment on the proceeds of their father’s Barbadoes estate. (This is the most important of the direct effects of British imperialism mentioned in the novel. George Eliot comments rather sardonically that Gwendolen “had no notion how her maternal grandfather got the fortune inherited by his two daughters; but he had been a West Indian – which seemed to exclude further question” Ch. 3 p. 52.) The contrast in the sisters’ situations after their financial ruin brings out the point that the rank they hold is entirely dependent upon men. The loss makes no appreciable difference to the social position of Mrs. Gascoigne: she has a husband. But the widowed Mrs. Davilow, deprived of a male protector, loses rank altogether.

The point is made by comparison as well as contrast, for Mrs. Davilow’s plan of setting to work with her daughters on “a tablecloth border for the Ladies’ Charity, at Wanchester, and a communion cloth that the parishioners are to present to Pennicote Church” (Ch. 21 p. 273) links her with the Meyrick mother and daughters, who do earn their living by embroidery; the Meyrick family is of much lower social standing than the Davilows, but, without a man, the Davilows drop to the same class. Ladyhood is a state which cannot be sustained without a male provider. It is enforced parasitism.

(2) Apart from Hans Meyrick, who is half-French and only
half approved of, "sweet-natured, strong" (Ch. 58 p. 778)
Rex Gascoigne is the only amicably depicted Englishman in
Daniel Deronda. Grandcourt is a figure of intimate horror;
for the rest, Englishmen are the butts of a satire sometimes
brilliant, sometimes biting. On Rex's father, the worldly
Gascoigne, who does not scruple to sell his niece to
Grandcourt though he knows what kind of man he is, the satire
is the subtlest, but I feel the most destructive, of all.

The exception George Eliot makes for Rex is made
possible, I believe, because he is a son. As I have pointed
out in my discussion of Middlemarch, her preoccupation with
the patriarchy gives to sons rather a special place - the
place given, in this novel, pre-eminently to Daniel Deronda;
but Rex, and Hans to a lesser extent, are allowed to share
some of its glory with him.

Like Dorothea and Will, Rex and Gwendolen are under the
patriarchal authority of the same man. But their relation
to each other is not that of wife and son, but of sister
and brother. They are both young, high-spirited, and
suffering under a sense of restriction:

'Girls' lives are so stupid: they never do
what they like.'
'I thought that was more the case of the men.
They are forced to do hard things, and are
often dreadfully bored, and knocked to pieces
too.'

(Ch. 7 p. 101)

Their common youthfulness is emphasized:

The horses' hoofs made a musical chime,
accompanying their young voices. She
was laughing at his equipment, for he
was the reverse of a dandy, and he was
enjoying her laughter: the freshness of
the morning mingled with the freshness
of their youth; and every sound that
came from their clear throats, every
glance they gave each other, was the
bubbling outflow from a spring of joy.  
(Ch. 7 p. 99)

Rex is the complete opposite of Gwendolen's successful suitor, Grandcourt - a point which is, like most contrasts and comparisons in this novel, explicitly made: Mrs. Davilow observes to herself that "certainly if Rex's love had been repugnant to her, Mr. Grandcourt had the advantage of being in complete contrast with Rex" (Ch. 13 p. 167). That Rex's love is repugnant to her is, in a sense, one of the crises of the novel: it is both a determining action ("if only things could have been a little otherwise then, so as to have been greatly otherwise after!" Ch. 7 p. 99) and a crucial revelation of Gwendolen's character.

One reason for her rejection of Rex is indicated by her subsequent acceptance of Grandcourt: what she wants is access to power, and Rex, being only her equal, and subject to his father's authority in every aspect of his life, cannot give her that.

But we are clearly meant to see something much more to it than this.

She objected, with a sort of physical repulsion, to being directly made love to. With all her imaginative delight in being adored, there was a certain fierceness of maidenhood in her.  
(Ch. 7 pp. 101-102)

If Grandcourt's whiteness suggests images of death, Gwendolen's is equally strongly associated with images of cold, of frost and ice. The evocation of sexual frigidity is brilliant and (in a Victorian novel) audacious.

While I have no intention to deny the artistic achievement here, I would question its purpose. For the frigidity is presented, I believe, as the physical expression
of a reprehensible desire to dominate. We are asked to interpret Gwendolen's "fierceness of maidenhood" as hard-heartedness, ambition, egoism - the sin of the humanist ethic. A desire for independence is conflated with resistance to love. Conversely, one might say, a capacity for love is conflated with a submissive posture. George Eliot has the formidably hard-hearted Alcharisi make such an equation:

'I know very well what love makes of men and women - it is subjection.'

(Ch. 53 p. 730)

And it seems to me that this view is George Eliot's own, though George Eliot apparently favours love (and hence subjection) over independence - a choice the reverse of Alcharisi's. Gwendolen, who resembles Alcharisi in all but the determining matter of talent, has a view similar to Alcharisi's:

Her observation of matrimony had inclined her to think it rather a dreary state, in which a woman could not do what she liked, had more children than were desirable, was consequently dull, and became irrevocably immersed in humdrum.

(Ch. 4 p. 68)

There is surely a valid point in this - Gwendolen's subsequent experience of marriage, after all, is of a "subjection" which has nothing at all to do with love. It seems, however, to be a point which George Eliot is reluctant to admit. It may be that her hesitations arise from the moral complexity of her vision; and that, at this stage, she shows Gwendolen's "fierceness of maidenhood" as a complicated matter, in which good and bad motives - selfishness and a proper desire for independence - are so entangled that the
young, self-ignorant Gwendolen mistakes the one for the other. Maybe; but I don't think so. I believe that the wish to run the two motives together is George Eliot's. This deliberate confusion in the presentation of the issue of submission assumes quite central importance in relation to the question of the nature of Deronda's power over Gwendolen; and that is the proper place for a full discussion of it. It is only important to note here how early in the novel George Eliot lays the foundations of this confusion.

(3) The prelude to Gwendolen's acceptance of Grandcourt is perhaps the most forceful demonstration - for Gwendolen, it certainly is - of her dependence upon men, for it defines the dimensions of her choice.

In discussing this, we may focus on a single scene: that in which Klesmer tells her what is involved in the acting life. Governessing, Gwendolen's other alternative to marriage, is only a less glamorous (because more familiar) version of that life; and this point about it is made in the chapter which follows immediately after the scene with Klesmer:

The idea of presenting herself before Mrs. Mompert in the first instance, to be approved or disapproved, came as pressure on an already painful bruise: even as a governess, it appeared she was to be tested and was liable to rejection.

(Ch. 24 p. 315)

Klesmer's opinion of Gwendolen's acting ability is presented in such a way that it is a comprehensive account of the sort of life available to any woman who does not marry - the main thing he tells her is not that she lacks
talent: 7

'If you had been put in the right track
some years ago and had worked well,
you might now have made a public singer,
though I don't think your voice would
have counted for much in public. For
the stage your personal charms and
intelligence might then have told without
the present drawback of inexperience - lack
of discipline - lack of instruction.'

(Ch. 23 p. 301)

Rather, the chief point he makes is that she belongs to the
wrong social class, maybe even the wrong race. She has not
been nurtured in privation, in the necessity for submission
and discipline. "A mountebank's child who helps her father
to earn shillings when she is six years old...has a likelier
beginning'" (Ch. 23 p. 300). (Much later in the book,
Mirah's father describes himself as looking like "'a broken-
down mountebank'", Ch. 62 p. 809. Throughout this scene,
Gwendolen is of course being implicitly contrasted with
Mirah, whose account of herself is given only a few chapters
before.)

Nor is being told that she is mediocre the thing that
most mortifies Gwendolen; instead, the words of Klesmer
which "hung heavily on her soul" are those which
had alarmed her pride and even her maidenly
dignity: dimly she conceived herself getting
amongst vulgar people who treat her with rude
familiarity - odious men, whose grins and
smirks would not be seen through the strong

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7 The scene contains much excited rhetoric from Klesmer about
Art and artists, but his rhapsodic paraphrases of Shelley
are not, I think, to be taken at face-value, as George Eliot's
own opinion - not entirely, at any rate. Catherine regards
Klesmer's "brusquerie" as "a needless effort to assert his
footing of superior" (Ch. 22 p. 283) and this, it seems to
me, is more like George Eliot's own attitude towards it.
Both this outburst, and the earlier one against Catherine's
suitor Mr. Bult, take place when Klesmer is particularly
conscious of being regarded as Catherine's social inferior.
The scene with Gwendolen occurs on the day after he and
Catherine have declared their engagement.
grating of polite society. Gwendolen's daring was not in the least that of the adventuress; the demand to be held a lady was in her very marrow.

(Ch. 24 p. 316)

(The image of the Count, who comes to Mirah backstage at the theatre and in whose smile she sees contempt for the Jewess and the actress, is fresh in our minds: I think that a reference to him is undoubtedly implied here.)

Gwendolen's choice, then, is not between wealthy bondage and impecunious independence. As George Eliot says, independence is what "we rather arbitrarily call one of the more arduous and dignified forms of our dependence " (Ch. 46 p. 647). Gwendolen's is, rather, a choice of either being Grandcourt's private dependant, entitled to his protection not just for herself but for her family too; or being, in a figurative sense, his public dependant, under his subjection, reliant on his favour, but without privilege of his protection.

George Eliot's depiction of life outside the "strong grating of polite society", which we will look at later, is actually less successful than her powerful evocation of the terror with which the thought of it charges Gwendolen's mind. The terror fluctuates - in rapid modulations which George Eliot captures brilliantly - between fear, the fear of having to share that outcast life, and guilt, the sense of having gained her social elevation by depriving others of it. And in Gwendolen's soul, this terror operates with the immediacy of an image, the image of Lydia Glasher, the "woman destitute of acknowledged social dignity" (Ch. 48 p. 668), which embodies both the fear and the guilt, and which is a continual throbbing presence in Gwendolen's mind.
It is a terror, too, which has the force of sensation – it is something seen, felt, breathed.

The thought that is bound up with our passion is as penetrative as air – everything is porous to it; bows, smiles, conversation, repartee, are mere honeycombs where such thought rushes freely, not always with a taste of honey. And without shutting herself up in any solitude, Gwendolen seemed at the end of nine or ten hours to have gone through a labyrinth of reflection:

(Ch. 48 p. 664)

Fantasies moved within her like ghosts, making no break in her more acknowledged consciousness and finding no obstruction in it: dark rays doing their work invisibly in the broad light.

(Ch. 48 p. 669)

The thoughts which seemed now to cling about the very rigging of the vessel, mix with the air in the red cabin below, and make the smell of the sea odious.

(Ch. 54 p. 738)

There is another terror in Gwendolen's consciousness: self-dread of her impulse to murder Grandcourt and gain thereby a "double deliverance from the injury with which other beings might reproach her and from the yoke she had brought on her own neck" (Ch. 48 p. 669). One act – the only one – Gwendolen has performed in fulfilment of her impulse, the acquisition of a dagger which she keeps continually with her, is kept concealed from the reader till Gwendolen confesses it to Deronda after Grandcourt's death. So, before that, we know of this murderous impulse only as a presence in Gwendolen's mind, as the thoughts that "'went about over everything'" (Ch. 56 p. 756), as a diffuse terror that blends into the other in the same way as fear and guilt are mingled in it.
The passages in which the impulses and modulations of Gwendolen's consciousness are captured are vivid and compelling descriptions. Undoubtedly, they are among the finest things George Eliot ever did. But I think they are, in a more particular way, a successful achievement for her. They are a fusion, a fusion magnificently executed, of the imaginative mode of "The Lifted Veil" with persuasive realism. Gwendolen, not the visionary Mordecai, is Latimer's true successor in Daniel Deronda. We may note, further, what it was that made possible the fusion, that relieved the "Lifted Veil" mode of its "outré" element, and gave the realism new depth, so producing this climax of creative energy. It was the need to create the forms that would render, to the furthest reaches of Gwendolen's terror-governed soul, the operation of the patriarchy.

* * * * *

I have made particular mention of three episodes which reveal different facets of the position of the lady. But really the point is made throughout the novels, in many different ways: ladyhood is, like the varieties of woman's lot that lie beyond the "strong grating of polite society", a state of bondage; but it is a state of bondage which requires as its special mark the ostentatious display of the master's wealth and privilege. This is what makes the depiction of marriage in Daniel Deronda more complex than in any other of George Eliot's novels: she has never before grasped its paradoxical aspect. The marriage between Casaubon and Dorothea, for example, is a finely-rendered
study of a master/slave relationship - and it is only that. But Gwendolen's wifehood is not just slavery (though the nature of her subjection is sharply and powerfully suggested), it is also a "vantage-ground which yet she dared not quit, any more than if fire had been raining outside it" (Ch. 48 p. 668).

The paradox is presented verbally, as in the scene of Grandcourt's proposal, in which George Eliot describes how Gwendolen is "overcome" by her "need to dominate" (a need, it is stressed, in which she shares with Grandcourt a "piteous equality" Ch. 7 p. 346), and in the application given to the dominant image of the gambling table, whereby her wifehood is "not simply a minus, but a terrible plus that had never entered into her reckoning" (Ch. 48 p. 659) - and above all, it is captured in the single, brilliantly congruous image of the diamonds. As F.R. Leavis says of them:

Again and again, with inevitable naturalness, they play their pregnantly symbolic part. They come to represent Nemesis: they are what Gwendolen married Grandcourt for, and her punishment is having to wear them.®

They are a perfect symbol of Gwendolen's simultaneous subjection and social exaltation: they are the image of the paradox of ladyhood.

* * * * * * * * *

Gwendolen has a foil in Catherine Arrowpoint, another cool fair girl exposed on the marriage-market. Both girls are in the same position of being, as Gwendolen puts it, "'expected to please everybody but themselves'" (Ch. 9 p. 130).® Leavis, p. 131.
It is taken for granted that she will consider herself an appendage to her fortune, and marry where others think her fortune ought to go.

(Ch. 22 p. 279)

This applies as exactly to Gwendolen's "fortune" of beauty and vivacity, as to Catherine's material wealth.  

Gwendolen and Catherine present a double-rendering of the lady as do Grandcourt and the Count of the lord. Catherine is, of course, a far more substantial figure than the Count. Yet, though she is by no means simply a symbolical image, she is not a complete naturalistic character either. Not just the hints of her symbolic function (such as Gwendolen's quip at the Archery Meeting that she looks "'a little too symbolical - too much like the figure of Wealth in an allegory'"), Ch. 10 p. 137, and Hans Meyrick's later description of the marriage of Klesmer and Catherine as "the planets of genius and fortune in conjunction", Ch. 52 p. 709), but also the fact that she virtually disappears after her decisive choice of Klesmer, suggest that the characterization of Catherine is subordinated to the purpose she serves in relation to Gwendolen the protagonist.

Though Gwendolen and Catherine do not resemble Grandcourt and the Count in mode of characterization, they do evince the technique of double-rendering in another respect:

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F.R. Leavis, in discussing the similarities between Gwendolen Harleth and Isabel Archer, points out what a difference it makes that James makes Isabel an heiress. What James has done is to combine Gwendolen and Catherine Arrowpoint into a single portrait of the lady. In this I think Leavis is quite right to see an "elimination of the inessential" which "tends to become the pursuit of an essential that is illusory" (p. 128).
they present a contrast. As Grandcourt succeeds in buying his woman while the Count fails to buy his, so Gwendolen is the woman who accepts Grandcourt, and Catherine the woman who, figuratively, rejects him. This difference in their determining acts coincides with their contrasting temperaments: Gwendolen's nervy, excitable, transfused with a sense of precariousness, Catherine's "perhaps too coolly firm and self-sustained" (Ch. 22 p. 282). This contrast of temperaments in turn coincides with the difference in their economic resources. Catherine's wealth is soundly founded: in land. Gwendolen's money comes from a more insecure source: capital investment. Her childhood, passed "roving from one foreign watering-place or Parisian apartment to another" (Ch. 3 p. 52), has lacked, as we are carefully told, the "blessed persistence in which affection can take root" (Ch. 3 p. 50). I believe there is meant to be an implied causal connection, in these contrasting cases, between economic resources and psychological temperament.

Catherine's possession of material wealth is the other side of the coin of Gwendolen's precariousness: both characterize the paradoxical position of the lady. But Catherine's heirship means more in the novel than this. Through it George Eliot explores the current condition of the patriarchy.

A noticeable feature of Daniel Deronda is the scarcity of male offspring in it. The Davilows are an all-daughter family; the Mallingers are too; Mrs. Meyrick and Lydia Glasher have each three daughters and one son.

George Eliot uses this predominance of daughters for
two purposes. One is to introduce a subdued protest on the negating insignificance attached to the woman's lot. This is the point of some of the minor female characterizations - of Anna Gascoigne, who know "what it was to have a brother, and to be generally regarded as of minor importance in the world" (Ch. 52 p. 717), of Miss Merry, the Davilow girls' governess, who preserves a "serviceable neutrality towards the pleasures and glories of the world as things made for those who were not 'in a situation'" (Ch. 58 p. 774), and of Lady Mallinger, who "felt apologetically about herself as a woman who had produced nothing but daughters in a case where sons were required" (Ch. 20 p. 267). All of these characters are nicely done; and in the case of Lady Mallinger particularly, the touch of compassion is a noticeable softening of the general satiric tendency in the presentation of English high society.

The Mallinger girls (whom Lady Mallinger thinks of as "little better than no children, poor dear things" Ch. 36 p. 498) can scarcely be said to appear in the novel at all; but something is made of the contrast between Gwendolen's contemptuous dismissal of her half-sisters as "superfluous: all of a girlish average that made four units utterly unimportant" (Ch. 3 p. 61) and their own individual personalities and consciousnesses, which are suggested fleetingly, it is true, but definitely - especially that of the book-reading, curious little Isabel ("a plain and altogether inconvenient child" Ch. 3 p. 56).

The Meyrick sisters, being older, are more articulate about their lot; and Amy, the "practical reformer" (Ch. 32 p. 410), who protests to Mirah about the segregation of men
and women in the synagogue, is George Eliot's first and only depiction of a conscious feminist. Yet the depiction of the Meyricks evinces the sort of class-prejudice apparent in Mrs. Transome and Mrs. Holt in *Felix Holt*: tragedy is confined to the upper classes - the dissatisfaction of the lower classes with their lot is a source of comedy.

In this case, sentimental comedy. Mary Garth, who was depreciated because of her sex and who had to work for her bread to send her brothers to university, was at least allowed an occasional bitterness. But the Meyrick sisters, even with their sharp little denunciations of the devaluation of women ("'I notice mothers are like the people I deal with - the girls' doings are always priced low'". Ch. 39 p. 545) and of the exorbitant demands of the male ego, never slip their binding context of picturesque poverty, industry, and comical quaintness. Even their feminism can be, in the end, subsumed into the attitude approved for them of endurance and uncomplaining contentment with a modest lot:

Mab had already observed that men must suffer for being so inconvenient: suppose she, Kate, and Amy had all fallen in love with Mr. Deronda? - but being women, they were not so ridiculous.

(Ch. 70 p. 881)

Insofar as George Eliot is making her protest against the insignificance attached to the woman's lot, it is a protest not only muted but dubious.

This is not her only use of the predominance of daughters, however. Throughout, she depicts the aristocracy and the wealthy generally as barren of energy, and the absence of legitimate male heirs seems to be put forward as one manifestation of this decrepitude. (Gascoigne's six sons thus seem
to be a measure of both his robustness and his low social
origin.) George Eliot has the tenants at the Abbey New
Year's Eve dance, for example, deplore the way in which "fine
families dwindled off into females, and estates ran together
into the single heirship of a mealy-complexioned male" (Ch.
36 p. 497) - a male who will himself die without legitimate
issue.

Some unhappy wives are soothed by the possibility
that they may become mothers; but Gwendolen felt
that to desire a child for herself would have been
a consenting to the completion of the injury she
had been guilty of. She was reduced to dread lest
she should become a mother.

(Ch. 54 p. 736)

So the Conquest-old Mallinger line ends: in one branch, in
a wife made barren, frozen, by the knowledge that her gain
is made out of others' losses; in the other, in all-female
progeny. The old blood has worn itself out.

The passing, by default, of wealth into female hands
promises a crucial change in the patriarchal system of
inheritance, and hence in its political and economic power.
New hopes, new possibilities arise. Catherine's heirship
gains its significance from this context. Nothing could be
plainer than the broad significance placed upon her choice
of Klesmer. It is described, quite simply, as "an insurrec-
tion against the established order of things" (Ch. 22 p. 279),
and Catherine's explanation of her action to her parents is
a political manifesto:

'I must see some better reason than the wish
that I should marry a nobleman, or a man who
votes with a party that he may be turned into
a nobleman...Why is it to be expected of an
heiress that she should carry the property
gained in trade into the hands of a certain
class? That seems to be a ridiculous mish-
mash of superannuated customs and false ambition. I should call it a public evil. People had better make a new sort of public good by changing their ambitions.'

(Ch. 22 p. 290)

Catherine's story is a parable of the moral scheme of the novel. George Eliot herself, as it were, enacts Catherine's choice - withdraws her "fortune", her artistic genius, from the rulers, and places it instead at the service of the dispossessed of the earth, seeing in them, as Catherine sees in Klesmer ("'a gypsy, a Jew, a mere bubble of the earth'" Ch. 22 p. 289, as Mrs. Arrowpoint calls him), the bearer of humankind's best energy and hope.

It is a parable which illustrates both the strengths and the weaknesses of that moral scheme. The strengths, I believe, proceed from George Eliot's heart-felt desire to dissociate herself from those in power. The weakness, however, is a fatal one: her satisfaction with a conclusion that truncates the characterization of Catherine, and leaves her, as Klesmer's wife, in the background somewhere, burning incense (so Gwendolen flippantly suggests) before a husband who is "'of a caste to which I look up - a caste above mine'" (Ch. 22 p. 286). The same attitude, in fact, in which George Eliot leaves Gwendolen herself before Deronda.

There are many points of resemblance between Daniel Deronda and Felix Holt. The central relationship of Felix and Esther has obvious similarities with that of Daniel and Gwendolen. It resembles that of Klesmer and Catherine too, except that in this case the heiress need not renounce her fortune, but instead carries it with her. These resemblances are neither coincidental nor surprising. For the moral
scheme of Daniel Deronda is that of Felix Holt: the patriarchy is not superseded, it is just rejuvenated. And the agent of the rejuvenation, the titular hero in both books, is a man carefully presented as the complete opposite of the master of the old order: a presentation meant to mask, I feel, their essential similarity. In Daniel Deronda, it is essential to George Eliot's purpose that both Daniel Deronda and Klesmer be seen to be in absolute contrast to Henleigh Mallinger Grandcourt and all he stands for.

The Dark Man

There are actually several dark men in Daniel Deronda - Rex Gascoigne, Klesmer, Daniel Deronda himself, Lush, and Lapidoth; and all except Lapidoth are at one stage or another explicitly contrasted with Grandcourt. The contrast with Rex is made by Mrs. Davilow, and that with Klesmer by Gwendolen, in passages already quoted. The contrast between Lush and Grandcourt is also made by Gwendolen:

He was not in the least like her husband. Her power of hating a coarse, familiar-mannered man, with clumsy hands, was now relaxed by the intensity with which she hated his contrast.

(Ch. 48 p. 660)

The contrast between Grandcourt and Deronda, obviously intended as the most important one of the book, is made by George Eliot herself:

Deronda, turning to look straight at Grandcourt who was on his left hand, might have been a subject for those

Mordecai also qualifies, by both race and appearance, for inclusion in this list. I have left him out because, as Daniel's spiritual marriage-partner, he is of dubious sex - indeed he can scarcely be considered corporeal. I do, however, discuss Mordecai in a subsequent section.
old painters who liked contrasts of temperament.

(Ch. 15 p. 200)

Grandcourt too contrasts himself with Deronda - significantly, in terms of his possession of Gwendolen (and, implied here perhaps, in terms of his possession of the legitimate heirship):

It was not a disagreeable idea to him that this fine fellow, whom he believed to be his cousin under the rose, would witness, perhaps with some jealousy, Henleigh Mallinger Grandcourt play the commanding part of betrothed lover to a splendid girl whom the cousin had already looked at with admiration.

(Ch. 28 p. 370)

Among the dark men themselves, there are certain shared characteristics: sonship (Rex, Daniel), musicianship (Klesmer, Daniel, Lush, Lapidoth), Jewishness (Klesmer, Daniel, Lapidoth). The association of these qualities with one another need not detain us. I have already suggested an explanation for the link between Jewishness and musicianship: George Eliot represents, through music, the cultural exploitation of Jew by Gentile. As for the link between sonship and Jewishness, this is a more extended employment of the association between the position of the male underling in the patriarchy, and that of the male underling in the racial power-structure, which we have seen used in Middlemarch.

But there is, in this novel, a further aspect to the relation between the dark man and the patriarchy. One indication of the direction this development takes is the importance of the fact that Daniel is not just a putative son, he is a putative bastard. We see a new emphasis, in this novel, on the "Hagars and Ishmaels" (Ch. 36 p. 489) - the outcasts of the patriarchy. And on suppressed aspects
of sexuality; indeed, on many things that lie outside the bright ring of the English family circle. The most important fresh aspect to the dark man in this novel is the role established for him, through Deronda, Lush, and Lapidoth, as the fair man's pandar.

Deronda and Lush are both lackeys to the Mallinger family. As Lady Mallinger puts it, "Deronda was altogether a convenience in the family" (Ch. 20 pp. 267-268). We see him writing letters, soliciting information, and being generally of service to Sir Hugo. Lush performs similar tasks for Grandcourt. Sir Hugo, also, finds him "useful as a half-caste among gentlemen" (Ch. 45 p. 618). The association of Deronda with Lush comes very close over the matter of the purchase of Diplow. When Lush finds he will be unable to broach the matter with Grandcourt, Daniel, "inwardly wincing under Lush's mode of attributing a neutral usefulness to him in the family affairs" (Ch. 28 p. 367) acts as Sir Hugo's agent in his stead.

But this role of lackey has a decidedly sexual connotation in Lush. The two major commissions which Grandcourt's "prime minister in all his more personal affairs" (Ch. 12 p. 164), his "human tool" (Ch. 48 p. 657), performs for his master in regard to Gwendolen are both sexual in nature. The first is to engineer her meeting with Lydia in Cardell Chase. This presents her, in her "fierceness of maidenhood" (Ch. 7 p. 10), with the concrete evidence of the sexuality of a man whom she has thought, up till then, merely "'quiet and distingué'" (Ch. 13 p. 175), and in whom she likes best "the absence of all eagerness in his attention to her" (Ch. 11 p. 156). Lush performs this commission without his
master's knowledge - indeed, it is meant to frustrate Grandcourt's aims - but Grandcourt is nonetheless quick to see in the results of it a change in "the conditions of his mastery, which, far from shaking it, might establish it the more thoroughly" (Ch. 35 p. 479). Lush's second commission is to inform Gwendolen that Grandcourt knows of her meeting with Lydia, and to deliver to her the threat of being left in comparative poverty if she does not produce an heir - blackmail meant to procure her sexual compliance. This commission is performed with Grandcourt's knowledge and at his command.

It is clear that Lush is, as it were, Grandcourt's sexual agent. In the initial stages of the courtship, it is he who seeks out Gwendolen's whereabouts and prospects, even though he himself favours a marriage with Lydia, as likely to profit him better. And in the marriage, he is the "tool" invested with "an official power of humiliating her" (Ch. 48 p. 660), employed to bring Gwendolen to order. He plays, in fact, the role stylized in Lapidoth's attempt to sell Mirah to the Count: that of pimp, with Grandcourt as his customer. (Incidentally, the first image of a Jew to rise in Deronda's mind is that of a pimp: "in some quarter only the more hideous for being smarter, he found himself under the breath of a young Jew talkative and familiar, willing to show his acquaintance with gentlemen's tastes, and not fastidious in any transactions with which they would favour him", Ch. 19 p. 247.)

And Daniel? To associate this saintly paragon with such sordid specimens as Lush and Lapidoth may seem both impertinent and rash. But an examination of Daniel's
relations with Mirah and Gwendolen does, I think, sustain the assertion that Daniel, too, acts as Grandcourt's agent and procurer.

Any sexuality in Deronda's relations with Mirah is denied right from the start. Yet the tone in which the denial is made - reiterative and even heated - betrays, I believe, a measure of insecurity about its convincingness. An obvious instance of this is the odd scene in which George Eliot makes Gwendolen visit Mirah to have her (and her author's?) doubts on this allayed by hearing from Mirah's own lips a fervid defence of "Deronda's goodness": "'Who are the people that say evil of him? I would not believe any evil of him, if an angel came to tell it me etc.'" (Ch. 48 p. 653). And Gwendolen's concluding impression, that "Deronda and his life were no more like her husband's conception than morning in the horizon was like the morning mixed with street gas" (Ch. 48 p. 653) is probably meant as a rebuke to our the readers' dirty thoughts, since, as Grandcourt has quite rightly said, "'It's very indecent of Deronda to go about praising that girl...Men can see what is his relation to her'" (Ch. 48 p. 649).

That "'relation'" is the pimp's role, in classic form. Deronda protects Mirah from some forms of exposure - for example, he protests to Hans about the use of her as a model for Berenice - and arranges other. He sells Mirah as entertainment for the Gentiles. I have suggested that music forms an image of the exploitation of the Jews; I would suggest further that musicianship operates as a metaphor for sexual exploitation, and I give more detailed attention to
this in my next section. To establish the link here it is perhaps sufficient to point to Deronda's awareness, during Mirah's performance at Lady Mallinger's musical party (a performance he has arranged for her), of "the undervaluing of Mirah as a woman" (Ch. 45 p. 619), and of the fact that she is regarded as "an imported commodity disdainfully paid for by the fashionable public" (Ch. 45 p. 619).

"Deronda and Lapidoth - the good guardian and the bad - present a contrast," and I feel this is an intentional effect. In the same way, Lush and Deronda present an intended counterpointed contrast. Both are Gwendolen's mentors: one instructing her in the ugly underside of life, in matters which, as Mr. Vandernoodt puts it, have "'sunk below the surface'" (Ch. 36 p. 487), the other educating her in "'the higher, the religious life'" (Ch. 36 p. 507)\(^\text{11}\).

The effect which I think is unintentional (though, in the case of Gwendolen anyway, it may be seen as the expression of some curiously deep-seated unconscious desire on George Eliot's part) is the revelation of Deronda as Grandcourt's agent: for Deronda is supposed to be the extreme antitype of Grandcourt. The way in which Deronda acts as the Gentile's agent towards Mirah is less important than the "mission of Deronda to Gwendolen" (Ch. 64 p. 833), which is a major part of the novel and requires a more

\(^{11}\) Klesmer, in his one important scene with Gwendolen, combines the roles of higher and lower mentor. He contributes to her moral education, by delivering a rebuke to her egoism, and to her sexual education, by giving her a new consciousness of the life "outside the strong grating of polite society."
What is the nature of Deronda's power over Gwendolen? On the surface, it is sacerdotal. By effects both overt ("Her feelings had turned this man... into a priest" Ch. 35 p. 485) and subtle ("an enormous logfire, 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" Ch. 36 p. 505), Deronda - modestly reluctant for the high office as he is - is turned into Gwendolen's spiritual director. The religion of which Deronda is the priest and Gwendolen the "crushed penitent impelled to confess her unworthiness" (Ch. 58 p. 771) is humanism. The novel enacts the progress of both Gwendolen and Deronda in tuistic morality: Gwendolen has her egoism soundly castigated; Deronda ("those who trust us educate us" Ch. 35 p. 485) learns through his "mission... to Gwendolen" that he loves another woman; and that his life cannot be determined by self-negating altruism. He discovers, like Dorothea and other altruists in other novels, that he too has a "centre of self" whose needs cannot be denied; he comes to acknowledge, in personal as well as political terms, the validity of his grandfather's notion of the "balance of separateness and communication" (Ch. 60 p. 791).

F.R. Leavis says, in connection with the question of Gwendolen's wrongdoing:

It is possible to overstress Gwendolen's guilt in the matter of Mrs. Glasher, a guilt that is so very conscious. George Eliot's appreciation of the moral issues doesn't coincide with that
of her protagonist - or of the conventional Victorian moralist. For George Eliot, the essential significance of Gwendolen's case lies in the egoism expressed here.\textsuperscript{12}

Leavis is right, I think, in sensing that there is something more to Deronda's power over Gwendolen than just the reproach offered by the bastard to the wife who has thrust bastards out. But again I feel impelled to ask, as I have in other instances of the egoist/altruist contrast, whether it is not the tuistic morality which is "so very conscious", while the real source of the contrast, and of its particular vehemence, lies beneath.

And the contrast between Deronda and Gwendolen is certainly vehement.

Strangely (and now it seemed sadly) their two lots had come in contact, hers narrowly personal, his charged with far-reaching sensibilities, perhaps with durable purposes, which were hardly more present to her than the reasons why men migrate are present to the birds that come as usual for the crumbs and find them no more.

(Ch. 50 p. 684)

The distance between them was too great. She was a banished soul - beholding a possible life which she had sinned herself away from.

(Ch. 57 p. 767)

The attempt to make sure that we fully appreciate the "spiritual distance" (Ch. 56 p. 759) between the two is more than adequately made. Gwendolen's is a "small life" (Ch. 69 p. 876); she is to be compared with birds and lapdogs; Deronda's natural realm, on the other hand, is that of the "great movements of the world, the larger destinies of mankind" (Ch. 69 p. 875). Again, as with Dorothea and Rosamond, I do not think that the peculiar insistence on the

\textsuperscript{12} Leavis, pp. 122-123.
contrast is to be accounted for as evidence of how thoroughly George Eliot hated egoism, and how much (even though she perceived its limitations) she approved of altruism.

Let us look again at Deronda's superiority and authority over Gwendolen. We see that it has striking similarities to Felix's power of Esther and Savonarola's over Romola. (Gwendolen's dream of being turned back by Deronda as she is escaping over Mt. Cenis, Ch. 54 p. 738, is very close indeed to Romola's actual encounter with Savonarola on the road out of Florence.) Like them, Daniel Deronda is not a priest of the new religion; he is a patriarch of the old order.

We might expect some mingling of the roles of priest and patriarch in the novels, since they are associated in reality; but the combination is recreated by the novels in a particular way - the establishment of the man in the role of father preludes his establishment in the role of priest. In Romola, Romola's submission to Savonarola's sacerdotal authority proceeds upon her addressing him as "'Father'", "the title which she had never given him before" (Romola, Ch. XL, p. 349). So, too, Deronda's first assumption of authority over Gwendolen is patriarchal: he redeems her father's heirloom, the turquoise necklace, and sends it back to her with an admonitory note. When she wears it for him at the Abbey dance, they both know that it signifies "that she had submitted her mind to rebuke" (Ch. 36 p. 500). It is the symbolic equivalent of Romola's salutation.

Gwendolen, in her all-female family, has been used to occupying a position which is compared to that of the man, the father:
Always she was the princess in exile, who in time of famine was to have her breakfast-roll made of the finest-bolted flour from the seven thin ears of wheat... How was this to be accounted for? The answer may seem to lie quite on the surface: in her beauty, a certain unusualness about her, a decision of will which made itself felt in her graceful movements and clear unhesitating tones... But beware of arriving at conclusions without comparison. I remember having seen the same assiduous, apologetic attention awarded to persons who were not at all beautiful or unusual, whose firmness showed itself in no very graceful or euphonious way, and who were not eldest daughters with a tender, timid mother, compunctious at having subjected them to inconveniences. Some of them were a very common sort of men. And the only point of resemblance among them all was a strong determination to have what was pleasant, with a total fearlessness in making themselves disagreeable or dangerous when they did not get it. Who is so much cajoled and served with trembling by the weak females of a household as the unscrupulous male - capable, if he has not free way at home, of going and doing worse elsewhere?

(Ch. 4 p. 71)

'My child, my child, what is it?' cried the mother, who had never before seen her darling struck down in this way, and felt something of the alarmed anguish that women feel at the sight of overpowering sorrow in a strong man; for this child had been her ruler.

(Ch. 7 p. 11)

The implication in this is, I think, that Gwendolen's assumption of the dominant position is made possible by her lack of a father. It is left to Deronda to give her her first experience of patriarchal authority - an experience which is physical as well as spiritual: when he takes her hand in his, it is "an entirely new experience" (Ch. 56 p. 755) of physical contact with men for her. This incident cannot be properly interpreted as Gwendolen's sexual awakening, nor - as George Eliot wishes us to think - as sibling affection ("He took one of her hands, and clasped it as if they were
going to walk together like two children", Ch. 56 p. 755). Clearly, Gwendolen is the only child in this situation; Deronda's touch has been paternal.

Actually, the question of sexuality in the relation of Deronda and Gwendolen is a very interesting one. Because Deronda is to marry Mirah, all hint of sexual attraction must be erased from his relation to her: his love must appear as immaculately pure. But, since he is not going to marry Gwendolen, George Eliot can afford to allow some hints of sexual attraction in his attitude towards her: and the turmoil Gwendolen creates in him is the most convincing thing about him. But Gwendolen has no such feelings for him.

Love-making and marriage - how could they now be the imagery in which poor Gwendolen's deepest attachment could spontaneously clothe itself? (Ch. 65 p. 842)

If there is sexual tension in the scene in which Gwendolen snatches up a piece of black lace to hide her beautiful throat and frame her face "black like a nun's" (Ch. 48 p. 673), it derives from her anxiety to prevent any sexual attraction Deronda may feel for her, rather than from a desire to quell her own for him. Indeed, despite his physical beauty, Daniel Deronda does not seem to attract anybody sexually (except perhaps Mordecai). The Meyrick girls find the idea of his marrying absurd; the woman he does marry thinks of him as the "Lord Chancellor" (Ch. 63 p. 814) or, even more unpromisingly, as an "angel" (Ch. 70 p. 880). Hans, too, as Deronda sourly notes, habitually regards him as "the angel Gabriel" (Ch. 37 p. 520). It is the general impression he makes on people; no wonder he
finds it "rather exasperating" (Ch. 37 p. 522).
The impression he makes on Gwendolen is no different.
Her feelings for him are strictly filial.

If she cried towards him, what then? She cried as the child cries whose little feet have fallen backward - cried to be taken by the hand, lest she should lose herself.

(Ch. 65 p. 842)

We may note in this a difference between Daniel Deronda and Felix Holt - at least Daniel Deronda doesn't identify paternal discipline with sexual love. As regards Romola and Daniel Deronda, I think there is at least one difference between them which is to Romola's advantage: Romola eventually declares her moral independence of her mentor, while Gwendolen remains passively receptive to the last - it is Daniel who disengages himself; and Gwendolen's last tributary message to him promises a permanent state of unreserved mental subjection: "'You know better than I. If it ever comes true, it will be because you helped me'" (Ch. 70 p. 882).

Similarities with Felix and Savonarola are, however, rather more obvious than the differences. That Daniel Deronda is a figure of patriarchal authority gives us a new perspective on the sin, or crime, for which Gwendolen is undergoing "the process of purgatory...on the green earth" (Ch. 54 p. 733) superintended by him. We may understand it in the light of its precedents: for it is the crime for which Maggie, and Romola, and Esther too are punished. Gwendolen has both rejected, and succumbed to, sexual relations with men. This is a double-headed crime - the rejection (of Rex) is to be interpreted as reprehensible uppityness, the succumbing (to Grandcourt) is so placed as to be prostitution
of her moral integrity - and Gwendolen is soundly punished for it.

George Eliot's urge to abase and punish her heroines has always puzzled critics. One common explanation of it holds that George Eliot suffered from a fairly savage sort of envy for pretty women, and took delight in fantasies of vengeance in her fiction. This explanation cannot bear close examination. After all, Maggie, Romola, Dorothea, and Mirah, are all beautiful; and George Eliot couldn't be said to hold this against them. Another explanation is that these hidden depths of animosity don't exist - George Eliot isn't punishing the woman, just dealing out to egoists their true deserts. (This is the explanation Leavis makes, at least for Gwendolen Harleth.) This again is an inadequate explanation. Esther, Rosamond, and Gwendolen, are certainly presented as studies in egoism; but Maggie and Romola are not, yet there is a common pattern in the punishment of them all.

The explanation seems to me to be rather simple. George Eliot just found the position of woman too complicated and harrowing a matter to be looked at steadily, without opium, for long at a time - it cut too deep into her. It was a relief to be able to thrust woman away, into the "black country" (Ch. 44 p. 615), the Antipodes, or to reduce her by self-humiliation to a tiny speck whose troubles are insignificant in comparison to the "larger destinies of mankind". In Daniel Deronda, Daniel performs this service for George Eliot towards the obdurantly substantial Gwendolen, using Zionism as his instrument to do so. (We will be looking at George Eliot's use of Zionism in a subsequent section.)
As Gwendolen fits into a pattern of George Eliot heroines, so Daniel fits into a pattern of George Eliot heroes. It was in my discussion of *The Mill on the Floss* that I first noted that George Eliot deals with the issue of male domination by divorcing sexuality from power - embodying these qualities in different men. In *Daniel Deronda* the syphoning-off process has developed further into a tri-partite division: sexuality/moral-religious influence/domination. But George Eliot's effort to dissociate the three in her fiction is subverted by their connection in reality. Insofar as the dissociation is successful the work seems strained, unconvincing; insofar as it fails, the action belies the interpretation she is at pains to place on it.

Gwendolen's subjection to Deronda, in this case, is presented as the opposite of her subjection to Grandcourt. The first is supposed to be a voluntary submission which issues in moral regeneration: the second an enforced yoke which, Gwendolen feels, holds her "truthfulness and sense of justice...throttled into silence, collared and dragged behind him to witness what he would, without remonstrance" (Ch. 54 p. 733). Yet clearly the contrast does not hold: the two authorities are in collusion.

Deronda's hold over Gwendolen is, as it were, the moral arm of the tyrannical authority Grandcourt represents - it secures the subject's internal consent to the external oppression. Deronda's influence checks Gwendolen's impulses to escape from Grandcourt or to murder him, and after his death, it reduces her to a state of utter "self-humiliation" (Ch. 69 p. 876).
The ending of Gwendolen's story is tentative, it is true; but it seems likely she will eventually marry Rex (as Hans will marry Anna), who has in the meantime attained his manhood and disciplined his turbulent emotionality by the study of law. Deronda's role, then, is to tame Gwendolen for the reception of the authority of the Gentile male. Indeed "Deronda had not spoiled his mission" (Ch. 64 p. 833):

* * * *

The dark man in Daniel Deronda, as we have seen, represents the social outcast or underling - him who is outside the pale of power. It is a Janus-faced image, possessing two contrasting associations: sordid sexuality (Lush, Lapidoth) and "a certain exquisite goodness" (Ch. 16 p. 219) (Daniel Deronda). It is, perhaps, a confirmation of George Eliot's powers of insight that she should see both sexuality and moral goodness as excluded or suppressed by the kind of despotism Grandcourt stands for. But it is evidence of her limitations that she had to polarize the two, depict them as opposites: make the sexuality perverted, ugly, sordid, and the moral goodness ethereal.

Daniel Deronda is the novel which undertakes most seriously the attempt we have seen being made in some of the earlier novels, to breach the duality of spirit and matter, Ideal and Real, vision and action: yet paradoxically the attempt to deal with the duality is made from within an artistic form which reflects it more rigidly, I believe, than any other of her novels. The same Jeckyll-and-Hyde effect occurs in her depiction of the dark woman. And in examining
why and how George Eliot succumbed to it, I think we get a new perspective on what must be called the novel's overall failure. This is what is examined in the following sections.

The Dark Woman

The image of the dark woman pervades Daniel Deronda. It is, one might say, the matrix of the novel, the centre in which the book's various thematic components meet and mingle. One instance of this is the way it lies at the core of the "hidden affinity" (Ch. 29 p. 380) between Deronda and Gwendolen. This is how Gwendolen reacts to being told that Deronda is Sir Hugo's illegitimate son:

An image which had immediately arisen in Gwendolen's mind was that of the unknown mother - no doubt a dark-eyed woman - probably sad...A dark-eyed beautiful woman, no longer young, had become 'stuff o' the conscience' to Gwendolen.

(Ch. 29 pp. 378-379)

And Deronda's reaction to being told about the family at Gadsmere is the counterpart of hers: "immediately the image of this Mrs. Glasher became painfully associated with his own hidden birth" (Ch. 36 p. 489). The image of the dark woman, of Daniel's lost mother, is where the experiences of Deronda and Gwendolen intersect: it is their meeting-ground. It is also at the heart of Deronda's interest in Mirah's plight: her appearance "stirred a fibre that lay close to his deepest interest in the fates of women - 'perhaps my mother was like this one'" (Ch. 17 p. 231).

Other appearances of dark women in the novel swiftly metamorphose into the more generalized image, as Mirah's does here: for instance, Gwendolen, watching Mrs. Glasher's face when she meets her in Cardell Chase, finds that "it was as if some ghastly vision had come to her in a dream and
said, 'I am a woman's life'" (Ch. 14 p. 190).

The image of the dark woman is a composite one: it is Daniel's lost mother, Mirah's lost mother, Lydia Glasher, the mother of Grandcourt's children, and Mirah, the lost child-woman. Deronda finds that his real mother is nothing like "that image which, in spite of uncertainty, his clinging thought had gradually modelled and made the possessor of his tenderness and duteous longing" (Ch. 50 p. 681): but it is this image, "the image of the mother who had not had all her dues whether of reverence or compassion", which "had long been secretly present with him in his observation of all the women he had come near" (Ch. 50 p. 681), which is the forceful presence in the book. It has the stature of a symbol: Hagar, the ultimate outcast, symbol of all unrecognized oppression and suffering.

His mind glanced over the girl-tragedies that are going on in the world, hidden, unheeded, as if they were but tragedies of the copse or hedgerow, where the helpless drag wounded wings forsakenly, and streak the shadowed moss with the red moment-hand of their own death.

(Ch. 17 p. 228)

It is George Eliot's last foray into Mrs. Transome's "dolorous enchanted forest" (FH Introduction, p. 8) - the dark underworld of female suffering. And she goes further into this territory here than in any of the earlier novels: exploring an "experience of evil and trouble" (Ch. 20 p. 267) much deeper than Mrs. Transome's adultery, or Maggie's temptation, or Hetty's misfortunes.

Yet her charting of these depths is not so firm, her vision not so clear, as in her previous novels. It is symptomatic of this that most of her explorations are carried
out through the medium of Daniel's mind, and indeed never progress beyond it. One main way in which the dark woman is presented in *Daniel Deronda* is as a transparent image, a projection of Daniel's imagination (or rather of his reflection: "his own face in the glass had during many years been associated for him with the thoughts of some one whom he must be like" Ch. 17 p. 226). The dark woman's existence independent of Deronda's mind is opaque, wooden. The most striking example of this is the contrast between Deronda's ideal mother, the figure he has modelled out of his thoughts and longings, and the real mother who is not receptive to his long-stored reverence and compassion. But Mirah, too, is an externally viewed object (looked at from the point of view of "the angels once supposed to watch the toilet of women" Ch. 61 p. 799) which we are assiduously exhorted to picture: "imagine her with her dark hair brushed from her temples... Then see the perfect cameo her profile makes, etc." (Ch. 32 p. 422). The difference of presentation between the fair woman and the dark is extreme. We are never called upon to "imagine" Gwendolen: she is so intensely there. And the difference between them cannot be accounted for as the difference between the realist character and the symbol: Gwendolen too, as we have seen, embodies broad significances. It is rather that the significances which George Eliot wishes the dark woman to embody are so confused a mixture of innocence and evil, nobility and degradation, that she cannot afford, really, to look at her too closely.

Mirah Lapidoth is the most glaring instance of this. There are several things wrong with the characterization of Mirah; in fact, just about everything in both the conception
and execution of her seems wrong, and the failure is magnified by the fact that as consort of the hero she is called upon to play a major part in the novel. Mirah has to be "in all things unlike Gwendolen" (Ch. 63 p. 813). But what is brilliantly-realized paradox in the depiction of Gwendolen's situation becomes, in its antithesis, simply a distressingly uneasy ambivalence. Mirah must have the experience of evil which Gwendolen lacks; yet she must also have a true purity that is the opposite of Gwendolen's prostitution of herself. (The apologia for the Jews enforces this latter demand. Mirah is a sort of Jewish showpiece for the Gentile audience, and as such is a combination of the qualities in a woman most likely to please the Gentiles: modesty, innocence, piety, submissiveness - and a distinctly, an emphatically, non-Semitic countenance13.)

The necessity to expunge sexuality, or even the suggestion of it, from Mirah's character leads George Eliot's description of her into sentimental excesses ("her presence like the freshly-opened daisies and clear bird-notes after the rain" Ch. 52 p. 721, etc.) and a monotonous cuteness meant to pass for childlikeness. It is Mirah who has had the strangest, deepest "experience of evil and trouble", yet we

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13 The Cohens, too, are meant as a Jewish showpiece. Money-grubbing but essentially kind-hearted, they are a comic-sentimental parody of the English bourgeois family. George Eliot may be making a serious point through this - that the respectability of an oppressed minority group tends to take the form of an exaggeration of hegemonic values. Her special mention of the Cohens' devotion to the Royal Family - "the Jew is proud of his loyalty" (Ch. 34 p. 449) - would seem to support such an interpretation. But she seems to be more prompted by a desire to allay her Gentile readers' fears and hostilities, by showing them that the Jews are Just Like Them. The mode of resemblance is family life: the patriarchy has a human universality.
learn of it in such a way that it seems distant and unreal. It comes in the form of an exceedingly long first-person narrative. Though the narrative contains some striking nightmarish effects (in the untransformed "Lifted Veil" style) it compares unfavourably, as an account of the flight of a perplexed and desperate girl, with the concrete, unsensational, but very moving description of Hetty Sorrel's wanderings. However, it serves the purity requirement admirably: Mirah's experience of evil does indeed appear as something that, as Mrs. Meyrick suggests, has "'only washed her'" (Ch. 20 p. 264) - it is both indefinite and lacking in impact.

Lydia Glasher, however, begins as a more substantial figure; and she is seen convincingly, if briefly, from the inside. That one scene at Gadsmere, the memorable struggle of wills between the woman "whom the years had worn to a more conscious dependence and sharper eagerness" and the man "whom they were dulling into a more and more neutral obstinacy" (Ch. 30 p. 391), is, in a novel studded with brilliant scenes, one of the most magnificent. But after that, Lydia virtually disappears. Her main existence thereafter is as an image in Gwendolen's mind - an image of piercing intensity. Like Baldassarre in Romola, she becomes a melodramatic figure, a personification of fierce-eyed vengeance. Lydia is a stylized and exaggerated figure, the personification of melodramatic Evil, as Mirah is of Virtue: the split halves of the image of the dark woman.

The figure of Alcharisi, on the other hand, is quite consciously and consistently a non-naturalistic representation.
She was a remarkable-looking being.
What was it that gave her son a painful sense of aloofness? - Her 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.

(Ch. 51 pp. 687-688)

The prototype for Alcharisi is Laure, the Provençale actress in *Middlemarch* who is Lydgate's first passion. Though Alcharisi does not, like Laure, actually murder her husband, she too is shown as a creature without moral sensibility or sense of sacredness, from whom adoring tenderness (of lover or son) recoils in horror. It is significant - and may, perhaps, be taken as a measure of George Eliot's own self-alienation - that George Eliot will come no closer to the figure of the female artist than this melodramatic, forbidding representation, and that she shows the female will that breaks through the bonds of family, race, and circumstance, and brings into being its own self-generated life, as a cold, totally destructive energy.

And yet, probably despite George Eliot's intentions, there is a glory about Alcharisi, in her brief appearances.

'He never thought of his daughter except as an instrument. Because I had wants outside his purpose, I was to be put in a frame and tortured. If that is the right law for the world, I will not say that I love it.'

(Ch. 53 p. 726)

Larger than life size, isolated from the context of the rest of the novel, she appears, delivers her speech, and exits while its tones are still ringing in our ears. She is the grandest of all the embodiments of the dark woman, a stylized heroic figure.

I have said that the dark woman, like the dark man, is
Janus-faced. She shares his characteristics in another way as well. She is, like him, musical, Jewish, and an outcast of the patriarchy. The last of these is the most important. The sexual suggestion pertains to all three: to Lydia most obviously, of course, but also to Mirah, who is exposed as sexual merchandise, and to Alcharisi, whose son has been raised as an English nobleman's bastard. The sexual degradation of the two Jewish women is, however, brought out more strongly through their profession: music.

Throughout the novel, and in a variety of ways, including allusions to real-life Jewish musicians and actresses (Meyerbeer, Mendelssohn, Rachel), musical talent is associated with Jewishness. I have suggested one reason (or outcome) of this: music forms an image of the cultural exploitation of Jew by Gentile - and, from this, a more general image of colonial exploitation. But musical talent is also associated with low patriarchal status. Daniel, at thirteen, takes Sir Hugo's suggestion that he become a singer as "unmistakable proof that there was something about his birth which threw him out from the class of gentlemen to which the baronet belonged" (Ch. 16 p. 209). With the women musicians, the association of music as a profession with low patriarchal status is rather more strongly made.

The link was perhaps more readily apparent to Victorian readers, for in the nineteenth century "singer" had connotations of "prostitute" (much, I suspect, as "model" has in the twentieth). But perhaps the association can be gleaned from the novel without recourse to historical aids. I have already brought up one instance in which there are,
I believe, sexual overtones: Deronda's perception, at Lady Mallinger's, that Mirah is regarded as "an imported commodity disdainfully paid for by a fashionable public" (Ch. 45 p. 619). There are others. Sir Hugo at one point describes the husband of a prima donna (and it is Alcharisi who is being spoken of, actually) as a "'public robber'" (Ch. 36 p. 493). To elicit a sexual double-entendre from Mirah's description of herself as a "'musical box'" (Ch. 20 p. 253) (or from the author's description of Lush as a "human tool" and also as "so to speak, a very large cigar" Ch. 45 p. 626) may be a bit far-fetched, though it is tempting to do so. But certainly, in the remark Mirah overhears on her way back from America - "'I wonder what market he means that daughter for'" (Ch. 20 p. 255) - a strong similarity between the theatre and the brothel is suggested: Lapidoth's role of pimp is a simple extension of his management of Mirah's singing engagements.

In fact, the Jewess is presented, in Daniel Deronda, in the image of the whore, as the Jew is presented in the image of the pimp. The sexual associations are not simply a set of gratuitous similes, employed for their sensation value. Rather, they are an intrinsic part of George Eliot's analysis of racial oppression: the racial power-structure is the patriarchy writ large, the Family is founded on the Whorehouse, in both micro- and macro-social terms.

I suggested that, in Middlemarch, George Eliot's own self-adopted position in the patriarchal structure was that of Mother. In Daniel Deronda she is adopting that position again, and makes the same vicarious investment in Daniel
that she made in Ladislaw. (But where Dorothea Brooke was a maternal figure with whom she could identify, Gwendolen is a daughter towards whom she is antipathetic - she negates her in favour of the son, who is likely to achieve more in the world.)

But George Eliot, in Daniel Deronda, is writing not only from the position of Mother, but also from that of the Whore, the "woman destitute of acknowledged social dignity" (Ch. 48 p. 668) - the position she herself occupied in the long, ostracized years before she regained her respectability through fame. She writes out of this experience, not so much in exploration of her own state, as in expression of her vision of the world from which she was excluded. Her writing from this position (in this role, as it were) is bitter sometimes, frustrated sometimes, sarcastic sometimes, but it always seems to have some driving power behind it - the driving power of rage and hurt, crystallized by a powerful intelligence. And the best strengths of Daniel Deronda all derive from this.

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Daniel Deronda offers not simply an analysis of the racial power-structure, but a strategy for change in it - a strategy symbolically presented in Deronda's spiritual marriage with Mordecai, his physical marriage with Mirah. The analysis is made, one might say, from the Whore's position, the strategy from the perspective of the Mother; for while the analysis is perceptive and audacious, the strategy is vicarious; it avoids the real sources of the problem.
If the racial power-structure is seen as a magnified structure of the patriarchy, then an essential condition of change in it is an alteration in the position of woman. Let us look again at the position of woman as presented in Daniel Deronda.

The position of woman, in this novel, consists of the complementary roles of Wife and Whore. Neither role is self-determined: an aspect George Eliot catches through the image of acting. Mirah and Alcharisi are literally actresses; but Gwendolen's wifehood is also a performance: "all like a dance set beforehand" (Ch. 36 p. 507), as she describes it. And as it becomes later, a form of "self-presentation":

Still Mrs. Grandcourt was outwardly in the same place, presenting herself as she was expected to do in the accustomed scenes, with the accustomed grace, beauty, and costume; from church at one end of the week, through all the scale of desirable receptions, to opera at the other.

(Ch. 48 p. 666)

So the roles of wife and whore (fair woman and dark) are not self-determined. Nor are they wholly dependent upon birth or race. Rather, they are determined by the nature of the woman's dependence on the master. Early in the novel, Gwendolen comes close to becoming a "dark" woman, by adopting a profession that puts her on the dark side of the "strong grating of polite society". And she is left at the end with Gadsmere, the house in the "'black country'" (Ch. 44 p. 615)\(^\text{14}\). The dark-eyed Lydia Glasher

\(^{14}\)Gadsmere's location, in a district "once entirely rural and lovely, now black with coal-mines, ... chiefly peopled by men and brethren with candles stuck in their hats, and with a diabolic complexion" (Ch. 30 p. 385), is the only major registration in this novel of the effects of England's domestic Industrial Revolution, which is so prominent a part of the previous novels.
had been a lady; and she becomes one again at the end of the book, through an act tantamount to marriage - the legitimization of her son. Mirah and Alcharisi, too, have their states transformed by marriage.

Wife and Whore are in a state of mutual hostility. Both Lydia and Mirah envy Gwendolen her position, and feel resentment against her. Lydia regards her as a usurper (and manages to impress this attitude strongly upon her), and Mirah, too, sees her as a "woman who possessed the good she wanted" (Ch. 61 p. 801). Even Alcharisi, who prefers her position as offering a "chance of escaping from bondage" (Ch. 51 p. 694), gives it up in the end for marriage into the Gentile nobility; Whoredom is an exposed position, even at its best.

Any substantial change in the position of woman must involve a transcendence of the roles of Wife and Whore. In Daniel Deronda, they are merely swopped around, and the mutual antagonism is never resolved. The reversal of the positions of wife and whore is made possible by a miraculous change of masters. On that Sabbath-Eve in Genoa, Grandcourt sinks (literally!) and Deronda ascends. Gwendolen is doubly thrust out: the act which makes possible Lydia's elevation to the state of wifehood symbolically makes possible Mirah's too. Grandcourt's death coincides exactly, in both time and place, with Deronda's discovery of his identity.

Deronda's identity is presented as an identification with the opporessed. It is nothing of the kind: it is an assumption of mastery. Throughout the novel Deronda has
had two social positions: among Gentile high society, he is "'not of any consequence in the world'" (Ch. 29 p. 379), as Mrs. Davilow puts it: he is only a bastard son. In the Meyrick-Cohen circle, however, he is looked up to: he is a gentleman of high social caste. Deronda confirms a permanent connection with the Meyrick-Cohen circle by marrying Mirah - it is the second identity he chooses. (And Mirah, of all the George Eliot heroines faced with a choice between a poor man and a rich man, chooses the rich man.)

Moreover, we may note that it is Alcharisi, acting out of dread of her father's will, who discloses Daniel's identity to him. His identity is, in other words, something given, under coercion, by the dark woman to the dark man. Is it too much to suggest that Deronda's discovery of his identity consists precisely of the assumption of mastery over "his" woman - an assumption made magically possible by the demise of the former master?

Among the blessings of love there is hardly one more exquisite than the sense that in uniting the beloved life to ours we can watch over its happiness, bring comfort where hardship was, and over memories of privation and suffering open the sweetest fountains of joy. Deronda's love for Mirah was strongly imbued with that blessed protectiveness. (Ch. 70 p. 879)

Deronda's "protectiveness" is extensive indeed: Mirah is in fact effectively shielded from most of the important aspects of her own and her future husband's life. Deronda never touches on his relation to Gwendolen "except in the most distant manner" (Ch. 70 p. 880); Mirah knows "nothing of Hans's struggle or of Gwendolen's pang" (Ch. 70 p. 880);
she seems to be fairly much in the dark about "all the momentousness" (Ch. 61 p. 800) of Deronda's relationship with her brother, and indeed about her husband's high destiny itself. However, Mirah is described as "glowing like a dark-tipped yet delicate ivory-tinted flower" (Ch. 70 p. 880) in the midst of her blissful ignorance, and we are obviously meant to think it all right and proper. The description of Deronda and Mirah's wedding strives after a tone of the utmost happy conclusiveness.

The velvet canopy never covered a more goodly bride and bridegroom, to whom their people might more wisely wish offspring; more truthful lips never touched the sacramental marriage-wine; the marriage-blessing never gathered stronger promise of fulfilment than in the integrity of their mutual pledge.

(Ch. 70 p. 880)

It is a tone with which George Eliot tries (unsuccessfully) to soothe her desperate anxiety about her chosen Deliverer. Will the new master be good and kind, now he has come to man's estate? The confidence of her hope is obviously only surface-deep, despite the special measures she has taken to ensure that he shall be. In the next section, we examine those measures, and what in them gives good reason for her anxious distrust of them.
F.R. Leavis says that the character of Daniel Deronda is conceived "in terms of general specifications". He is referring to, and indeed quotes, Mordecai's set of specifications for the Zionist Messiah:

He must be a Jew, intellectually cultured, morally fervid - in all this a nature ready to be plenished from Mordecai's; but his face and frame must be beautiful and strong, he must have been used to all the refinements of social life, his voice must flow with a full and easy current, his circumstances be free from sordid need: he must glorify the possibilities of the Jew.

(Ch. 38 p. 529)

Or, as they are succinctly summarized a couple of pages later: "youth, beauty, refinement, Jewish birth, noble gravity" (Ch. 38 p. 521).

But there is another set of general specifications which Deronda is also designed to fulfil - a set issuing from George Eliot's heart-felt preoccupation with the patriarchy. He must be male: otherwise he will not be able to lead, to act. But he must be like a woman - one who has the experience of being a patriarchal underling. He must, therefore, be androgynous in temperament - "moved by an affectionateness such as we are apt to call feminine,... while he had a certain inflexibility of judgment, an independence of opinion, held to be rightfully masculine" (Ch. 28 p. 367).

Will Ladislaw and Daniel Deronda are, to this extent, similar. But beyond this, there is a significant difference - a difference which is almost directly alluded to. In reference to the relationship between Daniel and Gwendolen,
George Eliot says: "He was becoming a part of her conscience, as one woman whose nature is an object of reverential belief may become a new conscience to a man" (Ch. 35 p. 468) - as Dorothea's nature, in fact, became for Ladislaw. Theirs, I suggested, is a mother-and-son relationship. In *Daniel Deronda* the roles are reversed: the son, as we have seen, becomes a father.

In this metamorphosis, the Zionist element functions as a hormone shot - it turns the effeminate youth into the virile hero. He acts as paternal mentor to Gwendolen before he discovers his racial identity, it is true, but the coup de grace he gives to her education - the dislodging of her "from her supremacy in her own world" (Ch. 69 p. 876) - stems directly from it; and in other obvious areas of his life it replaces vacillation with resolved masculine firmness ("it was as if he had found an added soul in finding his ancestry" Ch. 63 p. 814).

Equally important is the way the Zionist element transforms Deronda's androgynous temperament by providing him with a source of "affectionateness" which is not feminine. The integration of head and heart is in *Daniel Deronda*, as in other George Eliot novels, one of the major themes.

It is the hero's quest:

*What he most longed for was either some external event, or some inward light, that would urge him into a definite line of action, and compress his wandering energy. He was ceasing to care for knowledge - he had no ambition for practice - unless they could both be gathered up into one current with his emotions.*

(Ch. 32 p. 413)

Daniel consciously yearns for a "life of practically energetic sentiment" (Ch. 32 p. 414); even more explicitly,
"'some ideal task, in which I might feel myself the heart and brain of a multitude'" (Ch. 63 p. 819).

In previous novels, as I have shown, head and heart are identified as masculine and feminine qualities. The same identification is made in Daniel Deronda:

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

(Ch. 11 p. 160)

Indeed, the relegation of activity to the male sphere, of feeling to the female, is applied in Daniel Deronda with the force of doctrine. Wholesome family affection manifests itself in two circumscribed, female-dominated hearths, the Meyricks' and the Cohens'. (George Eliot is careful to make Ezra, the man of the Cohen household, attribute his kindliness and warmth to the influence of his womenfolk.) On the other hand, Gwendolen's chafing at her feminine inactivity, her expressed wish to "'go to the North Pole, or ride steeplechases, or go to be a queen in the East like Lady Hester Stanhope'" (Ch. 7 p. 101) is frowned on as evidence of her flightiness, coldness, and general egoism. Alcharisi's similar chafing is presented rather more favourably ("'I had a right to be an artist, though my father's will was against it. My nature have me a charter'" Ch. 53 p. 728) - more favourably, perhaps, than George Eliot intends - but she too is of a hard-hearted, coldly ambitious nature. Obviously, the moral is that a woman engages in activity at the risk of her human affectionateness. Mirah, who dislikes her work and only does it because she has to,
is praised over both of them.

However, in this novel, there are two kinds of woman, two kinds of man. The categories of head and heart undergo a corresponding refinement. In the male sphere, power (pertaining to the fair man) is separated from activity (pertaining to the dark man). And, in the female sphere, feeling has two distinct aspects: one the issue of the nerves, the other of the heart. The distinction is explicitly referred to in Rex's confusion of the two:

Heat is a great agent and a useful word, but considered as a means of explaining the universe it requires an extensive knowledge of differences; and as a means of explaining character "sensitiveness" is in much the same predicament. But who, loving a creature like Gwendolen, would not be inclined to regard every peculiarity in her as a mark of pre-eminence? That was what Rex did. After the Hermione scene he was more persuaded than ever that she must be instinct with all feeling.

(Ch. 6 p. 95)

Gwendolen's nervous susceptibility, I have suggested, is a result of her precarious ladyhood; it is also a privilege of it. It is a luxury which Mirah, in her position, cannot afford - just as Mirah's tenacious loyalty of affection to her mother and her religion, which sustains her in her oppression, is something Gwendolen Harleth does not need. Gwendolen Grandcourt learns affectionateness when she has troubles to endure; Mirah becomes sensitive and moody when she rises above her station by falling in love with a gentleman. (As she puts it: "'I used not to have horrible feelings!'", Ch. 61 p. 802.) And so the two qualities are integrated.

Apart from this detail, George Eliot's long exploration of woman's role seems to have come disappointingly to rest in traditional categories. For this very reason, she must
find some source of heart-energy outside the feminine sphere. The Judaic tradition provides her with what she seeks - or, she seizes from Judaism what she needs: "It is true, as Jehuda-ha-Levi first said, that Israel is the heart of mankind'" (Ch. 42 p. 590). Better still, Israel combines brain and heart in about equal proportions:

"'Where else is there a nation of whom it may be as truly said that their religion and law and moral life mingled as the stream of blood in the heart and made one growth?'" (Ch. 42 p. 590). Thus Deronda's androgyny of temperament is masculinized and transformed through Judaism. It is only fitting that this theme should be consummated by a spiritual "marriage" (Ch. 63 p. 820) between two men.

We may legitimately ask, I believe, whether the entire presence of the Jewish element in Daniel Deronda is not to be accounted for the functions it serves in relation to her depiction of the patriarchy. Leavis' account of it is this:

The kind of satisfaction George Eliot finds in Deronda's Zionism is plain. "'The refuge you are needing from personal trouble is the higher, the religious life, which holds an enthusiasm for something more than our own appetites and vanities.'"16

Perhaps, however, such an explanation is too plain: perhaps the source Leavis indicates is too obvious, too consciously admitted by the author, to be an adequate explanation of the deep, covert, emotional investment she has placed in the Zionist element. But Leavis is onto something more interesting a couple of pages earlier. After comparing

16 Leavis, p. 98.
George Eliot's attraction to Zionism with D.H. Lawrence's attraction to Mexican phallus-worship in *The Plumed Serpent* (a comparison that goes deeper than I think Leavis sees), he says:

The Victorian intellectual certainly has a large part in her Zionist inspirations, but that doesn't make these the less fervidly emotional; the part is one of happy subordinate alliance with her immaturity. We have already seen that this alliance comes very naturally (for the relation between the Victorian intellectual and the very feminine woman in her is not the simple antithesis her critics seem commonly to suppose).17

The Jewish part of the novel is, he says, the creation of "the Dorothea in her"18. We may compare this with a statement in Henry James's *Daniel Deronda: a Conversation*, a statement which possibly influenced Leavis' judgment:

As George Eliot lets herself go, in that quarter, she becomes delightfully, almost touchingly, feminine.19

Leavis, apparently, equates femininity with immaturity, and James seems to see a woman writer's failure as an occasion for indulgence and delight. These things annoy me, but I respect both critics for their insight, for they have sensed a deep, determining connection between George Eliot's use of Zionism and her femininity, and I think they are right. The condition of George Eliot's existence that determines her particular sensitivity to the workings of the patriarchy also determines the form her interest in Judaism takes, and

17 Leavis, p. 96.
18 Leavis, p. 97.
19 Leavis, p. 286. ("Daniel Deronda: A Conversation" is printed as an Appendix in *The Great Tradition*. )
the fictional uses she puts it to. These uses are by no means all bad: we have seen in the previous section the immense range and new dimensions its presence gives to her analysis of the patriarchy. But, when it comes to the strategy, we see that it provides her with a vicarious escape, it delivers her from the necessity of having to deal with the harrowing problem of the relation of man and woman.

I have referred to one way in which Judaism makes possible this escape: it extricates the hero from among the women. It is also the instrument for bringing the women to order. It is the stick with which the iridescent Gwendolen can be finally pushed out of the picture. It is the "something spiritual and vaguely tremendous that thrust her away, and yet quelled all anger into self-humiliation" (Ch. 69 p. 876) in her, as it is the "'stronger Something'" - note the capitalization! - "with deeper, farther-spreading roots, knit into the foundations of sacredness for all men'" (Ch. 53 p. 727), which brings the proud-spirited Alcharisi low.

And as for Mirah, she is simply made to subserve it. Alcharisi says of her father's attitude towards her: "'He cared for me as a makeshift link!'" (Ch. 51 p. 694) and "'He never thought of his daughter except as an instrument (Ch. 53, p. 726). It is very impudent of George Eliot to put such speeches into the mouth of a Jewish woman character in this novel. It is as though she is daring us to make the application of them - an application that fits the case very well - to her own attitude to Mirah. Mirah is indeed
a "'makeshift link'" and an "'instrument'": she is the vehicle in which the marriage of Ezra and Daniel can be realized. No other character in all George Eliot's novels, I believe, is so blatantly constructed for a purpose. It is an unconcealable flaw at the heart of the characterization of her.

We have now looked at several instances and effects of George Eliot's failure to deal squarely with the issues of sexuality and the relation of man and woman. Let us look now at how this failure subverts her central purpose in Daniel Deronda. No other novel of hers is so plainly the work of a monist philosopher, a follower of Feuerbach. Its theme is the incarnation:— the transformation of matter by spirit, of reality by vision.

Here undoubtedly lies the chief poetic energy:— in the force of imagination that pierces or exalts the solid fact, instead of floating among cloud-pictures. (Ch. 33 p. 431)

One can only wish that George Eliot had had more of this "chief poetic energy", or had not misdirected it. For one of the commonest complaints about Daniel Deronda ("the weak half") is that it floats abysmally among cloud-pictures. The ethereal Mordecai, a personification of vision, seeks incarnation in Deronda, who is himself "a yearning disembodied spirit" (Ch. 32 p. 413), through the mediation of a female figure so angelic that her face is one "where a painter need have changed nothing if he had wanted to put it in front of the host singing 'peace on earth and goodwill to men'" (Ch. 32 p. 418). The three-way embrace with which the novel ends is thus like an interlocking of idealities in mid-air. The "solid fact" remains unpierced: it is simply
left behind in upward flight.

This, however, is to be expected, given George Eliot's concept of where this "force of imagination" comes from. She speaks of the "visions which, as Mordecai said, were the creators and feeders of the world" as "moulding and feeding the more passive life which without them would dwindle and shrivel into the narrow tenacity of insects" (Ch. 55 p. 749). There is no intimation, however, that the visions are themselves nourished, at least in part, by that common life. Rather, she seems to maintain the opposite: that they must be kept strictly separated from the common life, in order to attain and retain their purity. One instance of this is her conception of the Zionist Messiah: he is to come from among the Gentiles. Certainly, he is to find his nourishment at the founts of the Judaic tradition, but from the incorporeal Mordecai - the ideal Ezra Cohen, not the real one.

Yet George Eliot is really very perceptive about where the reality lies. One consideration behind her decision to feature the Jews in the novel must have been a recognition that in the relation of Gentile and Jew is contained the economic Manichaeism of European history - a division between the possession of wealth and the management of wealth. George Eliot ventures into this territory, but she cannot handle it. So both Deronda (one of the specifications for whom is that he be "free from sordid need" Ch. 38 p. 529) and his mentor inhabit an airy realm above a squalid economic materiality which they never pierce with transforming vision.

It is the same with the sexual reality: she knows where it is to be found - among the outcasts of the patriarchy,
in bastardry and whoredom. And there she finds it, but in a bastard who is really very respectably born, and in an actress who "made a life in my own thoughts quite different from everything about me" (Ch. 20 p. 253): both of them floating like cloud-pictures above their reality, rather than belonging to it.

Then there is the political reality. Daniel Deronda's "ideal task" (Ch. 63 p. 819) also floats above its reality, refusing to recognize it. I have already drawn attention to the manner in which this task comes to Deronda - disclosed to him by Alcharisi's unwilling lips. And I have already suggested that the condition of Deronda's pre-eminence is his assumption of mastery over the woman. In this case, we see that man is the Ideal, woman the Real. George Eliot's attitude towards reality (for all her denials) is that it isn't worth worrying about: it can, for the sake of the Ideal, be utilized, abandoned, or suppressed at will; and woman is included in this reality. Indeed, it could be that it is a prior decision about woman, that she isn't worth worrying about, that determines the general attitude towards the whole of reality; for if George Eliot had allowed herself to acknowledge the reality of Deronda's political leadership - its origin in the subjugation of woman - the whole delicate edifice, in which she has invested so much hope, would come crumbling to the ground.

George Eliot cannot afford to allow the Ideal to acknowledge the Real; and so she gets stuck in absolutes. Her vision of reality is pessimistic and settled; her ideals are of questionable validity, since they are qualities come
adrift of the enfleshed reality in which their sources lay. Complacency and etiolation: these seem to me, finally, the qualities of Daniel Deronda's vision. Yet perhaps there is much to admire in the force that drove George Eliot to such exhaustion. The "solid fact" is indeed unyielding, the "poetic energy" that would transform it will be long gathering.

Of Will Ladislaw, all that was expected was that "since wrongs existed, (he) should be in the thick of a struggle against them", and, in collaboration with other like-minded men, should be "an ardent public man, working well in those times when reforms were begun with a young hopefulness of immediate good which has been much checked in our days" (Middlemarch, Finale, p. 894). The task laid on Deronda is the heavier in proportion as the "young hopefulness" has evaporated, leaving frustration and tiredness in its place.

I have now dealt with all seven of George Eliot's novels. I see their conclusions as changes rung on three solutions, as it were, to the problem of the patriarchy: the killing-off of the men, by fair means or foul (The Mill on the Floss, Romola, Casaubon in Middlemarch); an all-female offspring, an all-feminine world (Silas Marner, the ending of Romola); or a (male) deliverer, who will make all things new, including the patriarchy (Felix Holt, Middlemarch - though to a lesser extent). Daniel Deronda has elements of all three solutions in it, but it is obviously the third in which she has put most trusting hope. And, like her heroine, she clings to her cherished deliverer with "a more anxious tenacity, as a Protestant of old kept his Bible
hidden or a Catholic his crucifix" (Ch. 48 p. 655) - the more clinging as her urgent perception of the necessity for deliverance increases, the more anxious as her confidence in him wavers.

It is misleading to think of Daniel Deronda as George Eliot's final statement about the world, I know. Her writing career was cut short by death rather than by completeness; and her next novel, had there been one, might have belied all the general conclusions one is tempted to make on the basis of the existing seven. After all, the novel that Daniel Deronda is most like - in several ways - is Felix Holt. Felix Holt was the first of two Reform Era novels, of which the masterpiece Middlemarch was the second. Daniel Deronda was only the first novel of the age of imperialism.

Nevertheless, even if it happened only by accident, Daniel Deronda is George Eliot's last novel, and it contains her last imaginative vision of life. And her vision is of a world hardening around her, upon which she looks with dry, agitated despair.
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