The Treatment of Emotion in the Novels of George Eliot

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This thesis is all my own work, and all sources have been acknowledged.

Signed Susan Trigell
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Notes

This thesis has been formatted in accordance with the *MLA Style Manual*. However, I have added some extra information to footnotes (such as short titles) where I felt this would avoid confusion for the reader.
Till min älskling

Andrew
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Introduction

Barbara Hardy has asked us to attend to the life of the passions in *Middlemarch*, and to some extent literary critics have responded to this call. There has, for instance, been a good deal of work done on why Will and Dorothea's relationship is unsatisfactory — work which has involved a focus on the way love is portrayed in the novel.

This thesis, however, approaches the question from a different direction, and even its title indicates this different approach. Given the centrality of emotions in most narratives, it is surprising how infrequently the word "emotion" appears in the titles or even the indexes of books of literary criticism. The title of this thesis indicates one of its focuses: it uses George Eliot's fiction to investigate ways in which we might think about, describe or experience emotions.

In doing so, it intersects with and draws upon a great deal of recent work in other fields: psychology, linguistics, philosophy, sociology and anthropology. Writers in these disciplines have been turning an increasing amount of attention to investigating emotions: considering to what extent they are socially and culturally constructed and their connections to cognition.

As we shall see in Chapter Five, the clear split which at one stage dominated thinking about cognition and emotion has begun to dissolve under the pressure of theories which doubt that such a split can be made. New ways of thinking about emotion provide potential ways of re-illuminating George Eliot's treatment of emotion in her novels. They allow us to ask new questions about this

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2See discussion in Chapter Six.

3This increasing interest is reflected in several recent books and collections of essays on emotion (discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Five) as well as in the launch of academic journals such as *Cognition and Emotion* (launched in 1987).
portrayal and its consequences: asking whether, for instance, George Eliot presented emotions as cognitive and whether she depicts them as aiding, disrupting or altering perception.

The interpretive gains, however, are not just in one direction. Modern theories of emotion can help us to focus on neglected aspects of George Eliot's novels — but the way emotion is treated in those novels itself provides a challenge to these modern theories of emotion.

This is (at least partly) because theories of emotion put forward by philosophers often tend to be abstract or sweeping, absorbing everything into grand generalisations. Novels, where emotions are often analysed by being given vivid imaginative life, provide ways of thinking about emotions which challenge those generalisations.

The very idea, however, of a novelist's creation providing challenges to a philosophical theory — or the idea that a novel can say anything about life at all may seem controversial. Why should philosophers bother with novels, and what they say about emotions? Martha Nussbaum, one of the most important contemporary philosophers of emotion, takes up this challenge in her book *Love's Knowledge*, as she explains one of the claims she is putting forward:

The claim is that only the style of a certain sort of narrative artist (and not, for example, the style associated with the abstract theoretical treatise) can adequately state certain important truths about the world, embodying them in its shape and setting up in the reader the activities that are appropriate for grasping them.4

Yet my thesis could be seen as an invalid appropriation of Martha Nussbaum's work, for Nussbaum also says only some texts are suitable and that those of George Eliot are not:

Next, we should insist that neither all nor only novels prove appropriate, even for this small portion of the project. Not all novels are appropriate for reasons suggested by both James and Proust in their criticisms of other novel writers. James attacks the omniscient posture of George Eliot's narrator as a falsification of our human position.5


5Nussbaum, 45.
Nussbaum later comments that in James's novels "the author places himself humanly within the world of his text and links us to himself as limited and human adventurers". Nussbaum then quotes James's famous attack on the omniscient narrator, and notes that George Eliot's work is the main target:

... James tells us in his preface that he has elected to avoid "the mere muffled majesty of irresponsible 'authorship'" and to become a responsible (and, we suspect, therefore guilty) agent in the midst of his work. "It's not," he continues, "that the muffled majesty of authorship doesn't here ostensibly reign; but I catch myself again shaking it off and disavowing the pretence of it while I get down into the arena and do my best to live and breathe and rub shoulders and converse with the persons engaged in the struggle" (I. vi) — persons whom he soon describes as "the more or less bleeding participants." James here implicitly criticizes a tradition in the English novel for having created, in the authorial voice, a persona who is not humanly finite and who therefore does not show us a way to the understanding of our own finitude.6

Nussbaum evidently sees Eliot's authorial voice as a barrier: Eliot's novels cannot be used to shed light on emotions because this voice is not "humanly finite". Yet what we hear in the novels of George Eliot (after Adam Bede) is a human voice. In these cases, what we are hearing, as Barbara Hardy points out, is the "undisguised voice" of George Eliot.7 Moreover, it is a voice which calls attention to its incomplete knowledge, its incomplete descriptions, especially of emotions. As the narrative voice in Middlemarch reminds us, after analysing Casaubon's feelings: "This is a very bare and therefore a very incomplete way of describing a human soul . . . ."8 The authorial persona George Eliot presents is "humanly finite": she frequently draws our attention to the errors which she has made, and which we are likely to make: "Our guides, we pretend, must be sinless . . . ."9 It is, after all, through appeals to fellow feeling and common experience that Eliot's

texts often operate. There is a specious quality (and a not too hidden jealousy, as well as some personal hurt directed against a former idol) to James's claim that he (unlike Eliot) has shaken off the muffled majesty of authorship and is in the arena, suffering, with his characters. In fact, we are unlikely ever to meet more rarefied air than what we find in The Golden Bowl (and James is a good enough novelist to allow one of his characters — Colonel Assingham — to function, through his frequent exasperation and bewilderment, as a richly comic protest against all these fine perceptions). The extraordinary aesthetic tone of James's late novels, with their focus on exquisitely fine gradations of feeling and behaviour, leaves no room for common concerns of life and makes us wonder how much human suffering there is in these novels. Certainly it would be difficult to confuse James's characters with our acquaintances. In contrast, Eliot's authorial persona is presented as an imperfect, fallible being who has suffered and learnt from experience and who is sharing with us her hard-won wisdom. When Quentin Anderson expresses his admiration and sense of privilege in being in the narrator's company, what he focuses on is not her omniscience, but her wisdom: her admirable, hard-won, and always partial knowledge. We can therefore say that even if we accept Nussbaum's suggestion that for a novel to help us make sense of our lives we need to have a sense of the authorial persona being finite and human, George Eliot's novels meet this requirement.

George Eliot's knowledge of and attention to the complexities of emotions help to make her a perpetually rewarding author to read. In her novels we find not simply general formulations about emotions but subtle explorations of what a particular character is feeling at a particular time. And it is in these explorations that we may find complexities which challenge the more abstract, generalised statements about emotions (particularly about what is possible in emotions) put forward by philosophers such as Robert Solomon. George Eliot's treatment of emotion should

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11Solomon's work is discussed in Chapter Four.
not be accepted uncritically, however. It is here that literary criticism (and particularly the kind of
evaluative literary criticism which David Parker has argued for\textsuperscript{12}) has its role. It is only through the
delicate explication and analysis of how and why a character is feeling in a particular way that we
can see whether an emotion is being portrayed in a way which deepens our understanding of it, or
whether issues are being blurred to suit an author's purposes.

In making these comments, am I showing my adherence to a crude version of mimesis?
Am I assuming too simply that novels reflect the world's reality? Such mimetic assumptions have
been severely questioned, and frequently derided in the past couple of decades. Derrida has
challenged a conception of mimesis which he believes is put forward in Plato's \textit{Philebus}:

\begin{quote}
The book, which copies, reproduces, imitates living discourse, is worth only as much as that
discourse is worth. It can be worth less, to the extent that it is bereft of the \textit{life}, of \textit{logos}; it can't be
worth more. In this way, writing in general is interpreted as an imitation, a duplicate of the living
voice or present \textit{logos}.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

One can see why Derrida would like to resist this interpretation of mimesis. There are immediate
advantages gained by his resistance: literature (if it is no longer seen as an imitation of life) can
escape from Plato's famous strictures on the immorality of literature which is not truthful. There is
also the possibility that literature could be worth more than life, that it would no longer be seen as
just an imitation, as something second-hand.

However, to say that literature could be worth more than life is not really to express what
Derrida is aiming towards: in statements such as "There is no outside-the-text",\textsuperscript{14} Derrida is trying
to put into question simple oppositions between exteriority and interiority (or between literature
and life). The literature and life opposition has been questioned explicitly by Derrida in an
interview:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14}Derrida, 102.
It can be produced without literature, "in life", in life without literature, but literature is also "in life" in its way, in "real life" as people calmly say who think they can distinguish between the "real life" and the other one.\(^\text{15}\)

The kind of scepticism Derrida expresses here about terms such as "real life" is very catching. It becomes a sign of sophistication to adopt this scepticism, as Robin Grove comments:

> At which point, nowadays, the well-primed graduate springs forward with the question, Who believes in 'real life' anyway?\(^\text{16}\)

As Grove's comment indicates, the scepticism spreading from Derridean teaching has set up a totalising discourse, in which it is hard to raise questions about the complex inter-relationships between life and literature, and harder still to suggest that literature might help us to reflect on our emotional experiences.

In George Eliot's fiction, we find a sophistication about the ways in which literature and life are both interwoven and distinguishable which can match the challenges of modern theory. The narrator of Middlemarch reveals the weaknesses in Rosamond's, Will's, Lydgate's and Casaubon's assumptions that they have been adequately informed about romantic love by literature. Yet the subtle analyses of thought and feeling in Middlemarch should warn us that literature cannot be dismissed as a source of knowledge about feelings. Rather it is a source of "fragmentary, doubt-provoking knowledge",\(^\text{17}\) a source which should be treated, as Mary Garth treats it, with a good deal of scepticism.\(^\text{18}\) So we have a novel in which the narrator warns against trusting literature as a source of insight about emotions, yet which contains extensive, serious treatment of emotions. One of the themes of Middlemarch is that passions are dismissed or inadequately analysed when they should be attended to: attended to, the narrator suggests, both in literature and outside it.

\(^{15}\)Derrida, 56.


\(^{18}\)Mary Garth's sceptical reaction to using novels as a source of information is discussed in Chapter Three.
We come back to our earlier problem: can we speak of a world outside literature, a world which literature helps us to understand? Why isn't reading just a game, with nothing beyond the text? Charles Taylor answers sceptical arguments about ethics with his own challenge to the sceptic. Why should we give up the terms and values which give us our best account of the world? And by analogy, why should we give up on the texts which seem to make best sense of our emotional experience? Best sense: which means that we do not have to hold to a crude version of mimesis, for the texts in question need not be realist. Kafka's short story The Metamorphosis (in which the protagonist metamorphoses into a giant beetle) can hardly be called realist. Nonetheless, this story, by turns comic and deeply moving, may help to deepen our understanding of affliction.

As one of the most famous realist novels, Middlemarch stands accused of seducing the reader into believing in the reality of its world. Terry Eagleton writes: "Unlike science, literature appropriates the real as it is given in ideological forms, but does so in a way which produces an illusion of the spontaneously, unmediatedly real. . . . It is the function of criticism to refuse the spontaneous presence of the work — to deny that 'naturalness' in order to make its real determinants appear."

Eagleton clearly believes that in questioning the author's vision (a process that he later applies to Middlemarch), he is acting against George Eliot's intentions. But in fact the novel proceeds by a process of constant questioning, with readers being asked to test the narrator's comments against their own experience. Deconstructionist critics may detect a

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21Eagleton, 120-121.

22This will be discussed in more detail later. It is worth noting, though, that W. J. Harvey takes a different view of the narrator's comments: he regards them as truisms which we instantly agree with, so allowing the novel to make a series of bridges between our world and its fictional reality (W. J. Harvey, *The Art of George Eliot* (London: Chatto and Windus 1963) 80-83). This is not my experience of reading Middlemarch. The narrator's comments on people, emotions, etc. frequently strike me with surprise. I am impelled to pause, question, consider, and agree or disagree before continuing reading.
certain circularity here. After all, many of the readers of Middlemarch will be influenced by the same cultural tradition whose values Middlemarch (perhaps) embodies. But as Parker has pointed out, this circularity is not vicious. As Parker's comments make clear, it is undoubtedly true that Middlemarch means more to us because it is part of a cultural heritage which we share, but this does not mean we are unable to question what is portrayed in George Eliot's novels.

One aspect of her books which calls for testing against our life experiences, and against the views and experiences of other readers, is her treatment of emotions. If we approach this issue using an experiential framework, in other words, we will be looking at George Eliot's novels to see whether her treatment of emotions helps to illuminate our reflections about them, or whether her treatment seems merely confused when we compare it to the treatment of emotions by later authors (such as D.H. Lawrence) or the more systematic discussions about emotions which are put forward by philosophers. Much of this thesis will be devoted to showing that George Eliot's novels can be better understood if we focus on her treatment of emotions. But this thesis also makes a more radical claim: that Eliot's treatment of emotions is illuminating, and that her treatment of emotions can be usefully compared to theories of emotions in other fields. This is of course not the only reason why we might be interested in George Eliot's depiction of emotions, but it is important to reclaim it as a valid reason. S. L. Goldberg says that he believes that people are likely "to go on valuing those writings that they judge best help them to realize what the world is and what people are, to persist in distinguishing between those ideas, utterances, fictions and texts that they believe enlighten or deepen or enrich their minds and those that do not; and also persist

23Parker, Ethics, Theory and the Novel, 22.

24Parker, Ethics, Theory and the Novel, 23, 74-75.

25The degree of sharing will obviously differ from reader to reader, but most readers are likely, for example, to have read other works of English literature than Middlemarch. Many readers will also be influenced by traditions which affected George Eliot: the Enlightenment, the Judeo-Christian tradition, etc.

26For an example of experientially-based questioning see Simon Haines, Shelley's Poetry: The Divided Self (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1997) 171.
in thinking that this is still a good ground for preferring some books to others.  

This is an insight which is all too likely to be lost under the force of theories which insist that literature cannot give us insight into the world, or into people, but that it simply provides an ideological structure which we can use to pattern and falsify our experience.

Part of this thesis, then, is explicatory: looking at how George Eliot treats emotions (and often using modern theories to explain the assumptions of that treatment). And part of this thesis is evaluative: looking, for instance, at how George Eliot's treatment of emotion aids or weakens her fictional art. Finally, and most controversially, this thesis is evaluative because it engages in an interdisciplinary debate about the nature of emotions and the most illuminating ways of describing them — a debate in which (it is argued) George Eliot's novels can play a role.

Each chapter contributes to the aim of exploring George Eliot's treatment of emotion — each one from a slightly different angle. Chapter One looks at recent work on emotions, and briefly summarises some modern theories about emotions: in particular social constructionist theories of emotion, which set limits to the scope of this thesis. Chapter Two explores the question of moral judgements about emotions, contrasting D. H. Lawrence's frequently didactic purpose in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* to George Eliot's more wary treatment in *The Mill on the Floss*. The contrast is not absolute, of course: responsibility for emotions is a key issue for Lawrence, and although Eliot's fiction sometimes resists this sort of analysis, at other times (as we will see in Chapter Six) it is a key issue for her. Chapter Three looks at the fine discriminations which are made between emotions in Eliot's fiction, and the tendency to reject conventional views of emotions. Chapter Four looks at how we can distinguish between love and closely related emotions. In the process of distinguishing between them, we can throw new light on Dorothea's

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28 This kind of suspicion of fiction is evident in the work of critics such as Lennard Davis. See, for instance, Lennard J. Davis, *Resisting Novels: Ideology and Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987). Laura Quinney advances a much more subtle and sophisticated, but similarly sceptical argument in *Literary Power and The Criteria of Truth* (Gainsville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995).
relationship with Casaubon, as well as on patterns of love and hero-worship in *Daniel Deronda*.

Chapter Five focuses on questions of distrusting or valuing emotions (particularly in comparison to, or in connection with, cognition) and looks at whether George Eliot clearly separates cognition and emotion in her depiction of emotion. Chapter Six looks at questions of emotions and responsibility: both questions of whether we can control our emotions and whether we can take responsibility for them. It examines both Eliot’s explorations of these questions, and the ideas she was attracted to — and looks at whether these lead to imaginative strengths or weaknesses in her fiction.

George Eliot’s treatment of emotion is not flawless: it can be seen as judgmental, self-indulgent and insufficiently searching at various points. But the imaginative strengths of her fiction also point up the imaginative weaknesses. And despite all the limitations in her vision, her books still belong among those which can help us deepen our understanding of the world and our emotional lives.
Chapter One
Definitions of emotion

To speak about the treatment of emotion in George Eliot's novels, we first need some explanation of how the word "emotion" is used in this thesis. I will be using the word "emotion" interchangeably with "feeling". I am defining "emotion" as an inner experience or state. This inner experience is perhaps best thought of as psychobiological, provided that we remember emotions can vary from those which seem to be "purely mental" to emotions which make themselves known to us chiefly through some kind of physiological perturbation.

My decision to use the terms "emotion" and "feeling" interchangeably is controversial. Anna Wierzbicka comments "Scholars who debate the nature of emotions are interested in something other than just feelings. The notion that emotions must not be reduced to feelings is one of the few ideas on which advocates of different approaches to emotion (biological, cognitive, and sociocultural) generally strongly agree..."\(^1\) Nonetheless, Wierzbicka herself seeks to "define the area under consideration with reference to feeling".\(^2\) Wierzbicka's comments draw attention to the possibility that, by using "emotions" and "feelings" interchangeably, I have foreclosed any possibility of debating the nature of emotions. I hope this is not the case. Feelings, as I am using the term, refers to "inner experiences or states", not simply to phenomenological tone or to sensations. It should be taken to include states of mind (dispositions, attitudes, judgements) as well as experiences which seem to be more physiological. The other practical justification for using the two terms interchangeably is that George Eliot uses both, and a discussion confined to one term would be unnecessarily awkward.

The definition of emotions as inner experiences could be challenged as inadequate, or incorrect, on two grounds. One would be that it is simply wrong: that emotions do not refer to inner

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experiences. This stance would be taken by people with a behaviourist approach to emotions, as well as by the anthropologist Catherine Lutz, whose work among the Ifaluk people has led her to propose a theory of emotions as interpersonal processes, rather than as inner events.

The other challenge which could be made against this definition is that it is extremely vague. Shouldn't we aim for something more precise? As I shall shortly be arguing, it is essential that we begin with a broad definition of emotion, so that we do not foreclose the kinds of emotions we can focus on in George Eliot's fiction. Precision can only come later, in an analysis of how varying emotions are presented, how we identify them, and how they compare to various analyses of emotions put forward by linguists, psychologists, anthropologists and philosophers.

Challenges to the idea of emotions as inner experiences

Let us begin, though, by looking at the challenges to the idea that emotions are inner experiences. The main challenges come from two areas: the extreme versions of social constructionist and behaviourist views of emotion.

One of the major developments in the study of emotions during the last two decades has been the rise of social constructionist theories of emotion. These theories suggest that our cultures affect the way we react emotionally, or that they teach us how to react emotionally.

Moderate versions of social constructionism combine a focus on the way cultures construct our emotions with an acknowledgement that there may be (or that there is) a natural basis to our emotions. Extreme versions of social constructionism argue that emotions are entirely constructed by our cultures. It is one of the extreme versions of social constructionism which presents a challenge to the way the word "emotion" is used in this thesis. Catherine Lutz challenges the idea that emotions have to be internal states, and discusses an example of a culture — the Ifaluk — where they are seen as a relationship between people.3 Lutz’s interpretation has been contested by James Russell, who asks how we can know whether we are talking about an emotion word if it

does not refer to an internal experience. \(^4\) Wierzbicka, agreeing with Russell, comments that "A word that does not refer to an internal state cannot be said to be an emotion word". \(^5\) Russell has also queried Lutz's interpretation of her data, noting that Lutz's translations suggest that the emotion words she is studying refer to internal states, not to something external:

> I take this assertion [by Lutz] to mean, for example, that the Ifalukian word song, commonly translated as anger, refers not to the angry person's internal state, but to something external. There is first the question of whether Lutz's claim is consistent with her own ethnographic evidence. Lutz (1980) had earlier indicated that song refers to niferash, which she translated as "our insides". \(^6\)

Extending Russell's argument, we might note that Lutz groups together 31 Ifaluk words as being emotion terms because they are all about "our insides". This grouping suggests that the primary way the Ifaluk define emotion is as internal events, rather than as interpersonal experiences.

In her more recent work Lutz has argued that:

> Although we may experience emotion as something that rises and falls within the boundaries of our bodies, the decidedly social origins of our understandings of the self, the other, the world, and experience draw our attention to the interpersonal processes by which something called emotion or some things like joy, anger, or fear come to be ascribed to and experienced by us... Once de-essentialised, emotion can be viewed as a cultural and interpersonal process of naming, justifying, and persuading by people in relationship to each other. \(^7\)

Lutz is stressing the idea that emotions can be viewed not as internal states we may experience (by using the word "may" Lutz is casting doubt on the theory of emotions as internal states) but as interpersonal processes. Lutz's theory would only present a direct challenge to this thesis if we universalised it in a way that seems unnecessary: if we adopted another culture's alleged way of seeing emotions (as interpersonal processes) and then insisted that this was the only valid way in

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\(^6\) Russell, 445.

which we could view emotions, and that we must reject our own culture’s tendency to view them as internal states.

David Stove, arguing against the current trend towards cultural relativism, asks why a theory which has grown out of a particular culture must be therefore regarded as mistaken:

The cultural-relativist, for example, inveighs bitterly against our science-based, Europe-centred, white male cultural perspective. She says it is not only injurious but cognitively limiting. Injurious it may be; or again it may not. But why does she believe that it is cognitively limiting? Why, for no reason in the world, except this one: that it is ours. Everyone really understands, too, that this is the only reason. But since this reason is also generally accepted as a sufficient one, no other is felt to be needed.8

We can see the process which Stove is complaining about operating in Lutz’s view of emotions. Why must we regard emotions as a "process of naming, justifying and persuading" just because the Ifaluk do so? (Especially as — remembering Russell’s criticisms — it is by no means certain that the Ifaluk regard emotions in this way?) Why is the Western view of emotions as inner states automatically made subsidiary to the Ifaluk account? Isn’t it (as Stove has suggested) for no better reason than that it is Western, and therefore must be wrong?

Stove’s trenchant Positivism is not to everyone’s taste, so it might be useful here to remember a philosopher who acknowledges the force of cultural relativity without feeling that it impels us to abandon our values. I am referring to the theory we met in the Introduction to this thesis, Charles Taylor’s "best account" theory. Taylor argues (in relation to ethics) that we should not be forced to abandon terms which give the best account of our lives.9 "What better measure of reality do we have in human affairs", Taylor asks, "than those terms which on critical reflection and after correction of the errors we can detect make the best sense of our lives?"10 In a similar vein, Thomas Nagel warns against the voraciousness of the objective point of view, and argues

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9 Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 58.
10 Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 57.
that there should be a place kept for a subjective view of reality.\textsuperscript{11} And Mary Midgley, commenting on human psychology, writes:

\begin{quote}
We could not start to discriminate between anger and ambition, habit and jealousy as possible motives for an act unless we had an idea of the framework within which they work, of the kind of total character to which they must all belong. However obscure the idea of the whole must be in detail, its general shape is essential for explanation. And we do have that idea. No doubt if we ourselves did not also exemplify it — if we were members of an alien species with quite a different pattern of motives — we would have found it very hard to construct such a scheme. But this is a piece of bad luck which we do not have and need not imitate. We approach the problems of human psychology as humans, and it seems a pity to waste that advantage.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

The social constructionist view of emotions makes the universality of Midgley's comments questionable, but her basic point is important. Most readers of George Eliot's novels will have been partly shaped by the Western cultural tradition. Any reader who has not is likely to feel the need to understand something about that culture, and particularly about Anglo-Saxon culture, in order to appreciate its literature. (The same stress is placed on Western readers when they read literature from a markedly different culture). As Midgley remarks, we do not need to create artificial disadvantages for ourselves. We are used to using the words "emotion" and "feelings" to describe inner states or experiences; we have a rich understanding of the way those words are used in our culture. Nor does our culture have one simple stance towards them, as Lutz's own survey of Western theories reveals.\textsuperscript{13} The "passions", "emotions" or "feelings" of people have been a continuing source of debate, a debate in which Eliot and Lawrence take part.

The second major challenge to the idea that emotions are inner experiences or states comes from the more extreme versions of behaviourism. Behaviourist ideas which are opposed to the idea of emotions as inner experiences include those put forward by Gilbert Ryle. Ryle regards many emotion terms (particularly those which are used to explain people's behaviour) as nothing

\textsuperscript{11}Thomas Nagel, \textit{The View from Nowhere} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) 118-119.


\textsuperscript{13}Lutz, 53-80.
more than statements that a person is inclined to behave in a particular way.\textsuperscript{14} When we speak of someone as compassionate, Ryle argues, that description does not depend on the person having throbs or feelings of compassion: rather, we are saying that this person normally behaves in a compassionate manner. However, as Calhoun and Solomon comment, "nothing but" theories are always suspicious.\textsuperscript{15} Descriptions of someone's character (that they are inclined to get angry, for instance) may generally rest on a person's behaviour, but this does not mean that we need to eliminate the idea of emotions as inner experiences. A less extreme view is put forward by Frijda, who believes emotions include both behaviour and subjective valuations. Frijda suggests that the relationship between behaviour and emotion is complex and often difficult to interpret: "One and the same behaviour may "belong" to an array of different emotions; one and the "same" emotion may manifest itself in several different ways."\textsuperscript{16} J. P. Scott, similarly, includes in his study of the behavioural aspects of emotion an awareness of the importance of "subjective feelings or affect experienced by humans".\textsuperscript{17} The weight of current work in cognitive psychology has swung away from behaviourism and is concentrating on emotions as inner experiences. Writers in this field (along with philosophers of mind and moral philosophers) are paying close attention to links between thought and emotion, or are querying the idea that cognition and affect are separate. Strictly behaviourist views of emotions do not dominate the field.

All this is not to say that behaviour is unimportant in talking about emotion, or to deny that we often identify how a person is feeling from their behaviour. Proust gives us a comic example.


\textsuperscript{15}Calhoun and Solomon, 253.


of this, in showing Marcel behaving (despite his wish to conceal his infatuation) in a way that clearly reveals his love for the Duchesse de Guermantes. It is Marcel's inability to stay away from her, his "accidental" meetings with her on all her daily walks, which betrays his feelings to the Duchesse and others.\textsuperscript{18} In such cases we attend to the person's behaviour, and ignore his protests that he is really indifferent. Moreover, we often identify our own feelings (such as whether we are "really" in love) from our behaviour, rather than from introspection. In later chapters of this thesis, we will frequently look at how feelings flow into behaviour, how feelings are displayed in behaviour, how behaviour affects feelings. The split between inner experience and behaviour should not be regarded as absolute. The stress on inner experience, however, means that this thesis is following the lead of Paul Heelas in thinking that emotion cannot exist without some inner experience. Heelas writes:

> If talk is entirely about behaviour, then it is perhaps best not to regard it as emotional in meaning. The examples I have given count as emotion talk because, although behavioural loci are emphasized, inner experiences are not entirely left out of the picture.\textsuperscript{19}

Behaviour is certainly not irrelevant to emotion — but descriptions of emotion which entirely exclude inner experience seem incomplete.

**Challenges to vagueness**

The definition I have proposed should be thought of as a "fuzzy" definition, not one which is tightly delimited. For instance, I have referred to emotions as "inner experiences or states". An immediate objection to this might be that this does not distinguish between emotions and physical sensations: a feeling of anger, as against a pain in one's hand. Rom Harré has attempted to distinguish between these, categorising responses into ones that can be called emotions and ones which are purely bodily agitations. He comments, for instance: "Lust and depression are not


emotions. Depression is a mood and lust a bodily agitation.\textsuperscript{20} Harré also talks about "quasi-emotions", such as the feeling of misery when one coming down with the flu, and struggling home through the rain.\textsuperscript{21} He distinguishes these from actual emotions. Harré's category of quasi-emotions is interesting and suggests another solution: that we cannot always clearly distinguish between emotions and physical sensations. Wierzbicka, however, has commented on the way one can have a feeling without knowing whether it is physical or psychological (or both).\textsuperscript{22} Emotions and sensations may intermingle and entwine. Too much emphasis on splits between physical and mental sensations tends to create difficulties, the most famous of which is the Cartesian mind-body split (which we hardly have time to resolve in this thesis). It seems better to avoid such harsh divisions. Physical and mental responses are often mingled: so a feeling of anger might involve angry thoughts and an increased pulse.

Theorists of emotion typically try to define emotions, to look at what they consist of. At minimum, most theorists try to produce a clear, narrow definition of what the word "emotion" refers to. But this is not appropriate for literary criticism. If we want to examine George Eliot's treatment of emotion, it is unhelpful to have a definition which is clear but narrow. We need the broad term which Amélie Rorty has described, not a subset of it. Rorty stresses the disparate, varied phenomena which are grouped under the term "emotion":

Emotions do not form a natural class. After a long history of quite diverse debates about their classification, emotions have come to form a heterogeneous group: various conditions and states have been included in the class for quite different reasons and on different grounds, against the background of shifting contrasts. Fear, religious awe, exuberant delight, pity, loving devotion, panic, regret, anxiety, nostalgia, rage, disdain, admiration, gratitude, pride, remorse, indignation, contempt, disgust, resignation, compassion (just to make a random selection) cannot be shepherded together under one set of classifications as active or passive; thought-generated and thought-defined or physiologically determined; voluntary or nonvoluntary; functional or malfunctional; corrigible or not


\textsuperscript{22}Wierzbicka, "Emotion, Language, and Cultural Scripts", Kitayama and Markus, 144.
corrigible by a change of beliefs. Nor can they be sharply distinguished from moods, motives, attitudes, character traits. All the examples which Rorty cites (fear, delight, awe, pity and so on) can be included under the general definition of emotions as inner experiences. This indicates that the definition we are using is sufficiently broad. To begin with a definition of emotion which is any narrower than the varied class which Rorty has proposed, is to create problems of inflexibility.

Here, for instance, is Robert Solomon's definition of emotions, a definition which excludes physical sensations and reactions from playing a defining role in emotions:

It is the heart of my argument that "feelings" and physiology and, with qualifications, dispositions to behave, do not play an essential role in the constitution of emotions and cannot be used in even the most rudimentary account of the definitive properties of either emotions in general or particular emotions. My central claim is that emotions are defined primarily by their constitutive judgments, given structure by judgments, distinguished as particular emotions (anger, love, envy, etc.) as judgments, and related to other beliefs, judgments, and our knowledge of the world, in a "formal" way, through judgments. No alternative theory, it seems to me, has ever made the slightest progress in explaining the central features of emotion, as opposed to their red-in-the-face and visceral cramp symptomatology.

Unlike Rorty, Solomon appears to want to dismiss the physiological basis of emotions and to concentrate instead on the judgements they involve. Wierzbicka's comments on the difficulty we can have in distinguishing psychological and physical responses remind us that there are emotions which are less cognitively based and which would be difficult to define via Solomon's system of judgements.

The splits which Solomon makes between mental and physical tend to be too harsh when applied to the subtle depiction of emotions in George Eliot's novels. In describing emotions, Eliot often depicts an intertwining of the mental and the physical. Barbara Hardy, analysing Eliot's approach, writes of the "apparent effortlessness" with which Eliot combines natural symbolism and

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psychological observation, the way the narrator notes the mingling of physical discomfort and misery in Dorothea, feelings which are so intermingled that Dorothea cannot tell them apart.25

Adam Bede (by common critical assent) is less successful than Middlemarch. But in Adam Bede we can see again how intimately bodily exhaustion and sad thoughts intermingle to produce misery in Hetty:

For the first few miles out of Stoniton she walked on bravely, always fixing on some tree or gate or projecting bush at the most distant visible point in the road as a goal, and feeling a faint joy when she reached it. But when she came to the fourth milestone, the first she had happened to notice among the long grass by the roadside, and read that she was still only four miles beyond Stoniton, her courage sank. She had come only this little way, and yet felt tired, and almost hungry again in the keen morning air, for though Hetty was accustomed to much movement and exertion in-doors, she was not used to long walks, which produce quite a different fatigue from that of household activity. As she was looking at the milestone she felt some drops falling on her face — it was beginning to rain. Here was a new trouble which had not entered into her sad thoughts before; and quite weighed down by this sudden addition to her burden, she sat down on the step of a stile and began to sob hysterically.26

Hetty's burden is both physical and psychological; just as her pregnancy is both a weight on her mind and an additional drag on her body. It would be odd, for example, to respond to this passage by asking where Hetty felt miserable. Her misery is total, but it is clearly an embodied experience, in which sad thoughts weigh her down and exhaust her, while her exhaustion helps to contribute to her state of misery.

Keith Oatley thinks there are two components of emotion, action readiness and phenomenological tone. He writes "If we ask what the core of an emotion is, the best answer based on our present state of knowledge is that it is a mental state of readiness for action (Frijda, 1986) or a change of readiness."27 But do emotions really feel like states of readiness (or

unreadiness) for action? Isn't that making a feeling which may be inchoate and difficult to pin down rather too directly and practically related to our actions? The definition sounds unconvincing; George Eliot's descriptions of emotion, in contrast, often do sound convincing.

Laura Quinney is suspicious of the power of novelists, the way they persuade us that what they are saying is true. If what they are saying is true, Quinney asks, why do they expend so much literary power in convincing us? Against this suspicion we could set a quote from Iris Murdoch "You may know a truth", she says, "but if it's at all complicated you have to be an artist not to utter it as a lie." Murdoch here suggests that veracity can sometimes only come from the most finely, carefully crafted workmanship; from authors who make delicate discriminations in the hope of enlightening their readers. Later in this thesis, we shall look at some of the fine discriminations which George Eliot makes between emotions, and look at how attention to these discriminations both aids us in understanding her novels, and helps us to reflect on the differences between emotions.

A little later in Oatley's book, we find a partial explanation for his narrow definition of emotions. He defines emotions as states which last no longer than a few hours. Anything which lasts longer than this: for example, the sadness following a bereavement which may last for days, weeks, or even years is called a mood. However, in looking at the novels of George Eliot, one of the chief emotions we will be considering is romantic love: an emotion which frequently does last for years. It seems rather odd to call romantic love a mood rather than an emotion. Once again, we can see that Oatley is following a pattern which is typical of theorists of emotion: defining the word "emotion" much more narrowly than ordinary language does, in order to be able to describe a class of things with clear features in common. To narrow down emotions in this way has other implications. Oatley regards "emotions" as more compulsive than moods: they are short-term.

28Quinney, 9.
30Oatley, 23.
31Oatley's discussions are more flexible than his definitions: despite having separated moods from emotions, he discusses moods and dispositions within his book.
more intense, less controllable.\textsuperscript{32} If we adopted Oatley's definition and looked only at short-term, intense emotions, we would be likely to bias discussions of George Eliot's treatment of emotions, especially her concern with emotions and responsibility.

Rorty, rather than offering a definition of emotion, gave examples of the kinds of feelings, moods and so on which tended to be grouped under the term emotion. In this thesis, "emotion" will be used in the same way: as a general term under which we can focus on particular instances of love, anger, jealousy etc. within George Eliot's fiction. This, however, is a vague and negative way of approaching the definition of emotion. Should we be attempting to define it more precisely? There are many theories of emotions which offer a more precise definition. All these theories take for granted the idea that emotions are real, universal human experiences or states. They then go on to dissect emotions, to look at what their components are, and to describe a universal pattern of components for all emotions. I shall call this attempt to define a pattern the "component" view of emotions. The component view of emotions is popular with many philosophers and psychologists. Spinoza used it ruthlessly, dissecting and simplifying the components and causes of emotions in order to try to free people from the grip of passion. Thus despair, according to Spinoza, is "pain arising from the idea of something past or future concerning which all doubt is removed".\textsuperscript{33} If this strikes us as a "thin" account\textsuperscript{34}, a way of describing emotions which strips them of much of much of their meaning) it is intentional. Spinoza is being deliberately reductive, in order to rationalise and deny value to emotions.\textsuperscript{35} By reducing "despair" to a simple relationship with pain, he is trying to make us think about emotions more rationally and reduce their hold over our minds. We may also feel, though, that in this

\textsuperscript{32}Oatley, 24.


\textsuperscript{34}Simon Haines has discussed the work of several modern moral philosophers who are urging the need for a return to "thicker" ethical concepts (Haines, "Deepening the Self: The Language of Ethics and the Language of Literature," \textit{The Critical Review} 33 (1993) 20-21).

\textsuperscript{35}Martha Nussbaum has argued powerfully for the value of emotions and the need to experience them as rich particulars. (Nussbaum, \textit{Love's Knowledge}, 40-42)
simplification he has missed some essential qualities of despair: what type of pain is it? How does it differ from the type of pain referred to in his description of hatred: "Hatred is pain accompanying the idea of an external cause"? 

It may seem that Spinoza has already anticipated and answered this kind of objection in the section preceding his definitions of emotions. After all, doesn't he say:

There are as many species of pleasure, pain and desire, and consequently of every emotion which is composed of these (e.g. fluctuation of mind) or which is derived from them (e.g. love, hate, hope, fear, etc.) as there are species of objects by which we are affected.

A little later, he says "there is no comparison between the pleasure of a drunkard and the pleasure of a philosopher." Clearly this is no simple utilitarian account of emotion, which measures it only by the quantity of pleasure or pain. In what sense, then, can it be called reductive? Spinoza's reductivism is indicated by his dismissal of the differences between different kinds of emotions as unimportant:

For the rest, I cannot here explain the other species of emotions (which are as multitudinous as the species of objects) nor, if I could, is there any necessity for doing so. For with regard to the end we have in view, namely to determine the nature of the emotions and the power of the mind to control them, it suffices to have a general definition of each emotion.

This dismissal of the differences between emotions is needed because of Spinoza's wish to free us from our passions. As he makes clear, his aim is to show how the mind can control emotions. If he had investigated and displayed fully the subtle variations between emotions, it would have endangered this goal. Writing about emotions as though they were simple phenomena is a way of devaluing them. The other sign which should alert us to Spinoza's reductivism in his account of emotions is his style and language. As Martha Nussbaum has pointed out, the common view among philosophers that style is neutral, not part of meaning, is mistaken. Nussbaum draws

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36Spinoza, 142.
37Spinoza, 134.
38Spinoza, 135.
attention to Spinoza's deliberate choice of style. His use of a style which approaches the precision and detachment of mathematics, rather than a style which might capture the resonances of emotion, reflects his wish to detach us from the "confused idea" which is the essence of emotion.

Spinoza's view of emotions is very similar to Locke's. Locke defines sorrow as "uneasiness in the Mind, upon the thought of a Good lost, which might have been enjoy'd longer; or the sense of a present Evil." Fear is then defined as "an uneasiness of the Mind, upon the thought of future Evil likely to befall us." Locke was probably using the word "uneasiness" to indicate discomfort or anxiety (the association of restlessness with this word did not begin until the mid-eighteenth century, according to the Oxford English Dictionary). There are major qualitative differences between discomfort and anxiety, though. If we speculate that Locke was using "uneasiness" to mean discomfort in the case of sorrow, and anxiety in the case of fear, we must criticise him for an imprecise use of language. If, as seems more likely, he was using "uneasiness" to mean "discomfort" in the case of both sorrow and fear, we still run into problems. Locke's account does not seem to capture the qualitative difference between sorrow and fear. Like Spinoza, he uses one negative word (his use of "uneasiness" parallels Spinoza's use of "pain") and then says that the difference between the two emotions is related to their causes. When we search our own memories, and remember how both sorrow and fear feel, Locke's account is likely to seem false. The difference between these two emotions seems to lie as much in the affective experience of them as in their causes. A theory of emotions which reduces this experience to a undifferentiated universal experience, like "pain", does not reflect the richness and variability of human emotions, nor even their experiential quality.

39 Nussbaum, Love's Knowledge, 19, 34-35.
40 Spinoza, 151.
Ortony, Clore and Collins also take a component view of emotions, isolating and stressing a cognitive component. They describe emotions as "valenced reactions to events, agents, or objects, with their particular nature being determined by the way in which the eliciting situation is construed." Thus we feel resentment when someone we regard as undeserving obtains a promotion (provided we construe the promotion as being an outcome which will advantage that person). Justin Oakley develops a sophisticated model of the emotions, seeing them as a complex interaction of desires, cognitions and affective elements. Oakley argues that affectivity is always part of an emotion, even if we are not aware of it. He cites grief as being a typical instance of an emotion which may be affecting us (making us regard the whole world as cold and unloving, for example) without us being conscious of it.

The component view of emotions seems initially attractive. It promises a scientific model of emotions, breaking them down into their components and isolating the universal characteristics which apply to all emotions. It attempts to define emotions more clearly than we can in daily life, clarifying our confused intuitions about emotions, and giving us a more rigorous definition of what we mean by calling something an emotion. But the component view of emotions has serious disadvantages in the context of literary criticism. It can, for example, create results which are strongly counter-intuitive, as when Ortony, Clore and Collins designate "liking" as an intensity factor rather than an emotion. The problem with the component view is that it superimposes a theory across the work of the novelists we will looking at, so that their work becomes measured against this model. This allows little room for the novelists to present us with their own explorations of emotions, explorations which may well modify our thinking about emotions.

43 Ortony, Clore and Collins, 100-101.
45 Ortony, Clore and Collins, 76. Ortony, Clore and Collins concede liking can be an emotion, but only if it exceeds a certain intensity.
Cultural limits to theories of emotion

There is one group of theories about emotion which places useful limits on the way we will be talking about emotion in this thesis. These are the social constructionist theories of emotion. We saw earlier that there was an extreme version of social constructionism (supported by Lutz) which provided a challenge to the way the term "emotion" will be used in this thesis. Moderate versions of social constructionist theories, however, are not incompatible with the idea that emotions are inner experiences. Instead, they set limits to the universal applicability of this way of regarding emotions.

Moderate versions of social constructionism are compatible with a view that some emotions may be initially innate, though they stress the role cultures play in developing and training those emotions. Phoebe Ellsworth, supporting the moderate version of the social constructionist thesis, argues that it is essential not to dismiss either the natural or the socially constructed component of emotions.\(^\text{46}\) What kind of considerations does the moderate version of social construction ask us to take into account when using the word "emotion"? In answering this question, let us start by thinking about the words "feeling" and "emotion". Wierzbicka reminds us that "emotion" is an English word, which does not have a precise counterpart even within many European languages ("feel" is apparently more universal).\(^\text{47}\) Wierzbicka has questioned the appropriateness of using English classifications of emotions (such as anger and sadness) when writing about other cultures.\(^\text{48}\) Paul Heelas also queries our standard classifications of emotions, citing a study which indicates that English-speaking Ugandans do not distinguish between sadness and anger in the same way as Americans.\(^\text{49}\) The work of other anthropologists has focused on cultures where mental and physical feelings do not seem to be sharply distinguished from each other, and where comments on how a person is feeling are expressed in terms of what is happening to some part of


\(^{49}\) Paul Heelas, "Emotion Talk Across Cultures", Harré, 239.
These comments are helpful in setting limits to the scope of this thesis. The linguists, anthropologists and psychologists who are querying emotion terms are usually doing this to highlight the dangers of using English emotion terms to talk about other cultures or all of humanity. A thesis centred on the works of an English novelist cannot hope to contribute much to understanding how relevant the English concept "anger" is to a given culture, or whether certain emotions are universal. Moreover, most of the emotions which will be looked at in this thesis are ones which are often thought of as specific to Western cultures: such as romantic love. Others (such as hero-worship, ardour and enthusiasm) were possibly more encouraged in Victorian times than our own. It is well beyond the scope of this thesis to determine whether such emotions are universal, but no such claim is intended. Nor is it necessary to make such a claim to argue for the importance of George Eliot's treatment of emotion and the need to focus on it, both to illuminate her fiction and also to illuminate our own reflections about emotions. The word "our" refers only to the probable readers of Middlemarch, a group which is likely to be culturally limited.

We can see the interest in the idea that emotions are at least partly socially constructed without assuming that there is no natural basis to emotions. We can explore the idea that "we learn, largely from our culture, how to feel and when to emote". The quoted phrase is Parker's, in a discussion (to which I am indebted) of the rival views of the "social constructionist" and the "naturalist" conceptions of emotion. Parker notes that the social constructionist view of emotions can be traced back to Aristotle's view that the right feeling can be encouraged in us through repeated training. Parker's discussion concentrates wholly on the moderate thesis of social constructionism (a stance which enables him to find some continuity between Aristotle and Harré), which is the version of social constructionism that Western literary artists have been interested in. Due to this abiding interest of these artists in the way culture affects our emotions, it seems useful

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50 Wierzbicka refers to a study of an Austronesian language where images involving the liver are used to talk about all kinds of feelings. (Wierzbicka, "Emotion, Language, and Cultural Scripts", Kitayama and Markus, 148). Heelas refers to another culture which employs liver talk (Heelas, "Emotion Talk Across Cultures", Harré, 234.)

51 Parker, Ethics, Theory and the Novel, 99.
to keep the phrase "socially constructed emotions", remembering that we are using this in its moderate sense. From now on, when I refer to an emotion as being socially constructed, I will be emphasising the role social factors have played in creating that emotion in a person. This moderate version of social constructionism is the view of emotions which we appeal to when we want to claim that emotions can be shaped and altered. Parker comments that it "is often contrasted to a 'naturalist' (mostly Romantic) view which sees emotion as more or less primal, pre-social, and 'deep' and therefore an expression of our true nature".52 We shall be looking more closely at these two views of emotions later. Both play a role in D. H. Lawrence's and George Eliot's fiction.

While being aware that it is risky to use the same emotion terms for the entire human race, we still need to keep using the terms by which we can make sense of our own cultural experience: words like emotion, feeling. We need also to keep using the words which describe our emotional experience more precisely: words like love, anger and sadness. But this does not mean that we are prevented from questioning their accuracy. Words are notoriously imprecise, and the novelists we shall be looking at are well aware of the possible distance between any particular word and the emotion it designates. As George Eliot comments "There are many wonderful mixtures in the world which are all alike called love".53

George Eliot's thinking is remarkably close to the thought expressed more than a century later by Harre. Harre has criticised the way in which emotion terms are reified (treated as labels for real entities). He stresses the interpretive and classificatory nature of these terms, and challenges the idea that they refer to some underlying reality which can be divided in the same way:

Psychologists have always had to struggle against a persistent illusion that in such studies as those of the emotions there is something there, the emotion, of which the emotion word is a mere representation. This ontological illusion, that there is an abstract and detachable 'it' upon which


53 *Middlemarch*, 334; bk. 3, ch. 31.
research can be directed, probably lies behind the defectiveness of much emotion research. In many cases the only 'it' is some physiological state which is the basis of some felt perturbation.\textsuperscript{54}

Harre is not denying that people feel something, but he is stressing that it may not match our emotional labels, which we use to try to interpret our experience. In the passage below, Harre stresses that it is unhelpful to direct research towards explicating a general term like "anger": it is more helpful to look at a particular example of an angry person:

There has been a tendency among both philosophers and psychologists to abstract an entity — call it 'anger', 'love', 'grief' or 'anxiety' — and to try to study it. But what there is are angry people, upsetting scenes, sentimental episodes, grieving families and funerals, anxious parents pacing at midnight, and so on. There is a concrete world of contexts and activities. We reify and abstract from that concreteness at our peril.\textsuperscript{55}

Harre's emphasis on the need to look at concrete phenomena rather than abstractions suggests one advantage in looking at the treatment of emotions in novels rather than only in philosophical works. Later, we shall see that this concreteness is a strength of George Eliot's treatment of emotions (though it also means that we cannot necessarily generalise from the particulars she presents). Nonetheless, the examples we see in her novels of the way characters behave when they are in love, resentful, jealous etc. may lead us to query some theories of philosophers about those emotions.

\textsuperscript{54}Rom Harre, "An Outline of the Social Constructionist Viewpoint". Harre, 4.

\textsuperscript{55}Rom Harre, "An Outline of the Social Constructionist Viewpoint". Harre, 4.
Chapter Two
Judging emotions

Whether or not people are responsible for their emotions has long been a subject of debate in Western (particularly English) culture. Later in this thesis, we shall look at the question of emotions and responsibility in George Eliot's novels: looking both at whether characters are seen as responsible for their emotions, and at the related phenomenon of characters taking (or refusing) responsibility for their emotions. For the moment, let us start with some questions about judging emotions. How do we normally judge emotions in our daily lives? How do George Eliot and D. H. Lawrence judge the emotions they present in their novels? How do they encourage (or moderate) the judgements we are inclined to make of those emotions?

The first question, perhaps, is whether we judge emotions at all. Kant declared that emotions were morally irrelevant, and so a Kantian might argue that we do not (or at least should not) judge others on the basis of emotions.

Justin Oakley has argued (against this Kantian position) that emotions are morally relevant, that we can and should make judgements about them. Oakley takes an Aristotelian view, seeing emotions as at least partly under control, as states we can encourage or discourage. In this, he might seem to be similar to other Aristotelian philosophers, such as N. J. H. Dent, who is interested in exploring the way we can train our feelings. Where Dent and Oakley differ is that Dent argues that emotions are part of virtues. Dent suggests, for instance, that part of what we mean when we describe someone as kind is that they are likely to have and to encourage in themselves kindly feelings, rather than simply performing kindly actions. Dent suggests that an important part of a virtuous action is that it is performed in the "right spirit": a mode of assessing virtue which takes an agent's feelings and motives into account.

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1Oakley, 1-3, passim.
3Dent, 7.
significance of emotions is somewhat different from Dent's. Oakley's claims are stronger and perhaps less persuasive. Where Dent takes the view that emotions are part of virtues, Oakley is inclined to argue that at least some of the virtues are emotions. Oakley lists sympathy, interest, care and courage as emotions, for instance.\(^4\) It is a slightly curious list (fear, anger, love and guilt would be more typical entries under the heading emotion). Oakley wards off some criticism by stipulating that he is referring only to the emotional forms of sympathy, interest and care.\(^5\) However, there are still problems with Oakley's approach, which will become clearer if we look at his treatment of courage.

Oakley claims that courage is an emotion, and says that we may be admired for it.\(^6\) That courage is regarded as a virtue is uncontroversial, but claiming courage as an emotion seems doubtful. Courage does seem related to emotion (the emotion of fear) but it is just as intimately related to the external world. The English word "courage" is typically used of someone who is enduring danger, great misfortune or pain with fortitude. (In some other European languages, such as Polish, there are separate terms for the resolute endurance of danger and the endurance of misfortune such as illness).\(^7\) Even more importantly, courage must be displayed through action. Indeed, "display" is too weak a word. It is part of the logic of courage that it must be visible: we do not accept descriptions of mental states alone as showing courage. If someone says that they were happy, sad, scared or excited yesterday, we may ask them "Why did you feel like that?"; but we will not question the description of the mental state itself. In contrast, if someone said they were very brave yesterday, we would immediately ask "What did you do?" Only if the answer to that question is satisfactory will we accept that the person showed courage.

It is true that someone may display mental courage: for instance, in "courageously facing religious doubts" but my point is that this courage must be displayed in order to earn its label.

\(^4\)Oakley, 54.
\(^5\)Oakley, 36.
\(^6\)Oakley, 40.
\(^7\)I am indebted to Mary Besemerès (personal communication) for this information.
Courageous "thinkers" are not praised on the basis of a solipsistic existence: we call them courageous because of what they have written, said or done. Courage is an attribute, a quality which is ascribed to someone, which is why it must be proven: it must become part of the public world of action. This does not mean that courage only comes into existence when it is recognised by others: an isolated Robinson Crusoe might show great courage. Rather, it is that we do not apply attributive labels to people (courageous, tactful, kind) unless there is some evidence for them: evidence, rather than an invisible mental state. A courageous man does not simply feel courageous: he is courageous, and we will only accept him as such if he has demonstrated it in deeds. A quality which must be demonstrated in action in order to be accepted as real is unlikely to be an emotion (if we continue to follow Wierzbicka’s and Russell’s lead in regarding emotions as internal states). There are other problems in calling courage an emotion, though, and these concern the dual relationship that courage has with fear and danger (or pain or misfortune). It seems that at least one of these elements must be present in order for us to describe someone as courageous. We might, for example, say to a colleague who has just made a speech (and whom we know to be terrified of public speaking) "That must have taken a lot of courage". Even though public speaking is not dangerous, we recognise the courage the person showed in overcoming their fear. This is not a patronising misdescription of courage, for we would not make the same remark to someone who thought making speeches was lots of fun (making such a comment would be illogical). At the other end of the scale, we might greatly admire the courage of a skilled mountaineer. In this case we would not need to assume that the mountaineer was frightened in order to ascribe courage to him. We call him courageous because he has put himself in considerable physical danger.

It might seem, then, that one of the highest forms of courage is when great fear is combined with great physical danger. In a third person sense we can often acknowledge this: when we think about resistance workers in occupied France, for example. If a woman who had hidden Jews from the Nazis testified that she had felt terrified while doing so, we would not think that this showed she was not courageous. Rather, we would admire her for continuing her courageous actions despite her fear and the danger which surrounded her. Why then does fear often seem the opposite of courage? Why do people say "No, I wasn't really brave. I felt frightened the whole time"? Doesn't
this indicate that courage is an emotion, and one which is the opposite of fear? The seeming incompatibility of fear with courage comes from another reason. We usually acknowledge that it is harder to act courageously when you are afraid. More fear means more determination is needed to overcome it. A person who is timid, therefore, is less likely to be able to act courageously in the face of great danger than a person who is typically fearless. I am not of course claiming (as an empirical and statistically attested fact) that habitually timid people act less bravely in the face of great danger than typically fearless people. I am merely claiming that our "folk theory" of courage is that people who are timid even in untesting situations will be unlikely to act courageously in the face of great danger. The existence of such a folk theory, which is demonstrated in the way we talk about courage, explains the seeming contradictions: we value fearless people because we expect them to act courageously, but since action provides the only proof of courage, we also greatly value people who feel fear but act courageously. The common usage of the word courage provides no support for Oakley's claim that courage is an emotion.

Does the failure of Oakley's argument as regards courage, then, indicate that emotions are morally irrelevant? It can hardly do this, for we might note that the arguments made against Oakley all depend themselves on moral judgements about emotions: that overcoming fear is admirable, that having little natural tendency to fear is also admirable. The arguments against Oakley are intended to prevent blurring virtues (such as courage) into the class of emotions. This blurring could perhaps win readers to the view that emotions are morally relevant, but only via a false argument.

There are many other philosophical defences of emotions as morally relevant, and some of these are more convincing than Oakley's. John Sabini and Maury Silver have noted that we frequently judge other people on the general quality of their emotional response: their warmth, for example, or their spontaneity. They also argue that a person's emotions reveal something about

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both character and beliefs, about what values that person is committed to. Arguing against Kant's theory that emotions are morally irrelevant, Sabini and Silver put forward the example of someone reacting to a five-year-old who has been raped. They argue that regardless of the person's behaviour, whether he feels compassion or anger towards the five-year-old is important, and that it would be a good reason for either picking that person as a friend or avoiding him.

Sabini and Silver also note that we make judgements about particular emotions. We might disapprove of the emotion of anger under all circumstances, for instance, and always judge it to be bad. Or we might disapprove of anger when we feel it towards a friend, but not when we feel it towards a stranger. Aristotle comments that there are some emotions whose names already imply badness: to describe an emotion as "infatuation" usually involves slight disapproval rather than admiration.

Modern philosophers who are interested in the moral relevance of the emotions have tended to focus on whether or not we can be held responsible for our emotions, and more generally, on whether emotions are important. Martha Nussbaum's work in this area has been of great value in focusing philosophical attention on emotions. She argues that emotions are important and partly controllable (making this point powerfully through an analysis of Agamemnon's feelings in Aeschylus's Agamemnon) and that we can be regarded as responsible for cherishing or suppressing certain feelings.

As David Parker and Catherine Lutz have recently pointed out, there are broad differences in our culture over whether emotions are desirable and whether they are controllable.

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9 John Sabini and Maury Silver, "Emotions, responsibility and character", Schoeman, 168.
13 Lutz, 53-80.
Kant and Spinoza saw no moral value in the emotions, while for the Romantics, emotions were seen as part of the natural self, and were highly valued. In much of Blake's important poetry, for example, desire is celebrated and restraints on desire are damned. As Alicia Ostriker comments, Blake's attitude to desire is complex.\textsuperscript{14} Ostriker notes that Blake's early celebration of desire does not fit with his later poetry, in which he begins to portray women in ways which emphasise their destructive qualities and the dangers involved in desire and sexuality,\textsuperscript{15} but we can see a celebration of desire in his Songs, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell", "The Visions of the Daughters of Albion", and in some of the early Notebook poems. K. M. Newton stresses the importance of feeling for the Romantics:

\begin{quote}
One of the prime beliefs one finds in the work of the early Romantics, particularly the English Romantics, is that feeling can be a direct means of knowledge. They saw it as not merely supporting reason but as superior to it.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Newton explores the importance of this view of feeling for George Eliot, and sees her as setting up a debate in \textit{The Mill on the Floss} between "feelings that are the product of natural impulses and feelings that are an integral part of one's sense of the past."\textsuperscript{17} Newton analyses the debate between Maggie and Stephen in these terms, seeing it as a debate between two Romantic theories about feeling: an egoistic Romantic view which sees feelings as something which must be acted on, and an organic Romantic view which emphasises that one's whole self must be involved in such feelings. The views of the Romantics more generally contrast with what David Parker has called the classical tradition, deriving from Aristotle, which sees emotions as controllable and trainable.\textsuperscript{18} Each of these different views of emotions brings with it different moral judgements.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[15]{Ostriker, "Desire Gratified and Ungratified: William Blake and Sexuality", Hilton, 226.}
\footnotetext[17]{Newton, 115.}
\footnotetext[18]{Parker, \textit{Ethics, Theory and the Novel}, 98.}
\end{footnotes}
What does the word "moral" mean here, and what kind of judgements are involved in discussing emotions? Bernard Williams has argued that "the moral" is a subdivision of "the ethical". In *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, he calls morality "a particular variety of ethical thought".\(^{19}\) In *Moral Luck*, Williams criticises claims of "morality". He cites Gauguin as an example, arguing that his painting was valuable, even if it was not morally right for him to cut himself off from his family.\(^{20}\) As Mary Midgley points out, however, Williams is simplifying the world in arguing in this way. His definition of "moral" excludes the claims of the self and looks only at the claims of others. Midgley remarks that we do not have to endorse Gauguin's actions just because we admire his paintings: "The argument from gratitude, however, is not convincing. In this complicated world, no one can avoid constantly receiving benefits which result from past abuses."\(^{21}\) It is only because Williams defines "moral" narrowly that he can draw a distinction between "moral" and "ethical". S. L. Goldberg has criticised the narrowness of Williams' definition of the moral, and asks "why should we not call his 'ethical reactions' both 'moral' and 'judgements'?"\(^{22}\) In contradistinction to Williams' terminology, then, the term "moral" will be used in a broad sense in this thesis, encompassing the concerns Williams regards as "ethical".

The word "moral" often carries heavy baggage with it. We say, for example, that someone has acted morally, meaning that we approve of his actions, that we admire him. But there is a much broader way of interpreting the word "moral", one which Aristotle first formulated. Aristotle saw moral matters as those which related to the question "How should a human being live?"\(^{23}\) Modern anti-foundationalist moral philosophers, such as Martha Nussbaum, have returned to this

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\(^{22}\) Goldberg, *Agents and Lives*, 274.

\(^{23}\) Williams founds his notion of the ethical on Socrates' question about how one should live (Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, 1-4) but narrows down ethical considerations to exclude egoism (Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, 12). The use of the word "ethical" in this thesis is again broader than Williams' usage.
formulation because they feel it captures the full range of issues we include under the term "ethics". As David Parker points out, one of the features of Aristotelian ethics is "an insistence on the practical nature of ethics and ethical reflection, its raison d'être being its relevance to the deeply problematic business of living well."\textsuperscript{24} What Parker is stressing here is the kind of concern which is central to Aristotelian ethics and which is, as Simon Haines has pointed out, so notably lacking in modern theories of ethics such as emotivism. Haines discusses the work of a group of modern moral philosophers (including Bernard Williams, Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Stanley Cavell, Cora Diamond, Annette Baier, Martha Nussbaum and Raimond Gaita) who are critical of theories which lack this practical focus. All of these modern philosophers express the same frustration at our having been told for nearly a century (Moore's \textit{Principia Ethica} came out in 1903) that in ethics the important things are the ones we cannot speak about; or that to speak about them is simply to say "boo" or "hurrah" with rhetorical embellishments; or that the moral questions which really matter are not "How should one live?" or even "What should I do?" but "What kind of thing is a moral judgement?", and "What kind of concept is 'good'?"\textsuperscript{25}

A return to Aristotelian ethics involves a radical departure from the kind of detached speculation about terms which Haines describes here. In Aristotle's work we find instead a sense of urgency and practical purpose. In the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, he states firmly: "we are inquiring not in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good, since otherwise our inquiry would have been of no use" (N. E., 1103b).\textsuperscript{26} In the \textit{Eudemian Ethics}, he says: "For we do not wish to know what bravery is but to be brave, nor what justice is but to be just, just as we wish to be in health rather than to know what being in health is, and to have our body in good condition rather than to know what good condition is" (E. E., 1216b).\textsuperscript{27} Rather than taking a detached sceptical position and querying the nature of moral terms, Aristotle returns us to the living of life. We need to act justly, for example, rather than inquiring into the nature of justice.

\textsuperscript{24}Parker, \textit{Ethics, Theory and the Novel}, 37.

\textsuperscript{25}Haines, "Deepening the Self", 15.

\textsuperscript{26}Aristotle, \textit{Aristotle's Ethics}, 62; \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, bk. 2, sec. 2, 1103b.

\textsuperscript{27}Aristotle, \textit{Aristotle's Ethics}, 190; \textit{Eudemian Ethics}, bk. 1, sec. 5, 1216b.
Taking an Aristotelian position means that the word "moral" is interpreted broadly, as including all responses to the question "how to live". We judge emotions morally in our attempts to answer that question. The question "how to live" tends to throw up other questions: we might ask, hypothetically, was it possible for this emotion to be controlled? Would our lives be better if we were not suffering from (say) jealousy or guilt? Our answers to such questions clearly take the form of moral judgements of emotions.

There is a sense in which all the ways we describe emotions could be called judgements. When we name emotions, labelling them "love" or "infatuation", "admiration" or "envy", what are we doing but judging them? When we decide emotions are "artificial" or "natural", "real" or "not real", "serious" or "unimportant", "controllable" or "uncontrollable", aren't these judgements? Judgements seem embedded in the way we talk about emotions. A thesis like this one, which is engaged in making fine discriminations between emotions, which evaluates emotions and their controllability, is based on making judgements of emotions. Yet although this thesis can hardly be opposed to the practice of judging of emotions, there are dangers in judging emotions which it is worthwhile highlighting. These include the danger of judging emotions too quickly (and therefore carelessly), as well as the risk of unfairly dismissing or condemning certain emotions. I would like to draw attention to these dangers by pointing to the contrasting treatment of various judgements of emotion by George Eliot and D. H. Lawrence. Do these authors encourage their readers to make quick judgements of emotion, or are they more wary?

**Judging emotions: The Mill on the Floss**

Within George Eliot's novels, we find characters making frequent judgements about other people's feelings. The "world's wife", towards the end of *The Mill on the Floss*, for example, is as eager to comment on and criticise the feelings of Stephen, Maggie, Philip and Lucy as to comment on their behaviour:

Mr Stephen Guest had certainly not behaved well; but then, young men were liable to those sudden infatuated attachments — and bad as it might seem in Mrs Stephen Guest to admit the faintest advances from her cousin's lover (indeed it had been said that she was actually engaged to young Wakem — old Wakem himself had mentioned it) still she was very young — 'and a deformed young
man, you know! — and young Guest so very fascinating, and, they say, he positively worshipped her 
(to be sure, that can't last!) and he ran away with her in the boat quite against her will — and what 
could she do? . . . Poor Miss Deane! She is very pitiable — but then, there was no positive 
engagement — and the air at the coast will do her good. After all, if young Guest felt no more for her 
than that, it was better for her not to marry him. . . .

The attention of the world's wife moves quickly from Stephen's behaviour to his feelings: it is an 
"infatuated attachment" which "can't last". But his feelings for Maggie, although they are regarded 
with some disapproval, are rated as more important than his feelings for Lucy. His attachment to 
Lucy is judged as having been shallow; his attachment to Maggie is regarded as somewhat 
reprehensible but stronger. All this disapproval would have been directed at Maggie and Stephen 
had they returned as man and wife; but as George Eliot notes with a Thackerayan touch, the social 
advantages of visiting the well-to-do Guests would have outweighed it. The tone of judgement 
becomes more extreme when St Ogg's realises that Maggie has returned alone:

A girl so much indebted to her friends — whose mother as well as herself had received so much 
kindness from the Deanes — to lay the design of winning a young man's affections away from her 
own cousin who had behaved like a sister to her? Winning his affections? That was not the phrase 
for such a girl as Miss Tulliver: it would have been more correct to say that she had been actuated by 
mere unwomanly boldness and unbridled passion.

Again, the commentary moves rapidly, eagerly from a discussion of behaviour to a discussion of 
emotions. The focus moves from Maggie's behaviour — what she may have done to attract 
Stephen — to her motives and feelings. What she felt, the world's wife decides confidently, was 
"unwomanly boldness and unbridled passion". This is also, we might note, the kind of commentary 
that has given the phrase "moral judgement" a bad name: it is narrow, self-satisfied, moralistic, 
bullying and clearly false. However, as Parker and Goldberg have pointed out, our rejection of this 
kind of moral judgement is a moral choice in itself.

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vol. 3, bk. 7, ch. 2.


30 Parker, *Ethics, Theory and the Novel*, 10-13. Parker is discussing here how the work of philosophers and 
critics like Martha Nussbaum, John Finnis, Wayne Booth, Peter Dews and Kate Soper has begun to expose
Throughout *The Mill on the Floss* we can see different judgements being directed towards Maggie's feelings. They form part of a central debate over whether her feelings are justifiable, whether they have value, and whether they are important. The process starts early in the novel, when Maggie is feeling miserable because Tom is angry with her. As we read this passage, we are tempted to dismiss Maggie's feelings as comic rather than serious. We are skilfully encouraged to do this by the narrator, who also seems to be making such judgements here:

Those bitter sorrows of childhood! — when sorrow is all new and strange, when hope has not yet got wings to fly beyond the days and weeks, and the space from summer to summer seems measureless.

Maggie soon thought she had been hours in the attic, and it must be tea-time, and they were all having their tea, and not thinking of her. Well, then, she would stay up there and starve herself — hide herself behind the tub and stay there all night, and then they would all be frightened and Tom would be sorry. Thus Maggie thought in the pride of her heart, as she crept behind the tub; but presently she began to cry again at the idea that they didn't mind her being there. If she went down again to Tom now — would he forgive her? — perhaps her father would be there and he would take her part. But then, she wanted Tom to forgive her because he loved her, not because his father told him. No, she would never go down if Tom didn't come to fetch her. This resolution lasted in great intensity for five dark minutes behind the tub; but then the need of being loved, the strongest need in poor Maggie's nature, began to wrestle with her pride and soon threw it. She crept from behind her tub into the twilight of the long attic, but just then she heard a quick footstep on the stairs.  

In this superb piece of comic writing, Eliot is playing adeptly with our prejudices as well as entertaining us. She is both inviting identification with Maggie, as we remember our own childhoods, and distancing us from her. Memory is evoked as she reminds us of those "bitter sorrows of childhood" but instantly countered by the suggestion that children have a false perspective, while we as older readers have a viewpoint that can look "beyond the days and weeks". The comedy and the realism of this passage are created by the way narratorial comment...
is used to counterpoint free indirect style, with Maggie's childish thoughts being juxtaposed against an adult vision. The note of childish vengeance is perfectly rendered ("she would stay up here and starve herself — hide herself behind the tub and stay there all night, and then they would all be frightened and Tom would be sorry"), and yet there is a touch of pathos, as we sense that tears are not too far away. Comedy gains ground over pathos as we move to the ironic voice of the narrator, with the mock-biblical phrase "in the pride of her heart" being used to set up another comic contrast between the grand sinners of the Bible and Maggie. The deflating of Maggie's heroic resolution follows immediately: "This resolution lasted in great intensity for five dark minutes behind the tub". Yet there is more than just deflation here, for we are both drawn into Maggie's vision of the world, as we experience the "dark" minutes with her, and pulled away, as the narrator reminds us of the amusingly short time span.

The passage stresses time, and we are tempted to judge Maggie's feelings as not serious because of the short time they last. But George Eliot has a surprise in store for us, just as we are smiling over Tom and Maggie's easy reconciliation:

We learn to restrain ourselves as we get older. We keep apart when we have quarrelled, express ourselves in well-bred phrases, and in this way preserve a dignified alienation, showing much firmness on one side, and swallowing much grief on the other. 32

Suddenly it is the permanent feelings which are suspect, cemented as they are by behaviour rather than true intensity. Our awareness of the artificiality of these adult feelings casts into doubt our dismissive judgements of Maggie's feelings: until we read the passage again, and are beguiled by its comedy into the same mistake.

We are trapped in the same way when we are amused by the mock-heroic comparison of the shorn Maggie to Ajax:

What could she do but sob? She sat as helpless and despairing among her black locks as Ajax among the slaughtered sheep. 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

32 Mill on the Floss, 91; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 5.
Maggie — perhaps it was even more bitter — than what we are fond of calling antithetically the real troubles of mature life. Here, as earlier, Eliot casts some doubt on the seriousness of these adult emotions (dryly combining "dead loves" with "Christmas bills") and in doing so, asks us to reassess our judgements of Maggie's feelings. A little later, George Eliot makes her purpose explicit:

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? This is of course the operation that George Eliot is performing for us: making us recover the experience of our childhoods, reviving the consciousness of what we felt then. Along with the process of resurrecting those feelings comes the demand that we reassess them, that we consider our judgements of them more carefully.

So far we have looked at the judgements which we as readers are encouraged to make about Maggie's emotions, but her relationships with Tom, Philip and Stephen are constantly defined in terms of their judgements about her feelings. Tom is the one who always resists Maggie's views of her feelings, and defines them on his own, unfavourable terms. In return, Maggie judges him: his anger over the dead rabbits is "cruel", and his reproach to her over the jam puff is "unmerited". As they grow older, the terms of the debate harden:

'I don't want to defend myself —' said Maggie, still with vehemence: '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. If you were in fault ever — if you had done anything

33 Mill on the Floss, 122; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 7.
34 Mill on the Floss, 122; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 7.
36 Mill on the Floss, 89; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 5.
37 Mill on the Floss, 100; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 6.
very wrong. I should be sorry for the pain it brought you — I should not want punishment to be heaped on you. But you have always enjoyed punishing me — you have always been hard and cruel to me — even when I was a little girl, and always loved you better than any one else in the world, you would let me go crying to bed without forgiving me. You have no pity — you have no sense of your own imperfection and your own sins. It is a sin to be hard — it is not fitting for a mortal — for a Christian. You are nothing but a Pharisee. You thank God for nothing but your own virtues — you think they are great enough to win you everything else. You have not even a vision of feelings by the side of which your shining virtues are mere darkness!'

'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. 

The speeches here capture the faults on both sides, and the tendency each has to harshly judge the other. In different ways, each blames the other for their feelings, and questions (Tom more explicitly than Maggie) the reality of the other's love for them. Maggie's judgement, "you have always enjoyed punishing me", draws us in to question whether this is accurate, to make our own judgements about Tom's feelings. Tom is certainly dictatorial, but we are likely to feel some uneasiness about Maggie's characterisation of him as sadistic. Maggie's account of her own feelings is also thrown into question. Her claim that she would not want punishment to be heaped on Tom rings rather false when it is so evident that she is still nursing vengeful feelings over Tom's "cruel" behaviour to her when she was a child. This speech is her attempt to punish him, to belittle his "shining virtues". As Tom perceives, she can only do it by aggrandising herself. Her accusation, "You have not even a vision of feelings by the side of which your shining virtues are mere darkness!", may seem to have Christian overtones, coming as it does so soon after her reference to Pharisees; but the real standard of comparison is Maggie herself. She would like Tom to feel that he is "mere darkness" compared to her. Despite her claim to have loved him "better", her fantasies focus around humiliating him and making him worship her. Tom's immediate retort, "If your feelings are so much better than mine, let me see you show them", is

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\[38\] *Mill on the Floss*, 450; vol. 2, bk. 5, ch. 5.
cutting because it answers Maggie on this level — she must prove herself worthy to be admired. Tom's next comment, however, is perhaps the most important here: as he says, he has "a different way of showing his affection."

It is the stress which the novel puts on Tom's 'different way' which ensures that Tom remains a sympathetic character. Maggie cannot see him clearly — she is inclined alternately to adore and resent him. The strength of her adoration drags resentment in its wake: she feels the need to knock down the idol she has created in order to enhance her own status. Significantly, when Bob suggests Tom may have his own love troubles, Maggie thinks about them only for a moment.\(^{39}\) To think about them too deeply would threaten her image of Tom, and Maggie is only comfortable when she is either hero-worshipping or defying her brother. She cannot move to a relationship which would involve seeing him as vulnerable. That the novel does see Tom in this way is an indication that there is more here than the self-pity and immaturity which Leavis saw.\(^{40}\)

The struggle between these two different ways gives depth to the debate over feelings in the novel. Tom and Maggie continually make different moral judgements over feeling: about what is right, what is more important, what is real and what is controllable. As Goldberg has commented, a central part of Tom's morality is that feelings are controllable,\(^{41}\) a point of view which Maggie pleads against. Maggie is more divided over these issues than Tom, as she feels the force of his

\(^{39}\) Myers refers to Maggie being unpleasantly dismissive here, and says this is the novel's weakest moment intellectually (William Myers, *The Teaching of George Eliot* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984) 127). But within the novel, Maggie's attitude does seem to be placed as inadequate: not least by the fact that the place where she dismisses Tom's troubles is within his cramped lodgings. Their cramped nature is twice stressed by the narrator (see 499, 506; vol. 3, bk. 6, ch. 4) swinging the reader's sympathy towards Tom.


arguments while he tends not to accept hers. (This does not necessarily make things easier for Tom: his lack of division here is part of what Gillian Beer rightly describes as his burden.\textsuperscript{42})

One of the dissatisfying aspects of the ending of the novel is that it tips the scales in this debate unfairly. It seems to have been designed to grant Maggie's childish wish to make Tom sorry, and to make him see her as she sees herself:

It was not till Tom had pushed off and they were on the wide water — he face to face with Maggie — that the full meaning of what had happened rushed upon his mind. It came with so overpowering a force — such an entirely new revelation to his spirit, of the depths in life, that had lain beyond his vision which he had fancied so keen and clear, that he was unable to ask a question. They sat mutely gazing at each other: Maggie with eyes of intense life looking out from a weary, beaten face — Tom pale with a certain awe and humiliation.\textsuperscript{43}

Ostensibly, what impresses Tom is "a story of almost miraculous divinely-protected effort", but his gaze focuses on Maggie's face. What Tom sees is Maggie's nobility, a larger nature than his own. And what makes the moral thinking in the novel particularly poor here is that Maggie agrees that his new vision is correct. Tom is humbled, looking with "awe and humiliation" at "depths" that he had never realised existed. Maggie has achieved a fantasy here. It is a fantasy granted by an improbable twist in the narrative, which forces Tom to see Maggie exactly as she sees herself. George Eliot is normally keenly aware that other people often do not see us as flatteringly as we see ourselves (this is a form of self-delusion that she exposes in \textit{Middlemarch}, when she forces Bulstrode to see his unflattering image in Mr Vincy's terms\textsuperscript{44}). This awareness of the flattering nature of our self-portraits is an insight we meet in her earliest fiction. In "Amos Barton", she comments:


\textsuperscript{43}\textit{Mill on the Floss}, 654; vol. 3, bk. 7, ch. 5.

\textsuperscript{44}\textit{Middlemarch}, 159; bk. 2, ch. 13.
Indeed, what mortal is there of us, who would find his satisfaction enhanced by an opportunity of comparing the picture he presents to himself of his own doings, with the picture they make on the mental retina of his neighbours?45 Interpreting ourselves more favourably than others do is, as Eliot comments, a self-protective but egoistic device. What we see in *The Mill on the Floss* is the reverse of this insight, for Maggie's satisfaction is enhanced by seeing the new picture appear in Tom's mental retina. As Barbara Hardy comments, *The Mill on the Floss* is about doing without fantasies, but in its ending we have a collection of fantasies, including "the fantasy of being finally righted and understood".46 This final hijacking of the debate between Tom and Maggie, though, does not cancel what has gone before it. The debate is focused on Maggie's feelings, with the novel both inviting judgements on them and querying any that are made. Throughout *The Mill on the Floss*, George Eliot is urging us to exercise caution in judging emotions: particularly where we are inclined to dismiss them as not real or as unimportant.

**Judging emotions: *Lady Chatterley's Lover***

D. H. Lawrence, in contrast, wanted to dismiss many emotions. In Lawrence's "Apropos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*" whole categories of emotions are judged to be worthless:

The body feels real hunger, real thirst, real joy in the sun or the snow, real pleasure in the smell of roses or the look of a lilac bush; real anger, real sorrow, real love, real tenderness, real warmth, real passion, real hate, real grief. All the emotions belong to the body, and are only recognised by the mind. We may hear the most sorrowful piece of news, and only feel a mental excitement. Then, hours after, perhaps in sleep, the awareness may reach the bodily centres, and true grief wrings the heart.

How different they are, mental feelings and real feelings. Today, many people live and die without having had any real feelings — though they have had a 'rich emotional life' apparently, having showed strong mental feelings. But it is all counterfeit. In magic, one of the so-called 'occult' pictures


represents a man standing, apparently, before a flat table mirror, which reflects him from the waist to the head, so that you have the man from head to waist, then his reflection downwards from the waist to head again. And whatever it may mean in magic, it means what we are today, creatures whose active emotional self has no real existence, but is all reflected downwards from the mind. Our education from the start has taught us a certain range of emotions, what to feel and what not to feel, and how to feel the feelings we allow ourselves to feel. All the rest is just non-existent. The vulgar criticism of any new good book is: Of course nobody ever felt like that! — People allow themselves to feel a certain number of finished feelings. So it was in the last century. This feeling only what you allow yourselves to feel at last kills all capacity for feeling, and in the higher emotional range you feel nothing at all. This has come to pass in our present century. The higher emotions are strictly dead. They have to be faked.47

We can see in the passage above certain key points in Lawrence's theory of emotions: a recognition of the way emotions can be learnt ("Our education from the start has taught us a certain range of emotions"), coupled with a rejection of the validity of these emotions ("This feeling only what you allow yourselves to feel at last kills all capacity for feeling"), and a valuing of "real feelings". "Real feelings" are those emotions which Lawrence believes are intimately connected with the body and the natural life. They are "spontaneous", "true" and arise from deep impulses of man's natural self, as opposed to his socialised self. A theoretical framework which privileges certain emotions and denies the validity of other responses leads to the dismissal of many emotional reactions. And this tendency to dismissiveness (not to mention condemnation) becomes very evident in Lawrence's treatment of sexual desire in Lady Chatterley's Lover.

Lawrence's views about emotions derive from his broader beliefs about human psychology, beliefs which Daniel Schneider has examined in detail: his distrust of the socialised self, his wish to put man back in touch with nature,48 his belief that "blood-knowledge" is the only true

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47D. H. Lawrence, "Apropos of Lady Chatterley's Lover", Lady Chatterley's Lover (London: Heinemann, 1961) 16. All subsequent references to "Apropos" are to this edition. This passage is also discussed by David Parker (Parker, Ethics, Theory and the Novel, 99-100).

knowledge, and his belief that we must all, as human beings, surrender our egos and submit to deep, unconscious urges in order to achieve psychic health and fulfilment. I will not be discussing these beliefs in depth in this thesis, but they lie behind many of the passages in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* which we will be examining. The term "beliefs" is challengeable, particularly if we try to apply it to all of D. H. Lawrence's work. The idea of man needing to be in touch with nature, for example, is a theme which is insisted upon much more in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* than in *The White Peacock* or *Sons and Lovers*, where the towns are also seen as potential sources of life. What we see in the Chatterley novels, though, and especially in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, is a drive towards certain moral outcomes, a drive motivated by beliefs which Lawrence may not always have adhered to, but which he certainly wanted to promote in this novel.

David Parker, in the discussion of emotions referred to earlier, identifies Lawrence's concept of emotions as Romantic-expressivist, or "naturalist". This view, Parker explains, "sees emotion as more or less primal, pre-social, and 'deep' and therefore an expression of our true nature. According to this view, we should trust emotion to reveal to us our deepest, often unconscious, beliefs and insights — that is, those repressed by socialisation." Parker quotes Lawrence's discussion of "real" versus "mental" feelings as an example of this view. We can see, from

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50Schneider, 33; Lawrence, *Collected Letters*, 291.

51In *Women in Love* and *The Rainbow*, Lawrence's beliefs are tested and questioned by his fiction, so that as Wayne Booth has demonstrated, it is a mistake to think that his characters are simply spokespeople for his views (Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) 446-450). But in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence uses the fiction to insist on the correctness of his beliefs, to move to what David Parker calls "a mode of wilful telling" (Parker, *Ethics, Theory and the Novel*, 187).


Parker's discussion, why Lawrence would have valued only "real feelings". Such feelings come from our true nature, rather than from our socialised, artificial selves. What consequences does this valuation have? A theory which values the "natural" and the "spontaneous" might seem to be one which leads us towards freedom. But what sort of freedom?

David Parker has identified a major clash between two moral traditions: the other-regarding morality of the Judea-Christian-Kantian tradition, and the morality of the Romantic-expressivist-Nietzschean tradition, which stresses the responsibility to oneself to flourish. Parker emphasises that the Judea-Christian-Kantian tradition sees moral requirements as having "their source in the claims of other persons", while the Romantic-expressivist-Nietzschean tradition focuses on claims "that have their source in oneself — in one's own responsibility, if possible, to flourish". How is the division which Parker has identified relevant to our discussion of Lawrence? From the Judeo-Christian-Kantian viewpoint, where regard for the other is paramount, an attitude which condemns other people is deeply worrying. From the Romantic-expressivist viewpoint, the idea that someone may not achieve self-realisation is equally worrying. What one tradition will regard as intolerance, in condemning people for the quality of their lives, the other tradition will view as an attempt to move people towards freedom and enlightenment. To be tolerant of other people, from Lawrence's viewpoint, is to allow them to be imprisoned. One of the dangers with Lawrence's moral stance is that it may lead to judging others harshly or contemptuously, to becoming a "mere despiser", as Schneider puts it. Being a reformer can easily lead to condemnation of the unreformed, a danger which becomes particularly strong when Lawrence is discussing sexuality and emotions. It is also a moral stance that can work against freedom: if, that is, we choose a

54 Parker, Ethics, Theory and the Novel, 36.

55 I am discussing here the broad moral direction of this tradition, rather than the narrow articles of faith which, as Feuerbach saw, worked against the Christian ethos of love in comfortably condemning the greater part of humanity to damnation.

56 David Parker comments on this danger in discussing Birkin's attitude to other people (Parker, Ethics, Theory and the Novel, 159).

57 Schneider, 56.
definition of freedom which asks us to lay stress on the right of other people to their own values and their own self-realisation, rather than feeling impelled to rescue them from themselves.

As Schneider has commented, Lawrence felt we should act in accordance with the deep, inhuman will, and he saw sexual desire as being one of the chief promptings of this will. As we noted earlier, Harré attempts to distinguish lust from emotions. Lawrence's depiction of sexual desire, however, does not concentrate on physical reactions to the point of excluding emotional response. Any judgements that Lawrence makes about his characters' sexual desires, then, are likely to involve a judgement about their emotional responses.

In "Apropos of Lady Chatterley's Lover", Lawrence puts forward a passionate demand that emotions should be genuine. In the passage quoted earlier, he links genuine emotions with bodily response:

The body feels real hunger, real thirst, real joy in the sun or the snow, real pleasure in the smell of roses or the look of a lilac bush; real anger, real sorrow, real love, real tenderness, real warmth, real passion, real hate, real grief. All the emotions belong to the body, and are only recognised by the mind. We may hear the most sorrowful piece of news, and only feel a mental excitement. Then, hours after, perhaps in sleep, the awareness may reach the bodily centres, and true grief wrings the heart.

How different they are, mental feelings and real feelings. Today, many people live and die without having had any real feelings — though they have had a 'rich emotional life' apparently, having showed strong mental feelings. But it is all counterfeit.

There is much here that is important. Like Nussbaum, Lawrence is distinguishing between intellectually knowing something (that someone has died, for instance) and really knowing it. The "true grief" is a part of the knowledge, and inseparable from it. There are events which we cannot know or understand, Lawrence is suggesting, without emotional involvement. Moreover, the fact

\[56\text{Schneider, 33.} \]

\[57\text{Schneider, 34.} \]

\[60\text{"Apropos", 16.} \]
that we do not react at first with grief, that we "only feel a mental excitement" is taken as proof that we do not truly understand what has happened.

The role of the body is vital here, although we should not interpret this so narrowly as to feel that we must subscribe to Lawrence's theories about awareness reaching "the bodily centres". Like Blake, Lawrence is arguing against false divisions: in this case, between the mind and the body. But the theory he sets up in the place of these divisions leads him to condemn the lives of "many people" as being emotionally "counterfeit". A theory of emotions which prides itself on excluding what "many people" call emotions may make some readers a little uncomfortable. We might compare it to Herbert Morris's firm belief in other people ("I am sceptical about any claim of widespread misuse of terms for emotional states, and I am generally disposed to accept first-person reports as accurate") or to Ortony, Clare and Collins' modest description of the role of the psychologist who specialises in emotion theory: a person whose role it is to try to define terms formally which other people understand and use instinctively. We might note, as well, the heavy weighting of different emotions with moral values: some are "real", others are "counterfeit". Lawrence has set up a theoretical framework in which only some emotional responses are praiseworthy — others are to be dismissed or condemned.

The effect is seen early in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, in a significant passage which appears only in the final version of the novel. Lawrence is describing Hilda's and Connie's first love-affairs:

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61 Morris makes this statement at the beginning of an essay in which he sets out to prove that people who say they "feel guilty" over something they could not have prevented are not confused, but instead are taking a moral view of the world which can be seen as admirable. (Herbert Morris, "Nonmoral Guilt", *Responsibility, Character and the Emotions: New Essays in Moral Psychology*, ed. Ferdinand Schoeman (Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press, 1987) 221).

62 Ortony, Clare and Collins, 10.

63 The change reflects the greater didacticism of the later novel, the narrowing effect discussed by David Parker (*Parker, Ethics, Theory and the Novel*, 172-176).
Both Hilda and Constance had had their tentative love-affairs by the time they were eighteen. The young men with whom they talked so passionately and sang so lustily and camped under the trees in such freedom wanted, of course, the love connexion. The girls were doubtful, but then the thing was so much talked about, it was supposed to be so important. And the men were so humble and craving. Why couldn’t a girl be queenly, and give the gift of herself?

So they had given the gift of themselves, each to the youth with whom she had the most subtle and intimate arguments. The arguments, the discussions, were the great thing: the lovemaking and connexion were only a sort of primitive reversion and a bit of an anti-climax. One was less in love with the boy afterwards, and a little inclined to hate him, as if he had trespassed on one’s privacy and inner freedom. For, of course, being a girl, one’s whole dignity and meaning in life consisted in the achievement of an absolute, a perfect, a pure and noble freedom. What else did a girl’s life mean? To shake off the old and sordid connexions and subjections.

And however one might sentimentalize it, this sex business was one of the most ancient, sordid connexions and subjections. Poets who glorified it were mostly men. Women had always known there was something better, something higher. And now they knew it more definitely than ever. The beautiful pure freedom of a woman was infinitely more wonderful than any sexual love. The only unfortunate thing was that men lagged so far behind women in the matter. They insisted on the sex thing like dogs.

And a woman had to yield. A man was like a child with his appetites. A woman had to yield him what he wanted, or like a child he would probably turn nasty and flounce away and spoil what was a very pleasant connexion. But a woman could yield to a man without yielding her inner, free self. That the poets and talkers about sex did not seem to have taken sufficiently into account. A woman could take a man without really giving herself away. Certainly she could take him without giving herself into his power. Rather she could use this sex thing to have power over him. For she only had to hold herself back in sexual intercourse, and let him finish and expend himself without herself coming to the crisis. And then she could prolong the connexion and achieve her orgasm and her crisis while he was merely her tool.

Both sisters had had their love experience by the time the war came, and they were hurried home. Neither was ever in love with a young man unless he and she were verbally very near: that is unless they were profoundly interested, TALKING to one another. The amazing, the profound, the unbelievable thrill there was in passionately talking to some really clever young man by the hour, resuming day after day for months... this they had never realized till it happened! The paradisal promise: Thou shalt have men to talk to!—had never been uttered. It was fulfilled before they knew what a promise it was....

In the actual sex-thrill within the body, the sisters nearly succumbed to the strange male power. But quickly they recovered themselves, took the sex-thrill as a sensation, and remained free. Whereas the men, in gratitude to the woman for the sex experience, let their souls go out to her. And
afterwards looked rather as if they had lost a shilling and found sixpence. Connie's man could be a bit sulky, and Hilda's a bit jeering. But that is how men are! Ungrateful and never satisfied. When you don't have them they hate you because you won't; and when you do have them they hate you again, for some other reason. Or for no reason at all, except that they are discontented children, and can't be satisfied whatever they get, let a woman do what she may. 64

Mark Kinkead-Weekes has said that by the time the final version of the novel was written, the whole external world was seen as hostile to Mellors and Connie, and that hatred was directed at everyone except Lady Chatterley and her lover. 65 But this passage shows that Connie is not exempted from hatred. As Gavriel Ben-Ephraim says, the narrator has a frank animus towards the sisters here. 66 Lawrence's scorn of "mental feelings" shows up as he denies validity to the sisters' judgement that "It was the talk that mattered supremely: the impassioned exchange of talk. Love was only a minor accompaniment." Lawrence pushes our responses, as readers, in certain directions. We are likely to react negatively, for example, to the idea that love is just a minor accompaniment — and so we move away from the sisters emotionally even as Lawrence is apparently offering us fair-minded access to their point of view. But as we read on, it becomes clearer what Lawrence has excluded from that word "love". The love that Connie and Hilda view as being minor is nothing greater than unwanted sex.

If we stay within Lawrence's pre-defined moral framework of the emotions, though, the idea that sex can be unwanted is allowed little space. Connie and Hilda are deliberately refusing to succumb to sexual feeling, while the men are reacting properly in letting "their souls go out" in gratitude. "Gratitude" is a word which gains a particular moral force in this passage. The sisters are portrayed as powerful, "queenly" and disdainful, in contrast to the humble, craving men. Lawrence is pillorying feminine arrogance here, as part of his invalidation of Connie and Hilda's


feelings. Their enthusiasm for talk is pushed to easily satirised extremes: "The amazing, the profound, the unbelievable thrill there was in passionately talking to some really clever young man by the hour, resuming day after day for months . . . this they had never realised till it happened! The paradisal promise: Thou shalt have men to talk to! — had never been uttered." The intensity of the girls' emotional response is portrayed as artificial by stressing the interminability of the conversations, and by adding mock-biblical phrases. Lawrence uses this technique throughout these pages, combating any incipient sympathy which we might feel for the sisters by pushing their attitudes to extremes.

And yet — just how univocal is the novel at this point? I have spoken about Lawrence denying validity to Connie and Hilda's emotional reactions, but for us to be aware of that denial, they have to be portrayed. And we might wonder, too, why Lawrence felt impelled to set up such a clear theoretical framework for the novel as he did in "Apropos". Was it because the novel had not portrayed emotions quite as he wanted it to? After all, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is a novel, and as David Parker has pointed out, Lawrence was well aware that novels have a habit of developing a life strong enough to escape from their author's didactic framework.⁶⁷

If we focus on the phrases Lawrence uses to describe Connie and Hilda in this passage, we can see certain tensions emerging. Lawrence refers to Connie and Hilda as "the girls" and "the sisters". At one level, this is a good distancing technique. It is almost inevitable that the reader will feel sympathy for any one character if their thoughts and feelings are brought into focus. This is a problem which Lawrence, as a didactic novelist, was well aware of and fought against in his portrayal of Clifford Chatterley. In the scene where Clifford's chair fails to work in the woods, for example, we can see Lawrence reworking the material in each version of the novel to remove sympathy from Clifford: changing Clifford from a man who is frustrated, bad-tempered, but aware of his failings, to the melodrama of the final version where Clifford's evil tyranny threatens Mellors'⁶⁷

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life.\footnote{Some other critics regard this scene more favourably. H. M. Daleski, for example, praises its rich symbolism (H. M. Daleski, \textit{The Forked Flame: A Study of D. H. Lawrence} (1965. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987) 278-280), but notes in an earlier discussion of Clifford and Mellors that their characterisation loses something by being simplified (Daleski, 266).} In presenting Connie's and Hilda's sexual experience as identical, rather than focusing on one character, Lawrence is trying to ensure that the reader does not sympathise too closely with them. But at the same time he is presenting the kind of particularity, in focusing on their youth ("Both Hilda and Constance had had their tentative love-affairs by the time they were eighteen.") and on their thoughts, which creates a sympathy for them which is at variance with his didactic purposes. There is an imaginative richness in the way they are portrayed which means they cannot be condemned as Lawrence condemns "the modern young jazzy and high-brow person" in his "Apropos".\footnote{"Apropos", 14.}

The impulse towards condemnation remains strong, however. In the passage quoted previously, we can see the tension between Lawrence's dramatic and didactic purposes\footnote{Schneider sees Lawrence's different purposes (which he identifies as mimetic, scientific and didactic) as potentially harmonious, and says Lawrence's fiction only fails when one purpose overwhelms the others (Schneider, 83).}:

The arguments, the discussions, were the great thing: the lovemaking and connexion were only a sort of primitive reversion and a bit of an anti-climax. One was less in love with the boy afterwards, and a little inclined to hate him, as if he had trespassed on one's privacy and inner freedom. For, of course, being a girl, one's whole dignity and meaning in life consisted in the achievement of an absolute, a perfect, a pure and noble freedom.

As a dramatic novelist, Lawrence can imagine a situation in which lovemaking would be dull and disappointing compared to a conversation. But as a didactic novelist, he condemns and invalidates this emotional response.\footnote{I am drawing here on one of S. L. Goldberg's insights. In a discussion of \textit{Daniel Deronda} he comments that George Eliot frequently realises insights dramatically, even though she sometimes fails to grasp them philosophically (Goldberg, \textit{Agents and Lives}, 136, 148).} So the next sentence says that it is "as if" the boy had trespassed on "one's privacy and inner freedom". Technically, this is free indirect style — direct
access to the sisters' thoughts. But the phrase "as if" obscures the fact that their emotional reactions have validity. For surely any undesired sexual activity could be seen as involving a kind of trespass. But Lawrence refuses to allow this insight, and instead reduces it to ridicule by giving the girls an absolutist concept of freedom to which he is clearly opposed.

Lawrence's stress on the need for people to yield to passion means that lack of sexual desire (in situations where a generous lover is available) is a moral failing. Lawrence puts it more persuasively than this, but the consequences of his view are clear:

But a woman could yield to a man without yielding her inner, free self. That the poets and talkers about sex did not seem to have taken sufficiently into account. A woman could take a man without really giving herself away. Certainly she could take him without giving herself into his power. Rather she could use this sex thing to have power over him. For she only had to hold herself back in sexual intercourse, and let him finish and expend himself without herself coming to the crisis: and then she could prolong the connexion and achieve her orgasm and her crisis while he was merely her tool.

Connie and Hilda are blamed not just for responding inadequately, but for deliberately responding inadequately. Sexual feelings are seen as being entirely under the woman's control, and simple control at that: "she only had to hold herself back". I may seem to be blurring distinctions here between behaviour (delaying sexual orgasm) and feeling (lack of sexual desire). But Lawrence does not separate thought, feeling, and behaviour in human sexuality. The words "take", "yield" and "giving", for example, refer to mental and emotional attitudes as well as physical response. Full, enraptured response is being demanded in every area: emotional, mental and physical. Lawrence's indictment of women who fail to respond correctly in terms of sexual behaviour is thus also an indictment of their emotional response: an accusation that they could have had different emotions (or could have allowed some emotions free rein while repressing others) and that they are to be blamed for not having them.

Guilt, responsibility, emotions. Let us take a closer look at the issues here. The first thing we might notice about Lawrence's theory of emotions is that it brings with it some very harsh moral judgements. In the case of Hilda and Connie, Lawrence indicts them for their actual emotional response (feelings of disappointment) and allows moral value only to an emotional response which
did not occur (being overwhelmed by desire). I am using words like "accuse", "indict" and "blame" because of Lawrence's view that we are responsible for our emotions.

Responsibility is a vexed issue in philosophy. Sabini and Silver claim we assign responsibility for only some characteristics, and that our other value judgements are more like aesthetic decisions "We blame, reproach and punish someone who has committed a moral delict; we withdraw from, feel revulsion toward, someone with an ugly soul". Oakley divides moral assessments of responsibility for emotions into two categories: one where we are esteemable or disesteemable (a category similar to Sabini and Silver's aesthetic judgements), and another where we are creditworthy or blameworthy (which only occurs when we are fully responsible for our emotions). Given the strong note of violence and hatred (often emerging in a tone which verges on hysteria) towards "mental feelings" in Lady Chatterley's Lover, Lawrence seems to have assigned strong responsibility and blame towards people who possessed such feelings. Connie's lack of strong sexual feelings towards her lover in Germany, and her preference for intellectual companionship, is not merely distasteful, according to the standards set up in Lady Chatterley's Lover, but also blameworthy. The fact that someone is regarded as blameworthy for their emotions also implies that they were able to have other emotions. Lawrence seems to have believed that feelings which were in any way socially constructed were controllable, eliminable, and destroyable.

Lawrence portrays Connie with more compassion later, when she begins her relationship with Mellors, but she is still being judged morally:

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72 Sabini and Silver, "Emotions, Responsibility and Character", Schoeman, 172.
73 Oakley, 160. In a spirit which is contrary to Lawrence's, however, Oakley argues that the fact that we are blameable for some emotions does not mean other people should blame us (Oakley, 167).
74 I am assuming here Susan Wolf's point that the idea of an agent being responsible implies that the agent's actions fell within his or her control (Susan Wolf, Freedom Within Reason (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 7). See also Mark Spiika's discussion of the responsibility Lawrence places on people for creating love (Mark Spiika, "On Lawrence's Hostility to Wilful Women: The Chatterley Solution", Lawrence and Women, ed. Anne Smith (London: Vision Press, 1978) 189).
'Eh! what it is to touch thee!' he said, as his finger caressed the delicate, warm, secret skin of her waist and hips. He put his face down and rubbed his cheek against her belly and against her thighs again and again. And again she wondered a little over the sort of rapture it was to him. She did not understand the beauty he found in her, through touch upon her living secret body, almost the ecstasy of beauty. For passion alone is awake to it. And when passion is dead, or absent, then the magnificent throb of beauty is incomprehensible and even a little despicable; warm live beauty of contact, so much deeper than the beauty of vision. She felt the glide of his cheek on her thighs and belly and buttocks, and the close brushing of his moustache and his soft thick hair, and her knees began to quiver. Far down in her she felt a new stirring, a new nakedness emerging. And she was half afraid. Half she wished he would not caress her so. He was encompassing her somehow. Yet she was waiting, waiting.

And when he came into her, with an intensification of relief and consummation that was pure peace to him, still she was waiting. She felt herself a little left out. And she knew, partly it was her own fault. She willed herself into the separateness. Now perhaps she was condemned to it. She lay still, feeling his motion within her, his deep-sunk intentness, the sudden quiver of him at the springing of his seed, then the slow subsiding thrust. That thrust of the buttocks, surely it was a little ridiculous. If you were a woman, and a part in all the business, surely that thrusting of the man's buttocks was supremely ridiculous. Surely the man was intensely ridiculous in this posture and this act!

But she lay still, without recoil. Even when he had finished. she did not rouse herself to get a grip on her own satisfaction, as she had done with Michaelis. she lay still, and the tears slowly filled and ran from her eyes.

He lay still, too. But he held her close and tried to cover her poor naked legs with his legs, to keep them warm. He lay on her with a close, undoubting warmth.

'Are yer cold?' he asked, in a soft, small voice, as if she were close, so close. Whereas she was left out, distant.

There is so much in this passage which is beautiful, gentle and moving, so much compassion which is engendered for Connie here, that to identify judgementalism in it may seem harsh. Lawrence conveys so perfectly the beauty that Connie's body has for Mellors, and exactly why this kind of beauty is inexplicable to Connie, uninfluenced by passion. The sense of loneliness and forlornness that Connie feels as Mellors is possessed by passion and she is not, and the way their physical closeness increases the sadness of her mental isolation: all this is rendered with imaginative compassion. And the human vulnerability of the lovers is registered as Mellors tries to

75 Lady Chatterley's Lover, 174-175; ch. 10.
"cover her poor naked legs", while his gentle behaviour here adds a particular poignancy to the feelings that Connie cannot express. And yet the very gentleness and movingness of this passage is being used to place and condemn Connie. When Lawrence shows the kind of vision which passion can give, and which the passionless are blind to, this does not absolve Connie. Her lack of sexual response is a failure, a result of cowardice. Passion is natural — Connie's failure to achieve it shows that her psyche is crippled. The judgement is made by Connie ("And she knew, partly it was her own fault.") and by the novel, with its stress on the need for us all to get back in touch with the river of life. And indeed, this kind of moral judgement is partly why this passage is so moving. The sadness which it evokes in us as we read is partly a response to our sense that Connie has failed, that she should have achieved something and that she has not.

Mark Spilka refers to the disturbingly heavy sense of "life-responsibility" in Lawrence's writing76 and it is this which is so troubling here. We are responsible for our feelings, in Lawrence's view, and though we can be pitied for not having the right ones, there is no doubt that only certain pre-defined feelings are valid. It is this kind of absolutism which fires Lawrence's animus against modern youth, the working class, and the whole of humanity, in his frequent diatribes in both "Apropos of Lady Chatterley's Lover" and in the final version of the novel. So Mellors is right to see beauty in Connie, but Connie is wrong to feel separated from him, or to see him as ridiculous. She is morally wrong to feel this way, because Lawrence believes we can choose whether or not to have the right feelings, by accepting or refusing the river of life. It is this morality which judges Connie to have "willed herself into the separateness".

It should be clear by now that my own moral perspective is strongly influenced by the Judeo-Christian-Kantian tradition, and that my chief concern with Lawrence's morality is its potential for judgementalism. David Holbrook comments that we are invited to read the Chatterley novels "as offering teaching as to how we should be men and women. When we do, Lawrence's

attitudes to his characters, and the attitudes he portrays in them . . . seem seriously false. 77 I agree with Holbrook's assessment, and share his concern about the falsity of Lawrence's teaching. Many critics, however, readily accept Lawrence's Romantic-expressivist viewpoint, reflecting Lawrence's statements about Connie's feelings without any anxiety that they might be moralistic. Indeed, at times the response moves to a more rigid judgementalism than Lawrence's own, as when Carol Dix writes "Lawrence knew what modern women were like, knew that they arranged their own orgasms", 78 where the word "arranged" fits with a programmatic view of female sexuality, for which the woman is entirely responsible. Other critics do concede the obstacles which lie in the way of full sexual responsiveness, but praise or blame Connie on the basis of whether or not she achieves it. T. H. Adamowski, for instance, reflects on the passage we have just studied in terms which entirely accept D. H. Lawrence's views on emotions:

She is "half afraid" of her body, her spontaneity's assertion of itself. Then comes her moment of bad faith, as she wills herself "into separateness," returns to her ego, and reflects on the "buttocks" ("supremely ridiculous") of the creature who is with her.

When she does allow her will to lapse, it is only after a fight . . . 79

The responsibility Connie bears for her sexual and emotional response to Mellors is clear in this analysis: in words like "spontaneity" as opposed to "bad faith" and "will". It is obvious that Adamowski believes that Connie could have chosen otherwise, and that she is responsible for not doing so — that she has repressed a spontaneous emotional response, and willed a different one. H. M. Daleski repeatedly analyses Connie's response to Mellors in terms which judge her morally, and which see her response as a result of voluntary actions for which she is responsible:

Connie's tears . . . too, represent an admission; she knows she is left out because it is 'partly . . . her own fault' because she '[wills] herself into this separateness' . . . the next time, then, she does not cling to her separateness, and she discovers the joy of a full reciprocity . . . (my italics)


The word "admission" here of course ushers in the moral judgement, but even more important are the words indicating voluntary action, like "cling": one can decide to cling or to let go. Keith Sagar uses similar language: "Great courage is required to give oneself to the purifying flood, to let go the reservations and false prudery, to relax the grip of the will."\(^{31}\)(my italics). So does Daniel Schneider, underscoring his judgement of Connie with the word "achievement": "When she does finally yield herself entirely, it is her courage . . . that underscores the preciousness of her achievement."\(^{32}\)(my italics). But what if a feeling of separateness, or a feeling of contempt, or a flood of passionate desire, is not something we choose, but something which simply happens? What if, no matter how courageous we are, there is a sense in which "mental feelings" are not controllable? *Lady Chatterley's Lover* allows little space for such questioning, but there are elements in it which work against Lawrence's idea that we are responsible and blameworthy for our emotions.

The following passage, for instance, describes a disappointing lovemaking:

And when he said, with a sort of little sigh: 'Eh, tha'rt nice!' something in her quivered, and something in her spirit stiffened in resistance: stiffened from the terribly physical intimacy, and from the peculiar haste of his possession. And this time the sharp ecstasy of her own passion did not overcome her; she lay with her hands inert on his striving body and, do what she might, her spirit seemed to look on from the top of her head, and the butting of his haunches seemed ridiculous to her, and the sort of anxiety of his penis to come to its little evacuating crisis seemed farcical. Yes, this was love, this ridiculous bouncing of the buttocks, and the wilting of the poor, insignificant, moist little penis. This was the divine love! After all, the moderns were right when they felt contempt for the performance; for it was a performance. It was quite true, as some poets said, that the God who created man must have had a sinister sense of humour, creating him a reasonable being, yet forcing him to take this ridiculous posture, and driving him with blind craving for this ridiculous performance. Even a Maupassant found it a humiliating anti-climax. Men despised the intercourse act, and yet did it.

\(^{80}\)Daleski, 293-294. See also 281, 287, 290, 296.


\(^{82}\)Schneider, 240.
Cold and derisive her queer female mind stood apart, and though she lay perfectly still, her impulse was to heave her loins, and throw the man out, escape his ugly grip, and the butting overriding of his absurd haunches. His body was a foolish, impudent, imperfect thing, a little disgusting in its unfinished clumsiness.

We can see here many similarities with the earlier passages, and since it is Connie's "queer female mind" which is playing the villain's role here (and we have already noticed Lawrence's rejection of mental feelings), this may seem to be just another piece of evidence being presented to us to ensure that we know Connie is responsible for not feeling passion here. But within the book, the situation is more complex. Robin Grove has warned against the dangers of isolating and analysing any particular passage from a novel, and in this case it is the events which lead up to this lovemaking which cast doubt on Lawrence's apparent message here. For this lovemaking comes at the end of a day of frustrations, of failed communication and mistrust between Connie and Mellors. There is a strong sense in which Connie's failure to feel passion could be seen as inevitable — and not because of any act of Connie's will. In showing us the events that lead up to this lovemaking, Lawrence allows us some insight into the way outside frustrations and difficulties in relationships can interfere with the flow of passion: though in his description of the lovemaking, these influences are denied and the responsibility is thrown (largely) back onto Connie again.

Even within the passage, there are elements which mitigate Connie's responsibility: Mellors' haste, and that phrase "do what she might, her spirit seemed to look on from the top of her head" which is one of the rare occasions that Lawrence seems to concede the uncontrollability of emotional responses. But Lawrence is still weighing the cards against Connie morally here: her thoughts are so contemptuous that we are distanced from her, and she is portrayed as powerful and invulnerable: "her impulse was to heave her loins, and throw the man out".

Connie's conversation with Mellors after this lovemaking is interesting for the way it sometimes accepts and sometimes refuses the notion of variability in "love" (a word which here

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83 Lady Chatterley's Lover, 223-224; ch. 12.

seems to mean sexual desire, and to encompass both physical and emotional responses during sex). Thus Mellors says "This wor a bit o' thin for once. . . . Dunna fret thyself about lovin' me. Tha'll niver force thyself to't. Tha mun ta'e th' rough wi' th' smooth."\(^{85}\) a speech which seems admirably realistic and tolerant. But he also tells Connie that sex "isna horrid . . . tha canna ma'e it horrid". A worthy defence of the glory of sex? Perhaps. But in this context, what Mellors is saying is importantly false — for because of Connie's thoughts and feelings, because of the absence of love, the sexual experience they have had is horrid to her. Or as Gwendolen Harleth would put it: "How can anyone know that I exaggerate, when I am speaking of my own feeling? I did not say what any one else felt."\(^{86}\)

Let us take a final look at another scene in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, one which implicitly works against Lawrence's theory that we are responsible (in the heaviest sense of the word) for our emotions. It occurs just after the scene we have been studying, when Connie finally feels passion for Mellors:

> How beautiful he felt, how pure in tissue! How lovely, how lovely, strong, and yet pure and delicate, such stillness of the sensitive body! Such utter stillness of potency and delicate flesh. How beautiful! How beautiful! Her hands came timorously down his back, to the soft, smallish globes of his buttocks. Beauty! What beauty! a sudden little flame of awareness went through her. How was it possible, this beauty here, where she had previously only been repelled? \(^{87}\)

"How was it possible, this beauty here, where she had previously only been repelled?" There are simplified answers we could give to this question. We could say it is because Connie has finally learnt to trust, has been courageous (and so reduce this experience to a reward) or follow Keith Sagar's lead and see the language of religion and redemption here.\(^{88}\) But to do so would be to

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\(^{85}\) *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 225; ch. 12.

\(^{86}\) *Daniel Deronda*, 320; bk. 3, ch. 24. In the complex world of George Eliot's fiction, Gwendolen's comment is both false (she is claiming too much for herself) and true, as she emphasises the individuality of her response. S. L. Goldberg has discussed this dual ethical view and the consequences it has for Eliot's fiction (Goldberg, *Agents and Lives*, 123).

\(^{87}\) *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, 227; ch. 12.

\(^{88}\) Sagar, 188.
miss what is so special about this passage, because this is one of the times when Lawrence's writing has become what Haines calls "a distinctive mode of thought about being human". And part of that thinking is the implicit recognition that there are no simple answers to Connie's question, that the beauty she has discovered in Mellors cannot be accounted for in a rationalistic way. Lawrence's writing here captures the wonder, the elusive mystery of sexual desire, the way the loved one can become suddenly and overwhelmingly beautiful. But the beauty of sexuality which he captures here seems partly to consist in its unpredictability, its variability. Martha Nussbaum has suggested that part of the beauty of human virtue lies in its vulnerability, its fragility, and this thought seems also applicable to human sexuality. Lawrence's own writing on sexuality, though, veers between views which on the one hand sometimes capture the elusive, unpredictable beauty of sexuality and desire, and on the other blame people for having emotions which interfere with the true (and always available) response of passion.

Lawrence's view of emotions (as expressed in "Apropos of Lady Chatterley's Lover") places a heavy stress on responsibility. He believes that we choose (even if only unconsciously) whether or not to have real feelings, whether or not to be in touch with the river of life, and whether or not to admit passion into our lives. But if (as he dramatises in Connie's sudden awareness of Mellors' beauty) we can be suddenly overwhelmed by desire, if sex is touched with mystery and wonder, can we regard passion as always chooseable? And can we accept a view of emotions which sees us as always responsible for what we feel, and able to choose that feeling?

When we shift to looking at George Eliot's fiction, the differences in the way feelings are regarded are striking. Here is Celia comparing Lowick to Freshitt Hall, and revealing an attraction to Sir James she is as yet only partially aware of:

She thought of the white freestone, the pillared portico, and the terrace full of flower, Sir James smiling above them like a prince issuing from his enchantment in a rose-bush, with a handkerchief

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89 Haines, "Deepening the Self", 15.

swiftly metamorphosed from the most delicately-odorous petals — Sir James, who talked so agreeably, always about things which had common-sense in them, and not about learning! 51

Celia's feelings for Sir James are clearly partially socially constructed (the romanticised image of the enchanted prince emphasises the role of fantasy in Celia's attraction to Sir James), but George Eliot presents this fact in a tone of amusement rather than horror. But perhaps it is only when we begin to ask questions about responsibility that we can see how far we have moved from Lawrence's world. To ask "Is Celia to blame for feeling this?" simply seems the wrong kind of question, even though Celia's feelings are more complex than an impulse from the heart. Nor is it just that Celia's attraction to Sir James is harmless: Celia later feels a mild sense of compunction and embarrassment at having become involved with Dorothea's former suitor. We seem to be in a world where emotions are less inexplicable, more controllable and yet less blameworthy than the emotions felt by characters in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

We seem to be: but only if we let our analysis pause at this passage. In Chapter Six, we will be looking at *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* in more detail. George Eliot's treatment of emotions, decisions and responsibility in these books is complex and at times contradictory. At times, characters are seen as admirable for the way they take responsibility for their emotions (such as Lydgate's attempt to preserve his love for Rosamond after their marriage). At others, characters are seen as being responsible for their emotions: they are seen as culpable — sometimes comically culpable — because of the way they justify their less "worthy" emotions rather than trying to discourage them. Will's justification of his dislike of Casaubon is one such example. Yet there are also powerful passages which suggest that characters cannot be held responsible for their emotions. Such passages suggest that at times feelings cannot be willed into existence: Gwendolen, trapped in a loveless marriage with Grandcourt, sees the world as barren. Her view of the world is recorded with pity rather than with blame, despite earlier sententious comments from her mentor Deronda where he claimed we were responsible for the way the world seemed to us. And Dorothea, once her early love for Casaubon has dissipated (a love based on

91 *Middlemarch*, 99; bk. 1, ch. 9.
illusions about his character), is shown as painfully unable to create liking or love for him. She cannot feel more than pity and compassion for Casaubon: an impasse which indicates the limits which George Eliot saw on our responsibility for our emotions.

Before we begin to investigate the complexities of emotion and responsibility in George Eliot's fiction, though, it might be useful to look at how we identify particular emotions in her novels. How do we discriminate between the different emotions presented in George Eliot's fiction?
Chapter Three

Discriminating emotions: rejecting conventions

The treatment of love in *Middlemarch*

*Middlemarch* is a novel which both relies upon and encourages fine discriminations among emotions. This chapter will be directed towards elucidating a few of the ways in which, while reading *Middlemarch*, we are encouraged to consider subtle differences between emotions and to think about them less conventionally. Chapter Four will then explore certain distinctions we need to make between emotions in *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*. Making these discriminations between emotions (the feelings Dorothea has for Casaubon, those which Mary has for Fred, as well as the different feelings Deronda's female admirers have for him) should lead us to interpret *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* in slightly different ways.

In looking at the treatment of emotions in *Middlemarch* we will be focusing first on adult love: love between a man and a woman which is strong enough to make them desire — even if only temporarily — a life partnership. But we should begin by noticing how inadequate the word "love" is if we are trying to analyse what George Eliot calls "the subtly varied drama between man and woman". She comments that this drama:

> is often such as can hardly be rendered in words put together like dominoes, according to obvious fixed marks. The word of all work Love will no more express the myriad modes of mutual attraction, than the word Thought can inform you what is passing through your neighbour's mind.¹

The quote is from *Daniel Deronda*, but we will see the same line of thinking in *Middlemarch*: a suspicion of language, and a doubt that it can adequately reveal the intricacies of emotion. Barbara Hardy comments that *Middlemarch*'s "discriminations are nice, and insist in many ways that the names we bestow on emotional experience are inadequate".²

¹ *Daniel Deronda*, 346; bk. 3, ch. 27.
² Hardy, "*Middlemarch* and the passions", Adam, 5.
The word "love" has to be used with caution, and it is part of the narrator's function to educate us into doing this. In Chapter One of this thesis, we met a warning from Harré on the dangers of reifying emotion words: treating them as though they were entities which can be investigated. Harré's point is that emotions only exist as individual instantiations within particular people. According to Harré, we cannot, therefore, study anger: we must look at angry people.

George Eliot is well aware of the linguistic illusion that emotion words can conjure up: the illusion that they refer to a universal, stable quality. She makes her linguistic scepticism clear, and her novels encourage us to think about emotions not abstractly, but as manifested in particular characters. She puts forward this vision against a social background, where, as she shows, people do tend to think about emotions in certain conventional ways.

As we read *Middlemarch*, we meet comments by the narrator which question conventional views of particular emotions. In contrast to the conventional association of the word "love" with marriage (exemplified by Rosamond's comments later in the novel), the narrator describes the feelings which lead to ordinary marriages in terms which are far from flattering. Dorothea's ardent nature, we learn, is likely to discourage suitors: "Certainly such elements in the character of a marriageable girl tended to interfere with her lot, and hinder it from being decided according to custom, by good looks, vanity, and merely canine affection."  

Ordinarily, we could expect affection to play an important role in marriage: the narrator startles as well as amuses us by referring to a feeling of affection as "merely canine". This kind of affection is linked (somewhat disparagingly) to the feelings of animals. In George Eliot's essay on Dr Cumming, she makes a separation between unreflective feelings like "merely canine affection" and feelings which have been regulated by intellect: "Amiable impulses without intellect, man may have in common with dogs and horses; but morality, which is specifically human, is dependent on the regulation of..."
feeling by intellect." The narrator in *Middlemarch* is suggesting that the conventional type of romantic love may be partly based on one of these amiable impulses without intellect.

How far-reaching is this suggestion? The dismissive description of affection as "merely canine" leads us to question the value of this feeling. There is ambiguity, though, about just how much should be questioned: does the narrator believe all affection is canine, or only a particular variety of it? As Karen Chase has commented, the aura of general truth in the narrator's statements is deceptive: they are often an illumination of a particular character or situation, although they are offered with the authority of a general truth. This quality makes generalising about the narrator's comments on emotions both particularly tempting and fraught with difficulties. George Eliot's treatment of emotion in her fiction is perhaps more likely to raise questions than to provide answers. One of the questions which is raised in *Middlemarch* is whether we can learn anything about emotions from literature. With the open-endedness which is possible in a novel, that possibility is both seriously suggested and (as we will see later in this chapter) openly mocked. The narrator's own suggestions about the nature of romantic love may be less reliable than they seem: but the first goal of such comments is to make us question conventional assumptions about love.

The narrator's sceptical attitude towards at least some forms of conventional romantic love is clearly separated from the way it is regarded by the Middlemarch community. The community has a conventional view of love, and little sympathy with Dorothea's feelings:

All people, young or old (that is, all people in those ante-reform times), would have thought her an interesting object if they had referred the glow in her eyes and cheeks to the newly awakened ordinary images of young love: the illusions of Chloe about Strephon have been sufficiently consecrated in

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6As Barbara Hardy points out, both Casaubon and Ladislaw are "similarly misguided and let down by literary expectations". Hardy, "*Middlemarch and the passions*", *Adam*, 5.

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poetry, as the pathetic loveliness of all spontaneous trust ought to be. Miss Pippin adoring young Pumpkin, and dreaming along endless vistas of unwearying companionship, was a little drama which never tired our fathers and mothers, and had been put into all costumes. Let but Pumpkin have a figure which would sustain the disadvantages of the short-waisted swallow-tail, and everybody felt it not only natural but necessary to the perfection of womanhood, that a sweet girl should be at once convinced of his virtue, his exceptional ability, and above all, his perfect sincerity. But perhaps no persons then living — certainly none in the neighbourhood of Tipton — would have had a sympathetic understanding for the dreams of a girl whose notions about marriage took their colour entirely from an exalted enthusiasm about the ends of life, an enthusiasm which was lit chiefly by its own fire, and included neither the niceties of the trousseau, the pattern of plate, nor even the honours and sweet joys of the blooming matron.  

The narrator's view of Dorothea's feelings is much more sympathetic, though there is an irony which qualifies it: an awareness, for instance, of the self-generated, and perhaps excessive nature of Dorothea's enthusiasm, which is "lit chiefly by its own fire". The narrator draws attention to Dorothea's tendency to idealise and exaggerate, to react with an over-intensity which Mr Brooke will later kindly rebuke as "not healthy". The chief irony, however, is directed against the community, with its indulgent attitude toward conventional dreams of love and its lack of sympathy for Dorothea's enthusiasm.

The passage is designed to both challenge and flatter the reader into adopting the narrator's more sympathetic view of Dorothea's feelings. In this passage, there is no use of the word "we" to indicate that the more conventional views of love are fallacies we all share. Instead, the opinions are carefully placed in the past tense "everybody felt"; "that is, all people in those ante-reform times". In part, this attribution of ignorance to the past and enlightenment to the present is ironic: George Eliot frequently sets up this distinction in her fiction only to mock it. But the persistent use of the past tense here also encourages us to separate ourselves from the opinions of the past.

The challenge to us as readers, if it is felt, comes from the realisation that we share in the

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7Middlemarch, 50; bk. 1, ch. 3.
8Middlemarch, 90; bk. 1, ch. 7.
9Barbara Hardy notes that in Daniel Deronda, the narrator's ostensible praise of the current university system (in contrast to the failing of the past) is a "quietly two-faced remark". (Daniel Deronda, Notes, 890).
mistakes of the past; the flattery is in the suggestion that we, George Eliot's readers, are better qualified to understand Dorothea's feelings than Dorothea's neighbours were: that we can attain to the narrator's wisdom in this area.

In Chapter Four we will examine more closely Dorothea's feelings for Casaubon, and discuss whether these can be described as love. For the moment, however, let us turn to a character who thinks about romantic love in entirely conventional terms: Rosamond Vincy.

The conventional view of love: Rosamond

It is a mark of the shallowness of Rosamond's thinking that she tends to use the word "love" confidently, as if it referred to something easily knowable. Rosamond's views epitomise the conventional view of love which George Eliot is challenging.

Lydgate and Rosamond have just met, and the narrator describes the effect they have on each other:

I think Lydgate turned a little paler than usual, but Rosamond blushed deeply and felt a certain astonishment. After that, she was really anxious to go, and did not know what sort of stupidity her uncle was talking of when she went to shake hands with him.

Yet this result, which she took to be a mutual impression, called falling in love, was just what Rosamond had contemplated beforehand. Ever since that important new arrival in Middlemarch she had woven a little future, of which something like this scene was the necessary beginning. Strangers, whether wrecked and clinging to a raft, or duly escorted and accompanied by portmanteaus, have always had a circumstantial fascination for the virgin mind, against which native merit has urged itself in vain. And a stranger was absolutely necessary to Rosamond's social romance, which had always turned on a lover and bridegroom who was not a Middlemarcher, and who had no connections at all like her own: of late, indeed, the construction seemed to demand that he should somehow be related to a baronet. Now that she and the stranger had met, reality proved much more moving than anticipation, and Rosamond could not doubt that this was the great epoch of her life. She judged of her own symptoms as those of awakening love, and she held it still more natural that Mr. Lydgate should have fallen in love at first sight of her. These things happened so often at balls, and why not by the morning light, when the complexion showed all the better for it?\(^{10}\)

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\(^{10}\)Middlemarch, 145-146; bk. 1, ch. 12.
In this passage, it is Rosamond, not the narrator, who first classifies the feelings which have been created in this encounter. Rosamond takes these to be "a mutual impression, called falling in love". The narrator does not endorse this opinion, and we begin to wonder whether Rosamond has correctly classified these feelings. We note the way Rosamond's views on love are structured by the conventions of the community: these feelings are, she thinks, what is "called falling in love" (my italics).

We feel doubtful about Rosamond's judgements here partly because of her very certainty, a certainty which is noticeably not backed up by the narrator. The narrator does not even seem certain about what was physically observable ("I think Lydgate turned a little paler than usual") and this hesitation makes Rosamond's certainty seem presumptuous. Rosamond is sure that she knows the labels for her feelings: she has fallen in love with Lydgate, and any further symptoms can be confidently classified as "those of awakening love". The narrator tells us that Rosamond has made this judgement, but offers no other comment. Instead, we hear Rosamond's reasons for thinking this ("These things happened so often at balls, and why not by the morning light, when the complexion showed all the better for it?"). while the narrator remains silent. This allows an unspoken irony to play around Rosamond's thoughts, as we infer what the narrator's opinion of her feelings might be. We can see the contrast between this treatment, and the presentation of Fred's feelings for Mary. We are not left to speculate about Fred's feelings — the narrator defines them for us:

Like many a plucked idle young gentleman, he was thoroughly in love, and with a plain girl, who had no money! 

There is irony here too, with the exclamation mark being used to draw attention to Fred's opinion that this is a difficult state of affairs. The irony here, however, is directed at Fred's unwillingness to improve his financial situation through work. It is not directed at Fred's feelings for Mary, which are authoritatively described by the narrator, leaving us no room for doubt.

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Difficult discriminations

Though the narrator often firmly defines characters’ feelings for us, doubts about feelings — about how to describe them, how to analyse them, how to explain their causes — are highlighted in *Middlemarch*. The narrator draws attention to the difficulties associated with describing feelings. She highlights her inadequacy in portraying the thoughts and feelings of other characters. Chapter 42 of *Middlemarch* opens with an analysis of Casaubon’s suspicions and jealousies towards Will and Dorothea. This analysis (which is much too long to quote) stretches over the first third of the chapter. The analysis is characterised by a precision in wording in showing the emotional colouring which attends some of Mr Casaubon’s thoughts. The narrator refers first to “the uneasy susceptibility” which is the main result of Mr Casaubon’s intellectual labours, and then goes on to specify how this is manifested. It can be seen in “a morbid consciousness that others did not give him the place which he had not demonstrably merited — a perpetual suspicious conjecture that the views entertained of him were not to his advantage — a melancholy absence of passion in his efforts at achievement, and a passionate resistance to the confession that he had achieved nothing.”

Every fold of thought and emotion in Casaubon’s mind is revealed in this precise and thorough analysis. Neil Roberts comments that George Eliot creates sympathy for Casaubon by exposing the miserable self he has to live with: "It is not a sympathy which withholds judgement . . . but the judgement that is called for is more akin to that which is prompted by self-knowledge than that which we normally apply to other people". Pity is created by the full exposure of Casaubon’s emotions: an exposure which reveals complex eddies of uncertainty, resentment, self-consciousness and misery. A description of emotion which seems unusually precise and enlightening (unusual, that is, for someone other than George Eliot) is first given as "a morbid consciousness that others did not give him the place which he had not demonstrably merited".

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12 *Middlemarch*, 454; bk. 4, ch. 42.
13 *Middlemarch*, 454-455; bk. 4, ch. 42.
The definition could have ended here: it had already captured the note of uneasiness, and the disagreeable self-knowledge which is implicit in Casaubon's awareness that he has not proven himself to have merited high esteem. Instead, the narrator pauses and then adds an example of how this uneasy awareness is manifested in "a perpetual suspicious conjecture" that others hold low views of him. There is very fine discrimination here between emotions which shade into each other. Mr Casaubon's "morbid consciousness" is shown to manifest itself in particular modes: such as "a perpetual suspicious conjecture". Our attention is also drawn to how fear and resentment feed on each other in Casaubon's mind. The "melancholy absence of passion" in Casaubon's study is a major cause of his failure. He cannot bear to admit this, though, so he has instead "a passionate resistance to" the confession of failure.

The analysis of Casaubon's mind seems complete and subtle. The narrator, however, draws attention to the inadequacies of her analysis:

This is a very bare and therefore a very incomplete way of putting the case. The human soul moves in many channels, and Mr Casaubon, we know, had a sense of rectitude and honourable pride in satisfying the requirements of honour, which compelled him to find other reasons for his conduct than those of jealousy and vindictiveness. The way in which Mr Casaubon put the case was this:

'In marrying Dorothea Brooke I had to care for her wellbeing in case of my death. But wellbeing is not to be secured by ample, independent possession of property; on the contrary, occasions might arise in which such possession might expose her to the more danger. She is ready prey to any man who knows how to play adroitly either on her affectionate ardour or her Quixotic enthusiasm; and a man stands by with that very intention in his mind — a man with no other principle than transient caprice, and who has a personal animosity towards me — I am sure of it — an animosity which is fed by the consciousness of his ingratitude . . . . Even if I live I shall not be without uneasiness as to what he may attempt through indirect influence. This man has gained Dorothea's ear: he has fascinated her attention . . . . If I die . . . . he will persuade her to marry him. That would be calamity for her and success for him. She would not think it calamity: he would make her believe anything; she has a tendency to immoderate attachment which she inwardly reproaches me for not responding to, and already her mind is occupied with his fortunes. He thinks of an easy conquest and entering into my nest. That I will hinder! Such a marriage would be fatal to Dorothea. . . . I utterly distrust his morals, and it is my duty to hinder to the utmost the fulfilment of his designs.'

\[15\] _Middlemarch_, 457-458; bk. 4, ch. 42.
The narrative takes an unexpected turn here. After the confession from the narrator that her account of Casaubon's feelings is inadequate, we would expect to be given a longer, more subtle explanation of how Casaubon reconciles his "honourable pride" with "jealousy and vindictiveness". Instead we hear a lengthy account not from the narrator but from Mr Casaubon, justifying his actions while making significantly little reference to his feelings. We see demonstrated for us, in Casaubon's self-justification, how he reconciles vindictiveness and the surety that he is behaving properly. In Casaubon's self-justification (not quoted here in full) he refers only twice to his feelings: once to "uneasiness", and once to "distrust". He refers frequently, however, to Dorothea's feelings: to her "affectionate ardour", "Quixotic enthusiasm", "immoderate attachment", and to her reproachful attitude towards him. The phrase "affectionate ardour" could well have been used by the narrator, with one significant difference. The narrator uses ardour as a term of praise. When Dorothea is described by the narrator as "open, ardent, and not in the least self-admiring", the string of adjectives refer to positive qualities. Casaubon, however, is referring to Dorothea's "affectionate ardour" as a negative quality: something which makes Dorothea "prey", allowing her to be played upon by Will. Dorothea's warm feelings are seen only as weaknesses, features which make her vulnerable and readily led astray, not sources of insight, energy and action. Another phrase which Casaubon uses of Dorothea's feelings is more self-revealing than he realises. He refers to her "immoderate attachment".

Why does Casaubon think Dorothea's feelings of attachment are "immoderate"? The circumstances which Casaubon is referring to need attention here. Casaubon is aware that Dorothea could easily become strongly attached to Will: already, he notes, resentfully but accurately, "her mind is occupied with his fortunes". If Casaubon were only referring to Dorothea's possible feelings for Will, "immoderate attachment" would not reveal anything more than a jealousy which might have reasonable foundations. Dorothea's "immoderate attachment", however, has appeared under other circumstances: it is something which Casaubon knows Dorothea "inwardly reproaches me for not responding to". Casaubon feels threatened by

16 *Middlemarch*, 32; bk. 1, ch. 1.
Dorothea’s immoderate attachment to himself. Her feelings of affection for him are seen as threatening, out of place even within their marriage, because they ask for a response from him. (We have seen this dramatised earlier in the novel — for example, during the honeymoon in Rome, where Dorothea’s manifestation of “excessive feeling” is “highly disturbing” to Casaubon.\(^{17}\))

Sensitive to his inability to give such a response, he then becomes even more sensitive to the way he may be criticised for this failure. His criticism of Dorothea is thus a defensive reaction, designed to shield himself from hurt. He feels her tendency to ask for affection should be curbed: a particularly damning revelation of how unaware he is of the wastefulness of an emotionally sterile marriage. Finally, he reveals that he regards Dorothea’s perceptions as having no validity. She would not realise, Casaubon thinks, that any marriage to Will: “would be calamity for her and success for him [Will]. She would not think it calamity . . . “. Although, as Casaubon notes, Dorothea would not think her marriage a calamity, Casaubon has no doubt about its effects "Such a marriage would be fatal to Dorothea". The recognition that Dorothea would not notice this "calamity" does not lead Casaubon to question whether a disaster can be occurring if the supposed victim does not feel it. Casaubon regards his view of the marriage as calamitous as the only right view, and the only one of importance. Thus, while he concedes that Dorothea would not notice that she had made a dreadful marriage, it still remains his "duty" to stop such a match. Casaubon does not refer to his own feelings here: it is all (seemingly) a matter of conduct and considering others.

Casaubon refers instead to Will’s imputed feelings: they include "caprice", "personal animosity", and "ingratitude". Casaubon casts Will in the role of a seducer, a facile charmer without integrity. Will has "gained Dorothea’s ear, he has fascinated her attention"; he can "make her believe anything". Casaubon stresses the faults of Will and Dorothea, while commenting on his own "duty to hinder" Will’s plans. Casaubon’s self-justification begins and ends with a reference to his duty to care for Dorothea’s future, rather than with a reference to his own feelings. Such an analysis strongly suggests blindness on Casaubon’s part to his own faults, and so we

\(^{17}\) *Middlemarch*, 232; bk. 2, ch. 20.
return to trusting the narrator's analysis of Casaubon's feelings. The narrator introduced Casaubon's explanation of his action by disclaiming the accuracy of her own account of his feelings: "This is a very bare and therefore a very incomplete way of putting the case". Casaubon's self-justification, however, gives a much less complete account of his feelings in what he is willing to admit to himself, while it unwittingly reveals the less pleasant passions he is governed by. It is through subtle shifts like this that the narrator retains her authority as a superb analyst of feeling, while impressing on us the difficulty of analysing feelings and the inadequacies involved in any such analysis. We value the fine discriminations made between feelings in *Middlemarch* partly because we understand the difficulty of making them.

We are educated into a less conventional way of viewing feeling, not only by the narrator's comments but also through some thoughtful discussions by the novel's characters about feeling. When Caleb Garth and Farebrother discuss a question of feeling, for example, they both tend to ponder the issues rather than reach for a quick conclusion. Caleb opens the discussion, asking Farebrother for his opinion:

'Now Mary's gone out, I must tell you a thing — it's only known to Susan and me, and you'll not tell it again. The old scoundrel wanted Mary to burn one of the wills the very night he died, when she was sitting up with him by herself, and he offered her a sum of money that he had in the box by him if she would do it. But Mary, you understand, could do no such thing — would not be handling his iron chest, and so on. Now, you see, the will he wanted burnt was this last, so that if Mary had done what he wanted, Fred Vincy would have had ten thousand pounds. The old man did turn to him at the last. That touches poor Mary close; she couldn't help it — she was in the right to do what she did, but she feels, as she says, much as if she had knocked down somebody's property and broken it against her will, when she was rightfully defending herself. I feel with her, somehow, and if I could make any amends to the poor lad, instead of bearing him a grudge for the harm he did us, I should be glad to do it. Now, what is your opinion, sir? Susan doesn't agree with me. She says — tell what you say, Susan.'

'Mary could not have acted otherwise, even if she had known what would be the effect on Fred,' said Mrs. Garth, pausing from her work, and looking at Mr. Farebrother. 'And she was quite ignorant of it. It seems to me, a loss which falls on another because we have done right is not to lie upon our conscience.'
The Vicar did not answer immediately, and Caleb said, 'It's the feeling. The child feels in that way, and I feel with her. You don't mean your horse to tread on a dog when you're backing out of the way; but it goes through you, when it's done.'

'I am sure Mrs. Garth would agree with you there,' said Mr. Farebrother, who for some reason seemed more inclined to ruminate than to speak. 'One could hardly say that the feeling you mention about Fred is wrong — or rather, mistaken — though no man ought to make a claim on such feeling.'

For Mrs Garth, the questions about feelings can and should be resolved into questions of right and wrong. If Mary has acted properly, she should not feel guilty. Mrs Garth clearly thinks that if she can make Mary believe that she acted rightly, Mary’s pangs will disappear. Mrs Garth’s view seems similar to Nussbaum’s cognitive approach to emotions. Nussbaum argues that if you change a person’s belief you can change the emotions related to it. There is a further assumption in Mrs Garth’s attitude towards guilt: the idea that if you are not responsible you should not feel guilty. Mrs Garth seems to believe that if she could convince Mary that she acted in the only way possible, Mary would realise that she was not responsible and no longer feel guilty.

Against Mrs Garth’s strictures on what should “lie on our conscience”, Caleb simply answers: “It’s the feeling.” Cadence is important here. The stress falls on the word “feeling”, giving this simple sentence dignity and resonance, even as we sense the difficulty Caleb is having in adequately articulating his thoughts. Caleb is stressing the way in which we feel responsible even if we cannot be held responsible; this response is presented as a disputable but understandable moral attitude.

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18 Middlemarch, 441; bk. 4, ch. 40.

19 Nussbaum sometimes appears to hold to the view that "belief is sufficient for emotion", a view which would make a belief a sufficient condition for a corresponding emotion, though it would not make the belief a cause which would inevitably create the emotion. At other points, however, Nussbaum seems to endorse a stronger view: "the most powerful accounts, furthermore, go on to argue that if one really accepts or takes in a certain belief, one will experience the emotion". Nussbaum, Love's Knowledge, 41.

20 As we saw in Chapter Two, Herbert Morris has questioned this idea of guilt, and has suggested that there is a form of non-moral guilt which is not connected to responsibility. Rather it embodies a person’s moral attitude towards the world. Morris, "Nonmoral Guilt", Schoeman, 221-222.
The philosophical issues raised by the characters' discussion are integrated with the characters' lives. The importance which Caleb places on Mary's feelings is shown not just here, but at many points in the narrative, as when Caleb aids Fred in beginning his career.

Farebrother's tendency to "ruminate" rather than speak is part of the fine behaviour we come to expect from him. Here he avoids saying anything which could disadvantage his romantic rival. The possibilities of what Farebrother may be thinking about — his love for Mary, and whether his chance of success is lessened by the feelings of compunction she has towards Fred — are contained in the phrase "for some reason". No further analysis of Farebrother's feelings is given, a reminder of how other people's feelings can be hidden from us.

As we have seen, Rosamond's thoughts about love are marked by a tendency to use conventional phrases like "awakening love", but other characters discuss feelings in ways which question conventional accounts. Mary Garth, for instance, shows a sharp awareness of the limitations of her experience of the state of "falling in love" and the absurdity of using literature as a basis for judging on these matters, when she responds to Fred's comments:

'I suppose a woman is never in love with any one she has always known — ever since she can remember; as a man often is. It is always some new fellow who strikes a girl.'

'Let me see,' said Mary, the corners of her mouth curling archly; 'I must go back on my experience. There is Juliet — she seems an example of what you say. But then Ophelia had probably known Hamlet a long while; and Brenda Troy — she had known Mordaunt Merton ever since they were children; but then he seems to have been an estimable young man; and Minna was still more deeply in love with Cleveland, who was a stranger. Waverley was new to Flora Macivor; but then she did not fall in love with him. And there are Olivia and Sophia Primrose, and Corinne — they may be said to have fallen in love with new men. Altogether, my experience is rather mixed.'

Mary looked up with some roguishness at Fred, and that look of hers was very dear to him, though the eyes were nothing more than clear windows where observation sat laughingly. He was certainly an affectionate fellow, and as he had grown from boy to man, he had grown in love with his old playmate, notwithstanding that share in the higher education of the country which had exalted his views of rank and income.21

In this delightful response to Fred, Mary's affection for him is shown through her teasing. She teases Fred by ignoring the poorly hidden purpose behind his question, and turns the conversation into a playful one about love. She laughs at both Fred's suggestion that "a woman is never in love with any one she has ever known" and at the idea that there are definable patterns to love which she could identify. She points also to the absurdity of her commenting on this question, when her "mixed" experience is wholly based, she teasingly says, on literature.

She rewrites literary works with wit and affection: "Ophelia had probably known Hamlet a long time" she says, adding an amusingly prosaic prelude to Shakespeare's tragedy. Her seeming uncertainty over Mordaunt Merton ("he seems to have been an estimable young man") wittily links him to young men outside literature whose characters are not so easily known. She also deftly raises what only seems to be an innocent question: perhaps Merton's character had something to do with Brenda Troil's affection for him? (Half the fun here, of course, is the sly dig at Fred: neatly combined with the mock-serious suggestion that a man's good character might outweigh the disadvantages of long acquaintance). Mary's inclusion of Flora Maclvor and Waverley on a list of lovers (Mary seemingly remembers too late Flora's decidedly unromantic feelings towards Waverley) adds an extra touch of absurdity to the idea that we can learn about love through literature. There is another warning here too, as we remember how Waverley was led astray by his book-inspired ideas of romance.

So within Middlemarch itself, we face sharp questioning of whether literature can ever be useful as a source of information about emotions. Yet this scepticism does not amount to nihilism, but merely to wariness: for much of Middlemarch is devoted to exploring fine differences between feelings and to encouraging its readers to think about emotions — particularly love — in less conventional ways.
Chapter Four

Discriminating between emotions: is this love?

In Chapter Three, we saw that much of Middlemarch is devoted to making fine discriminations between emotions, and to encouraging its readers to think about emotions less conventionally. It is the argument of the current chapter that some of the critical commentary on Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda has not discriminated quite finely enough between emotions, and that as a consequence, some relationships between characters have either been misinterpreted or not seen clearly enough. In Middlemarch, I want to focus on the relationships of Fred and Mary, and Dorothea and Casaubon, in an attempt to overturn the view that Eliot's treatment of these characters reveals her typically Victorian confusion about love. The view that I am arguing against has been most cogently expressed by W. J. Harvey, when he said "there are some areas of human experience that George Eliot was unwilling or unable to treat fully and properly, the most important of these being romantic or passionate love between two adults".¹ In Harvey's defence, it must be noted that this generalisation refers to his dissatisfaction with the Will-Dorothea relationship; but it is significant that he has overlooked Fred and Mary's relationship. In Daniel Deronda, I want to focus on a relatively uncontroversial point (that Gwendolen Harleth is in love with Deronda) in order to bring out interesting contrasts with some of Deronda's other admirers, who have been neglected by other commentators.

Differing types of love: Fred and Mary's love

Fred and Mary's love has sometimes been dismissed as a brother and sister love.² To describe it in this way, though, is to over-sentimentalise brother and sister relationships. If we look at Middlemarch, we can see strong distinctions between the feelings which siblings within the novel have for each other, and the way Fred and Mary feel towards each other. The relationship

¹Harvey, The Art of George Eliot, 197.
between Letty Garth and Ben Garth or between Fred and Rosamond Vincy is not simply one of love. It is a complicated mixture of liking, rivalry, irritation, resentment and indifference. To describe Fred and Mary's love as being similar to that between a brother and sister is also to miss the sexual tension in their relationship. Brian Crick ignores this tension, commenting that George Eliot depicts adult love "as if at its best it was like the fondness of two children for one another or the affection a son might entertain for a mother he admires". Crick claims he can see no difference between Maggie Tulliver's feeling for her brother Tom, and Mary's feeling for Fred, other than that Fred is placed in the role of the junior in the pair. Fondness or affection, however, are not the only feelings Fred and Mary share, as is evident in Mary's delighted, suspenseful anticipation of Fred's kiss, a kiss which will be quite different from, and much more significant than, the ones which they shared as children. The reference to childhood activities in this scene stresses the difference, not the similarity, between the two kinds of kisses. Fred refers back to a time when kisses were natural but unimportant to ask for a kiss of great importance and potential pleasure:

They lingered on the door-step under the steep-roofed porch, and Fred almost in a whisper said, —

'When we were first engaged, with the umbrella-ring, Mary, you used to —'

The spirit of joy began to laugh more decidedly in Mary's eyes, but the fatal Ben came running to the door with Brownie yapping behind him, and, bouncing against them, said —

'Fred and Mary! are you ever coming in? — or may I eat your cake?'

If this were merely the affectionate kiss of two children, Ben's interruption would hardly have been "fatal". It is not just a kiss of affection: it is an act of adult passion, and must be postponed until they can find privacy. As in Jane Austen's novels, a direct description of passion is avoided, but the suggestion remains "The spirit of joy began to laugh more decidedly in Mary's eyes...". The potential kiss is interrupted: and Fred and Mary are forced to return to prosaic family life. But this hardly diminishes the sexual tension and promise in their relationship. Sexual and romantic

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3 Crick, 164.

4 *Middlemarch*, 889, bk. 8, ch. 86.
suspense is one of the dominant notes in this relationship. Here it involves frustrated action; at other times it involves flirtation and teasing, as we saw in Chapter Three, in Mary's playful analysis of her literary experience of love. The difference between the world of adults and children is stressed by the emphasis on the different perception of time: Fred and Mary linger on the doorstep, slowly and pleasurably moving towards a moment of togetherness, while in Ben's eyes they seem to be taking forever (and inexplicably ignoring the great importance of cake).

As well as seeing Mary and Fred's love as being too similar to that of brothers and sisters, Crick also sees it as too similar to the love between mother and son.\(^5\) Crick refers to Fred's "boyish efforts to gain her [Mary's] approval" and to his "childish dependence" on her. Crick claims there are strong links between Fred's relationship with his mother and with his relationship with Mary.

In a previous skirmish with his sister we learn that Fred's 'notion of a pleasant woman' (M I. xi; 74) is his mother, who just happens to dote on her 'tender, filial-hearted child' (M II. xv; 104). On the surface at least, Mary proves to be less indulgent with Fred than his mother but her frequent criticism of his irresponsibility and immaturity confirm the maternal posture she adopts in her dealings with her childhood playmate.\(^6\)

Crick bases his argument on a broad definition of the word "maternal": whether Mary is doting or critical she is guilty of this quality. It is rather difficult to escape the embrace of a word which can be so conveniently extended. Let us look instead at a moment which Crick seizes on, when the narrator uses the word "maternal" to describe Mary's feeling towards Fred. In analysing this incident, Crick assumes that George Eliot is exhibiting a typically Victorian confusion between familial and romantic love. In context, however, the word "maternal" clearly indicates that there is an element of protective caring in Mary's love for Fred:

> There is often something maternal even in a girlish love, and Mary's hard experience had wrought her nature to an impressibility very different from that hard slight thing which we call girlishness. At Fred's last words she felt an instantaneous pang, something like what the mother feels at the imagined sobs or cries of her naughty truant child, which may lose itself and get harm.

\(^5\)Crick, 161.

\(^6\)Crick, 161.
And when, looking up, her eyes met his dull despairing glance, her pity for him surmounted her anger and all her other anxieties.

'Oh, Fred, how ill you look...'

Placed back in context, it is easy to see that it is the sight of Fred looking ill which has called up Mary's protective, maternal instincts. It is not clear why such protectiveness should be excluded from definitions of love, or why a love which includes such an element is less adult, or less sexual, than a love which does not include any desire to protect a partner. Crick's objections seem to stem from taking a narrow view of what feelings it is possible to include in adult love. Any analogy drawn between this love and maternal love means, in his view, that George Eliot is confusing the two emotions. What we are seeing here, though, is that Mary's feeling for Fred includes (not is confused with) a protectiveness which is "something like" (not identical to) the feeling which a mother might have for a child. This protectiveness is only part of her feeling: it is an element "in a girlish love" (my italics). It is not (as Crick argues) something which makes her a mother-figure.

What Mary and Fred's love has in common with familial love is its deep roots (though this deep rooted love may be more akin to the love of place than to the love of family). It would have been possible, however, for them not to nurture this love and to allow it to wither away. We will be discussing this possibility in Chapter Six, as we look at the question of taking responsibility for emotions.

Dorothea's feelings for Casaubon

One of the "nice discriminations" which George Eliot makes in Middlemarch involves an examination of a range of feelings which could be called love, as well as feelings which are narrowly separated from it. In Middlemarch, we meet a cacophony of voices demanding to know how Dorothea can think of accepting Casaubon as her husband. Most of these voices think that Dorothea is mistaken about her feelings: that she has confused admiration or hero-worship with

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7Middlemarch, 287-288; bk. 3, ch. 25.
love. We meet, too, a plethora of answers to this question: some given by the narrator, some by other characters.

Do these answers seem satisfactory, or is there some evasion on George Eliot's part in treating this question of love? Crick, while noting the acute criticism which George Eliot turns on Dorothea's views of love, nonetheless feels that George Eliot is too sympathetic to Dorothea's feelings. So exactly what are those feelings?

Dorothea's first feelings towards Casaubon, we are told, are those of "venerating expectation". The Prelude comments on the problems facing "the ardently willing soul" in terms which stress the way ardour can turn towards either sexual passion or idealism: "Their ardour alternated between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood; so that the one was disapproved as extravagance, and the other condemned as a lapse". Ardour without an object, it is suggested, may turn towards either an ideal goal or result in sexual misconduct. It alternates, suggesting that neither goal is fully satisfactory. It is an overflow of emotion, looking for a focus. Dorothea's yearnings focus on Casaubon, a choice which meets with much disapproval. The first disapproval comes from Celia and Sir James.

That Dorothea should admire Casaubon does not surprise Sir James or Celia, and Sir James is initially "not in the least jealous" of Dorothea's interest in Casaubon. In Dorothea's ardent nature, however, admiration does not stop at the boundary which Celia and Sir James expect. To their annoyance, they find that her passionate admiration of Casaubon has taken on qualities which separate it from the more distant kind of admiration they would not have objected to.

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8Crick, 159.
9Middlemarch, 33; bk. 1, ch. 1.
10Middlemarch, 25; Prelude.
11Middlemarch, 45; bk. 1, ch. 2.
Sir James thinks that Dorothea could not possibly care for Casaubon "except, indeed, in a religious sort of way, as for a clergyman of some distinction". Celia is misled by the similarity between Dorothea's liking for Casaubon and another older man, Monsieur Liret:

For the first time it entered into Celia's mind that there might be something more between Mr. Casaubon and her sister than his delight in bookish talk and her delight in listening. Hitherto she had classed the admiration for this 'ugly' and learned acquaintance with the admiration for Monsieur Liret at Lausanne, also ugly and learned. Dorothea had never been tired of listening to old Monsieur Liret when Celia's feet were as cold as possible, and when it had really become dreadful to see the skin of his bald head moving about. Why then should her enthusiasm not extend to Mr. Casaubon simply in the same way as to Monsieur Liret? And it seemed probable that all learned men had a sort of schoolmaster's view of young people.

But now Celia was really startled at the suspicion which had darted into her mind. She was seldom taken by surprise in this way, her marvellous quickness in observing a certain order of signs generally preparing her to expect such outward events as she had an interest in. Not that she now imagined Mr. Casaubon to be already an accepted lover: she had only begun to feel disgust at the possibility that anything in Dorothea's mind could tend toward such an issue. Here was something really to vex her about Dodo: it was all very well not to accept Sir James Chettam, but the idea of marrying Mr. Casaubon! Celia felt a sort of shame mingled with a sense of the ludicrous. But perhaps Dodo, if she were really bordering on such an extravagance, might be turned away from it: experience had often shown that her impressibility might be calculated on.

What is it that separates Dorothea's enthusiasm for the two men, so that one remains a schoolmaster and the other becomes her husband? The answer is dramatised for us in Dorothea's reaction to the thought of Casaubon wanting to marry her:

It had now entered Dorothea's mind that Mr Casaubon might wish to make her his wife, and the idea that he would do so touched her with a sort of reverential gratitude.

Dorothea's reaction to the thought of Mr Casaubon making her his wife is "reverential gratitude"; Celia reacts to a similar thought with "a sort of shame mingled with a sense of the ludicrous".

Celia and Sir James both compartmentalise the feelings of admiration which they initially believe

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12 Middlemarch, 45; bk. 1, ch. 2.
13 Middlemarch, 70-71; bk. 1, ch. 6.
14 Middlemarch, 50; bk. 1, ch. 3.
Dorothea to have for Casaubon. It would be possible, in their view, for Dorothea to admire Casaubon intensely, but only within the constraints of a certain relationship: "in a religious sort of way" or because of "her delight in listening". Celia's views reflect what she has observed of Dorothea's feelings in the past, where Dorothea's admiration for Monsieur Liret did not involve a wish for a closer relationship. It is not that Celia underestimates the strength of Dorothea's feelings — she knows that Dorothea had "never been tired of listening to old Monsieur Liret", and she expects Dorothea to feel the same way about Casaubon. It is rather that Celia sees those feelings as confined to one narrow channel: "delight in listening" to "bookish talk". But Dorothea's feelings for Casaubon break these bounds, and spread out to include every aspect of a possible future. Thus there is no sense of shrinking, but only "reverential gratitude" at the thought that she might become his wife. Her feelings change rapidly from "venerating expectation" to "childlike unrestrained ardour".\(^{15}\) It is the lack of restraint in Dorothea's feelings, the lack of any sense that her relationship with Casaubon should be confined within limits, which so startles Celia. To Celia, those limits are so clearly defined that there is no danger in Dorothea's initial admiration: the idea of Casaubon as a possible lover of Dorothea is one which only enters Celia's mind at a late stage. In contrast, the idea of Casaubon as a potential husband has entered Dorothea's mind "by the evening of the next day".\(^{16}\) There is no sense in Dorothea's mind, as there is in Celia's and Sir James', that there are relationships from which Casaubon should be excluded, no sense that it is ridiculous to think of him as a lover.

But are we sure that Dorothea does think of Casaubon as a lover? Is this all part of her "childlike ideas about marriage"?\(^{17}\) Part of her feeling that "The really delightful sort of marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of a father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you

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\(^{15}\) *Middlemarch*, 73; bk. 1, ch. 5.

\(^{16}\) *Middlemarch*, 46; bk. 1, ch. 3.

\(^{17}\) *Middlemarch*, 32; bk. 1, ch. 1.
wished it"? 18 Is it, in short, ignorance about sexuality that allows Dorothea to accept Casaubon as a husband?

Several critics have thought so. K. M. Newton, in fact, thinks it is not merely ignorance but fear of sexuality which leads Dorothea to accept Casaubon. Newton, in listing the reasons for Dorothea's decision to marry Casaubon, comments "A conventional marriage to someone like Sir James Chettam has no attraction for her, and it is implied that she is afraid of her own sexuality." 19 Newton unfortunately fails to specify the evidence for his view that Dorothea is afraid of her sexuality. His view may rest on the narrator's comment about Dorothea's attitude to riding "she felt that she enjoyed it in a pagan sensuous way, and always looked forward to renouncing it", 20 a comment which reveals Dorothea's liking for dramatic gestures and her attraction to ascetism, but hardly indicates fear.

Other critics put Dorothea's choice down to ignorance. Barbara Hardy says that Dorothea is wrong about her emotional needs, and links this to her innocence, and her tendency to think about "ideals of marriage ominously expressed in reference to fathers and teachers". 21 Dorothea Barrett comments:

In George Eliot's characters, love and work are equal manifestations of one personality, and the same characteristics are manifest in both halves of the individual's life. Casaubon is both sexually and emotionally dessicated; Lydgate's warmth affects both his love life and his professional life; Ladislaw is a dilettante both emotionally and intellectually. Dorothea is both sexually and vocationally passionate; she is sacrificing the former passion for the latter. The pathos lies in the distance between the knowledge that narrator and reader share and Dorothea's lack of awareness; she is not yet conscious that she is making a sacrifice, and she has no suspicion, as we have, that her sacrifice will be futile, that neither her sexual nor her emotional needs will be satisfied by this marriage. 22

18 *Middlemarch*, 32, bk. 1, ch. 1.

19 Newton, 128.

20 *Middlemarch*, 32, bk. 1, ch. 1.


Barrett suggests that Dorothea's first marriage involves "sacrifice", the unconscious sacrifice of her sexually passionate side. This is certainly the view of some observers in the novel: Sir James Chettam, for example, objects to Mr Brooke's conduct in letting a "blooming young girl marry Casaubon". Sir James thinks Dorothea is unaware of what she is involving herself in: "She is too young to know what she likes." Sir James's view, though, is vigorously questioned by Mr Cadwallader: "Confound you handsome young fellows! you think of having it all your own way in the world. You don't understand women. They don't admire you half as much as you admire yourselves."

Mr Cadwallader's comment has particular force because we know Dorothea does not admire Sir James's appearance. Earlier in the novel, Celia and Dorothea have had a conversation where Dorothea cuttingly dismisses the notion that Sir James is attractive, and makes it clear she prefers Casaubon. Celia and Dorothea perceive Casaubon in completely different ways: not only his character, but even his outward appearance.

When the two girls were in the drawing-room alone, Celia said —

"How very ugly Mr Casaubon is!"

"Celia! He is one of the most distinguished-looking men I ever saw. He is remarkably like the portrait of Locke. He has the same deep eye-sockets."

"Had Locke those two white moles with hairs on them?"

"Oh, I daresay! when people of a certain sort looked at him," said Dorothea, walking away a little.

"Mr Casaubon is so sallow."

"All the better. I suppose you admire a man with the complexion of a cochon de lait."

'Dodo!' exclaimed Celia, looking after her in surprise. 'I never heard you make such a comparison before.'

23 Middlemarch, 93; bk. 1, ch. 8.
24 Middlemarch, 93; bk. 1, ch. 8.
25 Middlemarch, 94; bk. 1, ch. 8.
'Why should I make it before the occasion came? It is a good comparison: the match is perfect.'

Miss Brooke was clearly forgetting herself, and Celia thought so.

'I wonder you show temper, Dorothea.'

'It is so painful in you, Celia, that you will look at human beings as if they were merely animals with a toilette, and never see the great soul in a man's face.'

'Has Mr Casaubon a great soul?' Celia was not without a touch of naive malice.

'Yes, I believe he has,' said Dorothea, with the full voice of decision. 'Everything I see in him corresponds to his pamphlet on Biblical Cosmology.'

While Celia reacts to Casaubon's appearance with distaste, Dorothea calls it distinguished.

Dorothea's judgements about Casaubon's appearance are accompanied by a confidence that she can see his true nature. He looks like the portrait of Locke, Dorothea says, drawing attention to this resemblance not as one of chance but as something which indicates Casaubon is also a great thinker. His appearance corresponds, she says (without a touch of irony) "to his pamphlet on Biblical Cosmology". The large conclusions Dorothea draws are counterpointed amusingly by Celia's refusal to go beyond the facts: Mr Casaubon has two moles, he is sallow. But if Dorothea is both literally and figuratively short-sighted, Celia's vision is also criticised as being limited. The criticism is made here by Dorothea: "people of a certain sort" she says, might have noticed only Locke's facial blemishes and not his soul. A little later, a similar criticism of Celia's vision is made by the narrator: when Celia sees people singing, she merely watches and criticises their facial movements, rather than being uplifted by the music.

The passage also indicates that Dorothea's vocational and sexual yearnings are more intimately connected than Barrett allows for. Dorothea is not sacrificing a handsome young suitor for a learned middle-aged man; there is no such sacrifice, from Dorothea's viewpoint. She does not see Sir James as attractive, while everything about Casaubon seems appealing. Barrett, evidently not believing that anyone could find Casaubon attractive, thinks Dorothea's admiration of

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26 *Middlemarch*, 42-43; bk. 1, ch. 2.

27 *Middlemarch*, 55; bk. 1, ch. 3.
Casaubon's sallow complexion "evinces a deep-seated sexual aversion".\textsuperscript{28} To interpret Dorothea's reaction to Casaubon in this way, however, is to underplay an important theme in the novel: the variations in how people perceive each other.

The vivid and biased descriptions which other observers use of Casaubon are in danger of drowning the reader's remembrance of how differently Dorothea perceives Casaubon. For Mrs Cadwallader, Casaubon looks like "a death's head skinned over for the occasion",\textsuperscript{29} from Sir James's point of view, "He is no better than a mummy".\textsuperscript{30} But Sir James's point of view, the narrator says "has to be allowed for" (my italics); it is the viewpoint of "a blooming and disappointed rival".\textsuperscript{31}

If Dorothea has selected a father-figure as her husband, she has done so without any sense that there is a physical incongruity between them. Indeed, she never seems to feel the physical incongruity which the other characters — from Celia to Naumann — feel is so evident.\textsuperscript{32} It would be easy to decide that this is because Dorothea is ignorant of the erotic side of marriage: she does not realise, we might say, that this is a sexual partnership she is embarking on. Later in this chapter we will look at the evidence for this view, by examining what happens when she and Casaubon become sexual partners.

I have suggested that in portraying Dorothea's feelings for Casaubon, George Eliot is distinguishing between two closely linked emotions, admiration and love. Critics who stress Dorothea's sexual naivety in accepting Casaubon are likely to think that Dorothea is simply confused about her feelings. Gillian Beer writes:

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{28}Barrett, 134.
\item \textsuperscript{29}\textit{Middlemarch}, 117; bk. 1, ch. 10.
\item \textsuperscript{30}\textit{Middlemarch}, 81; bk. 1, ch. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{31}\textit{Middlemarch}, 81; bk. 1, ch. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{32}Barbara Hardy notes that "Almost everyone who comments on the marriage reacts in protest and disgust". (Hardy, \textit{Appropriate Form}, 115. Rpt. in Hardy, \textit{Particularities}, 23).
\end{enumerate}
Dorothea finds it hard to distinguish between love and learning: this is a problem which bears particularly hard on women. The mentor-pupil relationship in its male-female form presents the man as teacher and the woman as pupil... To Dorothea, passion and knowledge are identified. She seeks to know more than her meagre education has so far allowed her, and thereby to do more than her society designates as appropriate to her. At the beginning of the book, Casaubon is irradiated for her by the light of his imagined knowledge. Dorothea clearly figures partly as a chastened re-reading of the writer's own early experience; in particular, her attraction to learned older men who seemed to offer access to an intensified world of ideas. In her relationship with Herbert Spencer, Marian Evans had been forced to the point of understanding that the power of intellectual synthesis does not guarantee emotional power or sexual feeling.  

The link which Beer makes between the Dorothea-Casaubon relationship and the Marian Evans-Herbert Spencer relationship does not seem to be the right one. There is a link, but it is the inverse of the one which Beer indicates. Herbert Spencer's comments on his relationship with George Eliot (not to mention his theories about women, which stress that physical beauty is their only important quality) make it clear that while he valued George Eliot intellectually, he found her appearance physically repellent. In this response, he is much closer to Celia than Dorothea: he cannot see beyond the moles to the great soul. This way of seeing is criticised by Dorothea — she finds it "painful" that Celia should think only about trivialities. Celia reacts with squeamish distaste to details in Casaubon's appearance which Dorothea simply does not see (and which she would, in any case regard as trivial). Dorothea is "short-sighted" we are told; but could Celia, who drops backward because "she could not bear Mr Casaubon to blink at her", be regarded as a trifle over-fastidious?  

Dorothea does indeed identify knowledge and passion, as Beer remarks, but this does not mean that she necessarily confuses "love and learning". Knowledge is identified with the passion of vocation: Dorothea will later learn painfully that Casaubon has knowledge without this type of...

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33 Beer, George Eliot, 172-173.
35 Middlemarch, 53; bk. 1, ch. 3.
36 Middlemarch, 103; bk. 1, ch. 9.
passion. To say that Dorothea confuses love and learning, though, is to take us back to an earlier question: why, then, do Dorothea's feelings for Casaubon differ from her feelings for Monsieur Liret?

If the critics who believe that Dorothea is sexually naive and confused about her feelings are right, we should see a dramatic difference in Dorothea's feelings towards Casaubon after they are married. And indeed, in a revealing passage about Dorothea's experience in Rome, it is suggested that the sexual side of marriage comes as a shock to her. The suggestion that Dorothea's marriage experience involves sexuality may seem dubious, since many critics refer to Casaubon as impotent. T. R. Wright comments "There has, of course, been much speculation about Casaubon's supposed impotence, suggested as it is by imagery of dried peas, dried-up streams, stagnant ponds, locked drawers, winding stairs and catacombs". All these images, I would suggest, can be seen as referring to sexual inadequacy rather than impotence, as well as to Casaubon's inability to give and receive affective. Casaubon's physically withered state is partly a metaphor for a more crippling disability, which is emotional. I will discuss this imagery in more detail later on, but the discussion itself requires justification. As Wright points out "to discuss the genitalia of fictional characters . . . is a dubious activity." Why, then, is it necessary to spend any time on this question? That Casaubon is not impotent is relevant to my argument, for (as we will see later in this chapter) Dorothea shows a yearning for closeness and physical intimacy, an intimacy which must be transfigured with loving emotions. Dorothea's yearning for affection from Casaubon and for physical intimacy with him suggests that she loves rather than merely admires him.

Physical intimacy, however, comes without any display of affection from Casaubon. The sexual consummation of their marriage is entirely devoid of any expression of feeling on

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38 Wright, 47.
Casaubon's part which could have made it intelligible to Dorothea. Instead it is horribly divested of everything which makes it meaningful, and is reduced to a grotesque physical experience:

To those who have looked at Rome with the quickening power of a knowledge which breathes a growing soul into all historic shapes, and traces out the suppressed transitions which unite all contrasts, Rome may still be the spiritual centre and interpreter of the world. But let them conceive one more historical contrast: the gigantic broken revelations of that Imperial and Papal city thrust abruptly on the notions of a girl who had been brought up in English and Swiss Puritanism... a girl whose ardent nature turned all her small allowance of knowledge into principles, fusing her actions into their mould, and whose quick emotions gave the most abstract things the quality of a pleasure or a pain; a girl who had lately become a wife, and from enthusiastic acceptance of untried duty found herself plunged in tumultuous preoccupation with her personal lot. The weight of unintelligible Rome might lie easily on bright nymphs to whom it formed a background for the brilliant picnic of Anglo-foreign society; but Dorothea had no such defence against deep impressions. Ruins and basilicas, palaces and colossi, set in the midst of a sordid present, where all that was living and warm-blooded seemed sunk in the deep degeneracy of a superstition divorced from reverence, 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, 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.

...Dorothea all her life continued 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.

Not that this inward amazement of Dorothea's was anything very exceptional: many souls in their young nudity are tumbled out left to 'find their feet' among them, while their elders go about their business. Nor can I suppose that when Mrs Casaubon is discovered in a fit of weeping six weeks after her wedding, the situation will be regarded as tragic. (Italics mine)39

I have added the italics because the implicitly sexual nature of this oft-quoted passage seems to have been generally overlooked, with many critics being convinced of Casaubon's impotence.

39Middlemarch, 225-226; bk. 2, ch. 20.
Gillian Beer sees this passage as referring to Dorothea's isolated state: she is not linked to a sisterhood of women which could help her make sense of history.\textsuperscript{40} K. M. Newton, referring to this passage, wonders if it is intended to suggest Dorothea's experience of Casaubon's physical impotence.\textsuperscript{41} T.R. Wright suggests that we see Dorothea's "disappointment with Rome mixing symbolically with her disappointment in her husband",\textsuperscript{42} but leaves open the question of whether or not Casaubon is impotent, merely saying "it is clear that Casaubon does not satisfy Dorothea's sexual or emotional needs".\textsuperscript{43} Barbara Hardy speaks about "the vague sensual implications here"\textsuperscript{44} but says that "We cannot definitely say that the marriage is never consummated, but since Dorothea's nervous misery begins in Rome, this seems highly probable."\textsuperscript{45} In her Open University film \textit{A View of Middlemarch}, Hardy suggests that what is being referred to in this passage is Dorothea's shocked reaction to the sensual art of Rome. In a later essay, however, Hardy refers to this passage and speaks of Rome as "a correlative for the shocks and revulsions of the marriage journey".\textsuperscript{46} David Carroll sees the passage as indicating Dorothea's inability to find an interpretation which would make sense of the world;\textsuperscript{47} U.C. Knoepflmacher also sees it as a painful failure to find a theory which could bind meaningless facts together;\textsuperscript{48} Neil Hertz sees it as "an experience of the sublime";\textsuperscript{49} Santanu Majumdar sees it as showing that Dorothea is overwhelmed.

\textsuperscript{40}Beer, \textit{George Eliot}, 164-165.
\textsuperscript{41}Newton, 131.
\textsuperscript{42}Wright, 46.
\textsuperscript{43}Wright, 47.
\textsuperscript{44}Hardy, \textit{Appropriate Form}, 127. Rpt. in Hardy, \textit{Particularities}, 32.
\textsuperscript{45}Hardy, \textit{Appropriate Form}, 120. Rpt in Hardy, \textit{Particularities}, 27.
\textsuperscript{47}David Carroll, \textit{George Eliot and the Conflict of Interpretations: A Reading of the Novels} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 245.
\textsuperscript{48}Knoepflmacher, "Fusing fact and myth: the new reality of \textit{Middlemarch}", Adam, 64.
by the immensity of past history,\textsuperscript{50} while Bodenheimer reads it as a description of a disturbed psyche, "suggestive of the speaker's intimacy with madness or hysteria."\textsuperscript{51} Gordon Haight is in a minority in seeing the passage as indicating a violent and painful initiation into matrimony.\textsuperscript{52}

Once we look at the passage closely, the sexual imagery seems striking. The references to huge phallic objects which are "thrust" on Dorothea who has no "defence against deep impressions" (in contrast to the other nymphs who more easily accept the "weight" lying on them), the comments on the difference between her current experience and the "Puritanism" which she was brought up, the references to the difficult transition between being a "girl" and a "wife": all these point towards a consummated marriage which has come as a great shock to Dorothea. She is conscious of a "sordid present", of a "dimmer but eager Titanic life gazing and struggling on walls and ceilings", and the experience which "jarred her as with an electric shock" and which is then urged upon her, taking "possession of her young sense", leaves her with an "ache" and a sense that her emotions have been checked. The defloration imagery presented through the red drapery spreading everywhere, the "excited intention" which is horribly linked to men of religion (and it is worth remembering Casaubon's vocation here), the confused images which invade Dorothea's subconscious — this is some of George Eliot's darkest writing, and should warn us against dismissing Dorothea's marriage experience lightly, despite the irony which normally lightens the picture of Casaubon. The separation from loving emotion, from anything which would stop the experience being "sordid" or allow emotions to be expressed, is made equally clear.\textsuperscript{53}


\textsuperscript{53}Although I have called the imagery clear, my interpretation is controversial because (as we have seen) not all critics interpret this passage in such strongly sexual terms. Kerry McSweeney sees the passage as obliquely expressing Dorothea's initiation into marriage, but remains ambivalent about whether the marriage
Dorothea's reaction to Rome seems to be a metaphor for her marriage, particularly its sexual side. She has had the physical experience without the transfiguring emotions, without the ability to lavish her emotions on Casaubon, communicate with him or receive affection in return.

George Eliot's comments that most people will not regard it as tragic that a new bride should be crying on her honeymoon gather new force once the sexual imagery is noted. Eliot's language is discreet, but it does not hide her underlying criticism of society (made even more strongly in *Daniel Deronda*, via the sinister comments of the gossips at Gwendolen's wedding) which so inadequately prepares women for marriage.

Yet despite this disastrous sexual initiation, Dorothea still retains ardent feelings towards Casaubon. The narrator makes it clear that Dorothea could have been content enough with Casaubon (at least for some time) if only he had allowed her to shower affection on him, and receive it in return:

These characteristics, fixed and unchangeable as bone in Mr Casaubon, might have remained longer unfelt by Dorothea if she had been encouraged to pour forth her girlish and womanly feeling — if he would have held her hands between his and listened with the delight of tenderness and understanding to all the little histories which made up her experience, and would have given her the same sort of intimacy in return, so that the past life of each could be included in their mutual knowledge and affection — or if she could have fed her affection with those childlike caresses which are the bent of every sweet woman, who has begun by showering kisses on the hard pate of her bald doll, creating a happy soul within that woodenness from the wealth of her own love. That was Dorothea's bent. With all her yearning to know what was afar from her and to be widely benignant, she had ardour enough for what was near, to have kissed Mr Casaubon's coat-sleeve, or to have caressed his shoe-latchet, if he would have made any other sign of acceptance than pronouncing her, with his unfailing propriety, to be of a most affectionate and truly feminine nature, indicating at the same time by politely reaching a chair for her that he regarded these manifestations as rather crude and startling.\(^\text{54}\)

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\(54\) *Middlemarch*, 230; bk. 2, ch. 20.
Dorothea does not merely want "an ideal rather than a man" as Patricia McKee suggests: instead she has "ardour enough for what is near". Indeed, she has so much ardour, so great a wish to show and receive physical affection, that Mr Casaubon regards her gestures as "rather crude and startling". She combines a yearning reverence for Mr Casaubon's wisdom with a wish for physical and emotional closeness, and the kind of intimacy which comes from an interchange of personal experience. She does not just want to explore great intellectual and religious ideas, to "share and further all his great ends". She wants to share "little histories" with him, trivialities which no one but a lover would listen to with tender indulgence. Brian Crick sees this as evidence of the "child in Dorothea Brooke" but it is not clear why he translates Dorothea's "girlish and womanly feeling" back into a childlike need for affection. The phrase "womanly feeling" should alert readers familiar with Victorian diction that sexuality may be being hinted at here. Elsewhere in Eliot's writing, we can see the association of "womanhood" and "womanly" with sexuality: in Middlemarch's Prelude, the "common yearning of womanhood" is something which can easily become "a lapse", while in Adam Bede, as Juliet McMaster points out, the reference to "the more luxuriant womanliness" of Hetty's appearance indicated that she was pregnant. When we consider the restrictions within which George Eliot was writing, it is clear that she is indicating that Dorothea is yearning for physical and emotional closeness with Casaubon, who regards the whole idea as "rather crude and startling".

Casaubon's rejection of Dorothea's affectionate gestures could be read as more evidence for the theory which many critics have put forward, that he is sexually impotent. There is an oppressive load of imagery hovering over Casaubon, all of which emphasises his faded physique against Dorothea's youth. The following passage, where Dorothea enters her boudoir, is typical:

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56 Middlemarch, 73; bk. 1, ch. 5.

57 Crick, 164.

when Dorothea passed from her dressing-room into the blue-green boudoir that we know of, she saw the long avenue of limes lifting their trunks from a white earth, and spreading white branches against the dun and motionless sky. The distant flat shrank in uniform whiteness and low-hanging uniformity of cloud. The very furniture in the room seemed to have shrunk since she saw it before: the stag in the tapestry looked more like a ghost in his ghostly blue-green world; the volumes of polite literature in the bookcase looked more like immovable imitations of books. The bright fire of dry oak-boughs burning on the dogs seemed an incongruous renewal of life and glow — like the figure of Dorothea herself as she entered.

She was glowing from her morning toilette as only healthful youth can glow; there was gem-like brightness on her coiled hair and in her hazel eyes; there was warm red life in her lips; her throat had a breathing whiteness above the differing white of the fur which itself seemed to wind about her neck and cling down her blue-grey pelisse with a tenderness gathered from her own.

Her blooming full-pulsed youth stood there in a moral imprisonment which made itself one with the chill, colourless, narrowed landscape, with the shrunken furniture, the never-read books, and the ghostly stag in a pale fantastic world that seemed to be vanishing from the daylight.

In the first few minutes when Dorothea looked out she felt nothing but the dreary oppression. All existence seemed to beat with a lower pulse than her own, and her religious faith was a solitary cry, the struggle out of a nightmare in which every object was withering and shrinking away from her.

There seems ample evidence here to support Harvey's description of Casaubon as "chill, impotent, a creature of shadows". There are many suggestive adjectives which mark a contrast between Dorothea and her surroundings, surroundings which appear to symbolise Casaubon: the objects around her are shrunken and withered, while that proud male symbol, the stag, is "ghostly" and vanishing. The way the narrator dwells lovingly on Dorothea's youth and beauty, the fur which clings to her, makes the contrast still more marked. Yet is the contrast between Dorothea and Casaubon only the physical one which is so apparent, or is the physical contrast also a metaphor for a more significant inequality?

What kind of oppression is Dorothea suffering from here? Myers has suggested that to follow Mrs Cadwallader's lead and to see the chief problem in the Casaubon marriage as physical

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59 Middlemarch, 306-308, bk. 3, ch. 28.
60 Harvey, Introduction, Middlemarch, 14.
incongruity is to read *Middlemarch* too simplistically. One of the "true conclusions" which Lydgate is able to reach about Dorothea's married life is that she has been suffering from "self-repression". Eliot's portrait of the Casaubon marriage repeatedly shows us Dorothea reaching out and asking Casaubon for an emotional response, and being rebuffed. Moreover, Casaubon disapproves of Dorothea's displays of feeling (even when they are not directed towards him but instead towards philanthropical projects). She has grown used, the narrator tells us, to suppressing her speech because she feels her husband inwardly objects to it. This is one source of difficulty; the other is a yearning for affection to which Casaubon cannot respond. His lack of emotional responsiveness is, so to speak, forewarned of in his physique (as Sir James suspects, in his question "has he got any heart?"). His physical withering does not simply mean, as Mrs Cadwallader puts it, that Dorothea's marriage is like "going to a nunnery", though it is likely that, as McSweeney suggests, that he is "sexually inadequate". There is more significance to Casaubon's physique, though, than his sexual prowess: it can be seen as a forewarning of a deep emotional disability. That disability means that Casaubon cannot respond to Dorothea's passionate enthusiasm, or to her yearning for affection from him.

Dorothea's yearning is not long lasting. By the time Will meets her again at Lowick, he has "the unutterable contentment of perceiving — what Dorothea was hardly conscious of — that she was travelling into the remoteness of pure pity and loyalty towards her husband." We should note, however, that this remote feeling is one which she is "travelling into": it is not the feeling with which she began. I have argued that Dorothea is not mistaken about her feelings: that she feels

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62 *Middlemarch*, 534; bk. 5, ch. 50.

63 *Middlemarch*, 362, 424; bk. 4, ch. 34, ch. 39.

64 *Middlemarch*, 94; bk. 1, ch. 8.

65 *Middlemarch*, 82; bk. 1, ch. 6.

66 McSweeney, 109.

67 *Middlemarch*, 400; bk. 4, ch. 37.
love rather than simply admiration for Casaubon. But if so, why does this love dissipate so quickly? If Dorothea really begins with a desire to have a relationship with Casaubon which will affect all of her life, a relationship where intimacy (as well as moral and intellectual guidance) is important, why are her feelings for Casaubon so unstable?

Her initial love for Casaubon proves unstable because it was based on illusions: illusions about Casaubon's character. She believes him to be passionately involved in great work, but Casaubon's only remaining passion is directed at fending off the knowledge that he is a failure and that his work is worthless. The marriage is doomed, therefore, partly because Casaubon needs Dorothea's illusions to continue. The kind of love which David Parker points to — in which Dorothea would have simply delighted in Casaubon as he is — is acceptable to neither of them. For to delight in Casaubon as he is, Dorothea would have to see him as he is, and Casaubon does not want that. He wants Dorothea to continue to believe in him, to believe in something which is false. The pretence wearies him, but anything else is inadmissible. Inadmissible, too, is the knowledge that her acceptance of him as a suitor has not made him happy:

Here was a weary experience in which he was as utterly condemned to loneliness as in the despair which sometimes threatened him while toiling in the morass of authorship without seeming nearer to the goal. And his was that worst loneliness which would shrink from sympathy. He could not but wish that Dorothea should think him not less happy than the world would expect her successful suitor to be; and in relation to his authorship he leaned on her young trust and veneration, he liked to draw forth her fresh interest in listening, as a means of encouragement to himself: in talking to her he presented all his performance and intention with the reflected confidence of the pedagogue, and rid himself for the time of that chilling ideal audience which crowded his laborious uncreative hours with the vaporous pressure of Tartarean shades.

The picture of loneliness, of weariness, is terrible. Casaubon cannot even be honest with Dorothea about his feelings. He must pretend to her that he is happy, pretend that he is confident in his authorship. The burden is unendurable: we do not wonder that this is "a weary experience". The words "shrink from sympathy", too, underline how sensitive and vulnerable Casaubon is.

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68 Parker, Ethics, Theory and the Novel, 103.
69 Middlemarch, 111-112; bk. 1, ch. 10.
Even if he can temporarily lean on Dorothea's "young trust and veneration" this only underscores his vulnerability: for these will only last as long as his pretence is successful. He is happiest when he can forget reality, and cheat both himself and Dorothea into believing that he is achieving. But this kind of self-deception is really just another imprisonment, and makes the return to his "chilling ideal audience" even worse. There could have been a way out of this imprisonment, and it is this which Parker points to in asking "where do we find Dorothea actually feeling 'affection' for something in him, where it would be possible to say that she . . . knew this trait in her husband's character and liked it?" Parker identifies what is lacking in Dorothea's love: she does not feel affection for anything "in" Casaubon. She venerated what she thinks he is, what she thinks he is doing.

She is not, therefore, in love precisely with Casaubon, but with who she believes him to be. As the person she believes him to be is committed to a life of great works, Casaubon's achievements, and his supposed commitment to achievements, become more important than Casaubon himself. Dangerously, Casaubon wants to encourage this illusion because he cannot bear the admission of failure. The kind of love where Dorothea might see his failure but continue to see him as lovable is beyond both of them. Once Dorothea begins to note those characteristics of Casaubon which were "fixed and rigid as bone", her love starts to diminish. By the time Dorothea begins adjusting herself to the "clearest perception" of "her husband's failure", she is judging him. Even though she sees her "duty" towards him as "tenderness", this is not love: it is a rather less accepting emotion. Both her duty and her tenderness spring from a judgement of her husband as a failure: as someone whom she therefore ought to deal with tenderly. We can see, then, that her initial love for Casaubon was both illusory and limited, resting largely on imaginary qualities.

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*Middlemarch*, 400; bk. 4, ch. 37.

*Middlemarch*, 400; bk. 4, ch. 37.
She still, however, retains enough feeling for Casaubon to want to link herself more closely to him. But time and time again Dorothea's attempts at emotional closeness, at gestures of affection, are rejected:

His glance in reply to hers was so chill that she felt her timidity increased; yet she turned and passed her hand through his arm.

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

There was something horrible to Dorothea in the sensation which this unresponsive hardness inflicted on her. That is a strong word, but not too strong: it is in these acts called trivialities that the seeds of joy are for ever wasted, until men and women look around with haggard faces at the devastation their own waste has made, and say, the earth bears no harvest of sweetness — calling their denial knowledge.  

Dorothea sees this as having essentially caused the breakdown of their marriage:

And just as clearly in the miserable light she saw her own and her husband's solitude — how they walked apart so that she was obliged to survey him. If he had drawn her towards him, she would never have surveyed him — never have said 'Is he worth living for?' but would have felt him simply as a part of her own life.

and though she is oversimplifying, for Casaubon's Key to all Mythologies was unlikely to have met her aspirations even within an emotionally rich marriage, his rejection of her affection is clearly one of the elements which makes her marriage intolerable.

Dorothea's hunger for affection, for physical closeness with Casaubon is significant, because it reveals that her early feelings for Casaubon are love, rather than simply admiration. Her love, though, is based not on what Casaubon is but on what she believes him to be, and she is quickly disillusioned. As we have seen, many critics think Dorothea's marriage is doomed to failure because she has confused a wish to learn with a need for love. I have argued that she does not merely admire Casaubon, or regard him purely as a teacher. Dorothea wants (and

73Middlemarch, 462; bk. 4, ch. 42.
74Middlemarch, 463; bk. 4, ch. 42.
needs) a loving response from Casaubon, but he is incapable of giving her this response. Casaubon's continual rebuffs contribute to the withering of Dorothea's love for him, though her disillusionment as she comes to see his scholarship not as great but as futile also plays a major part.

Some critics object to the feelings Dorothea has towards Casaubon on somewhat different grounds. They are uncomfortable about the idea that veneration can be a part of love. Crick, for example, writes "Dorothea's self-abasing devotion and the transfiguring passion that disguise Casaubon's real nature from her are intended to win a measure of approval. The displaced religiosity of her response which offends our sense of the emotions appropriate to married love is for Eliot a sign of ideal womanhood — a generosity of spirit and a capacity for reverence."\textsuperscript{75}

Crick's comments seem only partially accurate. It is clear that Dorothea is meant to win some approval from us, and that in portraying Dorothea's relationship with Casaubon, George Eliot does want to highlight her generous spirit and her capacity for reverence. But I am less comfortable with Crick's large statement about what "offends our sense of the emotions appropriate to married love". What is "our sense" here? Is this any more than Crick's own predilections? Are we sure that we know what emotions are "appropriate to married love"? Is not "appropriate" a rather questionable word to use about emotions?

The whole question of whether or not we can be held responsible for our emotions will be discussed in Chapter Six, but I want to simply point out here that Crick has not put forward any justification for his judgement that Dorothea's transfiguring passion is an inappropriate basis for married love. Kerry McSweeney, however, evidently agrees with Crick in regarding Dorothea's emotions as inappropriate. McSweeney quotes Dorothea's longing for guidance so that "her life might be filled with action at once rational and ardent . . . what lamp was there but knowledge? Surely learned men kept the only oil; and who more learned than Mr Casaubon?"\textsuperscript{76} McSweeney then says that this is an analysis "which must strike a responsive chord in university teachers of

\textsuperscript{75}Crick, 159-160.

\textsuperscript{76}Middlemarch, 112-113; bk. 1, ch. 10.
literature who annually observe young persons — usually female — bringing to the acquisition of knowledge and the study of literature expectations that neither can properly satisfy. But if knowledge is not the lamp, what illumination is there for an intense young woman seeking fulfilment and a 'life beyond self'?\textsuperscript{77}

It is difficult to know what to make of this comment. What are these unsatisfied "expectations"? McSweeney's comment seems to imply something which George Eliot would have disagreed with: the impossibility of a passionate vocation. The notion that students will be more satisfied with their university experience if their expectations are suitably restrained seems to be negated by the examples of many enthusiastic academics. McSweeney reduces Dorothea's project, in his analogy between her and modern students, to "the acquisition of knowledge". But this is exactly what Dorothea and George Eliot do not do. The narrator says "It would be a great mistake to suppose that Dorothea would have cared about any share in Casaubon's learning as mere accomplishment... She did not want to deck herself with knowledge — to wear it loose from the nerves and blood that fed her action".\textsuperscript{78} Dorothea instead wants a way of shaping her life in action "which is at once rational and ardent".\textsuperscript{79} It is a mistake to assume that Eliot is cynical about this project. Her whole career of authorship stands as an example of rational and ardent action. With Lydgate, we see someone who had the potential to lead exactly this kind of life "to do small good work for Middlemarch and great work for the world",\textsuperscript{80} the kind of work which involves both intellect and passion. Lydgate's tragedy would not be as moving if we thought that it was impossible for anyone to have a passionate vocation. Dorothea's quest for something to give illumination and meaning to her life needs to be taken seriously. McSweeney's oddly depersonalised language: "observe", "young persons", "acquisition of knowledge" denies the

\textsuperscript{77}McSweeney, 110.
\textsuperscript{78}Middlemarch, 112; bk. 1, ch. 10.
\textsuperscript{79}Middlemarch, 112; bk. 1, ch. 10.
\textsuperscript{80}Middlemarch, 178; bk. 2, ch. 15.
possibility both of students having a passionate engagement with their subject, and of Dorothea's quest for a way of living which is both rational and ardent.

When we look more closely at the Casaubon marriage, then, we find that the problem is not (as many critics have supposed) that Dorothea is mistaken about her feelings for Casaubon, and that she has somehow confused hero-worship with love. Rather it is that her love for Casaubon is based on unsustainable illusions about his character.

Both the differences and connections between hero-worship and love are important issues in Middlemarch. They are even more central in Daniel Deronda.

**Hero-worship and love in Daniel Deronda**

In Agents and Lives, Goldberg criticises Eliot's presentation of Gwendolen Harleth: seeing a split between a conduct-moral story, where Gwendolen is viewed as a responsible and erring agent, and a more moving life-moral story, where Gwendolen is seen as a life, with particular needs and vulnerabilities. He feels that although Eliot often shows dramatically Gwendolen's deep needs and vulnerability, Eliot nonetheless remains focused on Gwendolen's "egoism". Goldberg points to Gwendolen's basic insecurity, and says that it is the lack of any stable sense of self which makes her need and want love, not just egoism:

And it is this same lack again that exposes her to the effect, not just of Grandcourt's apparent self-possession and mastery of his life, but of her uncle's self-possession and assurance, of Kiesmer's, and (first, last and most deeply) what she sees — or is supposed by George Eliot to see — as Deronda's. Right from the beginning, it is not simple 'egoism' that causes her to find (and accept) a judgment on herself in Deronda's gaze, and that always brings her to men in whom she feels a life-moral superiority, a capacity to judge her, to which she is unstably ambivalent precisely because she wants it and fears it very deeply — wants so that it might define and endorse her, and fears because it may annihilate her instead . . . She has never had a father, or even a step-father, from whom she received any combination of moral authority and personal love that might have provided her with an object of psychic aggression and yet also a source of reassuring forgiveness, creating some definite and adequate sense of her self . . .

This life-moral story is more ambiguous than the conduct-moral one. It depicts Gwendolen's dependence on — in fact, need of — the acknowledging love (or even respect, or even mere attention) that could assure her of actually being a particular self with valuable possibilities of growth.
and achievement as well as error, let alone a self conscious of the value or even the reality of its pride, courage, sensitivity and intelligence; and it traces her failure ever to find that kind of love.\footnote{Goldberg, Agents and Lives, 130-131.}

Goldberg is right to emphasise Gwendolen's radical insecurity and the connection between it and her need for love: but there is too much blurring together of feelings here. Gwendolen does not want the same kind of "acknowledging love (or even respect, or even mere attention)" from her uncle, Klesmer and Deronda. She wants to be admired, and her vanity is hurt by Klesmer's lack of admiration (of anything apart from her beauty); she feels her uncle will be socially useful, and because of this she is careful not to incur too much of his disapproval; but the love she wants from Deronda marks off a different realm of feeling. She does indeed want respect and attention from Deronda, but this is connected to her desperate wish for a particular type of love from him. Goldberg may be right in thinking that what Gwendolen \textit{needs} is paternal love; but what Gwendolen \textit{wants} from Deronda, and what she feels for him, is romantic love.\footnote{Henry James comments on Gwendolen's romantic love for Deronda in his famous 'Conversation'. Henry James, "\textit{Daniel Deronda: A Conversation}", \textit{George Eliot: The Critical Heritage}, ed. David Carroll (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971) 426. Rosemary Ashton and Richard Freadman have commented on the attraction between Gwendolen and Deronda (see Rosemary Ashton, \textit{George Eliot} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 92; and Richard Freadman, \textit{Eliot, James and the Fictional Self: A Study in Character and Narration} (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1986) 69). Most critics, however, exclusively stress the role Deronda has as a saviour or an outer conscience for Gwendolen.}

Goldberg points to the 'snub' Eliot has in store for Gwendolen, by making Daniel Deronda not just engaged to someone else, but concerned with world events which lie entirely apart from Gwendolen's life.\footnote{Goldberg, Agents and Lives, 139.} Goldberg analyses two passages from \textit{Daniel Deronda} which he feels indicate that Eliot's dominant concern is correcting Gwendolen's egoism, an egoism which leads Gwendolen to believe Deronda will always be part of her life:

\begin{quote}
But the new existence seemed inseparable from Deronda: the hope seemed to make his presence permanent. It was not her thought, that he loved her and would cling to her — a thought would have tottered with improbability: it was her spiritual breath...\footnote{\textit{Daniel Deronda}, 840; bk. 8, ch. 65.}
\end{quote}
Gwendolen is once again not thinking; once again she is just breathing and assuming; but this time, it seems, her fault is a more common kind of egoism:

we are all apt to fall into this passionate egoism of imagination, not only towards our fellow-men, but towards God. And the future which she turned her face to with a willing step was one where she would be continually assimilating herself to some type that he would hold before her. Had he not first risen on her vision as a corrective presence which she had recognised in the beginning with resentment, and at last with entire love and trust? She could not spontaneously think of an end to that reliance, which had become to her imagination like the firmness of the earth, the only condition of her walking.\textsuperscript{85} (Goldberg's italics)

And George Eliot has prepared a final snub for this ultimate form of 'egoism' in Gwendolen too: not merely in Deronda's engagement to somebody else, but even more in his engagement with the 'vast mysterious movement' of world-historical forces. In the latter (as in the American Civil War), 'life looks out . . . with the awful face of duty, and a religion shows itself . . . something else than a private consolation'. It is therefore 'something spiritual and vaguely tremendous' to Gwendolen that simply overwhelms her residual assumption that 'whatever surrounded her was somehow specially for her', and does so with a shock which is 'deeper than personal jealousy' and which 'quelled all anger into self-humiliation. We are presumably meant to see Gwendolen's self-humiliation as the last step of her moral maturation . . . \textsuperscript{86}

Goldberg's analysis is persuasive, but it leaves aside one of the most interesting aspects of the relationship between Gwendolen and Deronda. In emphasising Gwendolen's personal dependence on Deronda, even in setting her up for disappointment, Eliot has something more than egoism in her sights. It is egoism, pure and simple, which makes Hans confide in Deronda, without worrying about Deronda's own troubles, as Deronda notices with irritation.\textsuperscript{87} With Gwendolen, more than egoism is involved, and more than self-dread. It is true that Gwendolen is punished for her self-centred outlook, for her narrowness of vision, and part of this punishment comes when she is effectively abandoned by Deronda. Gwendolen's dependence on Deronda, however, is not merely egoistic. Eliot is using it to show the fine distinctions between different types of hero-worship and romantic love.

\textsuperscript{85}Daniel Deronda, 867; bk. 8, ch. 69.
\textsuperscript{86}Goldberg, Agents and Lives, 139-140.
\textsuperscript{87}Daniel Deronda, 710; bk. 7, ch. 52.
It is through Gwendolen's personal need for Deronda, her wish that he should permanently be part of her life and above all her wish for his attention that we can detect a shade of romantic love in Gwendolen's worship of him. It is romantic love which (as the narrator informs us) is unrecognised by Gwendolen; it does not take the shape of conventional dreams about courtship and marriage; but it is recognisably personal and possessive.

The discrimination between love and hero-worship was an area of continuing interest to George Eliot (different varieties are examined in *Middlemarch* as well). But it is in *Daniel Deronda* that this is explored most fully. We shall see it most clearly if we compare Gwendolen's feelings for Deronda with those of another hero-worshipper, Mab. Mab's intense enthusiasm and belief in Daniel Deronda are unaccompanied by any sentimental tinge, any wish for personal possession, or any other form of romantic feeling. She is entirely comfortable about expressing her enthusiastic belief in him, and generally does so with delightful humour, as when she gives a parody of the rituals she and her sisters perform in Deronda's honour:

'Kate burns a pastille before his portrait every day,' said Mab. 'And I carry his signature in a little black-silk bag round my neck to keep off the cramp. And Amy says the multiplication-table in his name. We must all do something extra in honour of him, now he has brought you to us.'

Mab's hero-worship is untinged by sentimentality — instead, it is enlivened by nonsense as she laughs at the way she and her sisters worship Deronda.

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88Elizabeth Daniels interprets this differently, seeing Gwendolen's expectations that Deronda will marry her as a consequence of the fact that there is "no other valid form of permanent close friendship between men and women". (Daniels, "A Meredithian Glance at Gwendolen Harleth", in *George Eliot: A Centenary Tribute*, Haight and VanArsdel, 35). Friendship, however, seems a word which is inadequate in the light of the emotional intensity between Gwendolen and Deronda. It seems odd to call their relationship "friendship" when it is uneasy, intense and always unequal.

89*Daniel Deronda*, 841-842; bk. 8, ch. 65.

90*Daniel Deronda*, 266; bk. 3, ch. 20.
Her hero-worship, nonetheless, remains at the highest level of enthusiasm. When Anna Gascoigne remarks that her brother Rex seems to her "better than any one", Mab puts forward Deronda as a person whose goodness outshines all comparison:

'Wait till you see Mr Deronda,' said Mab, nodding significantly. 'Nobody's brother will do after him.'

'Our brothers must do for people's husbands,' said Kate, curtly, 'because they will not get Mr Deronda. No woman will do for him to marry.'

'No woman ought to want him to marry [her],'' said Mab, with indignation. 'I never should. Fancy finding out that he had a tailor's bill, and used boot-hooks, like Hans. Who ever thought of his marrying?'

'I have,' said Kate. 'When I drew a wedding for a frontispiece to "Hearts and Diamonds", I made a sort of likeness of him for the bridegroom, and I went about looking for a grand woman who would do for his countess, but I saw none that would not be poor creatures by the side of him.'

There is a delicate contrast here between Mab's feelings and Kate's, for Kate may not be as perfectly free of romantic feeling for Deronda as Mab thinks. There is only the barest suggestion here that Kate's feelings are not identical to Mab's: it is suggested through the curtness of Kate's initial response, and through her statement that (unlike Mab) she has thought of Deronda getting married. The difference between their feelings, though, is not insisted upon and it remains a mere possibility. Mab's feelings are comically clear. Her indignation at the idea of Deronda marrying is scornful, dismissive and entirely confident. Her wish for Deronda not to be a possible marriage partner does not come out of any sense of possessiveness, any wish to retain him for herself, but out of a sense that this is not compatible with his role as a higher being. She has a beautifully clear (if amusingly rigid) awareness of the role she wants him to play as an ideal: an ideal which would, as she sensibly points out, be marred if he stepped into their personal lives, and showed himself to be concerned with mundane details. There is no touch of possessiveness in Mab's feelings for Deronda: instead, she wants to hold him up as an example to Anna and any one else who is willing to listen.

91Daniel Deronda, 719-720; bk. 7, ch. 52.
There is also no wish by Mab for any kind of equality with Deronda (indeed, she does not wish him to be concerned with earthly things — like boot-hooks — at all). Compare this to Gwendolen's yearning to be closer to Deronda:

'Don't wish now that you had never seen me — don't wish that,' said Gwendolen, imploringly, while the tears gathered.

'I should despise myself for wishing it,' said Deronda. 'How could I know what I was wishing? We must find our duties in what comes to us, not in what we imagine might have been. If I took to foolish wishing of that sort, I should wish — not that I had never seen you, but that I had been able to save you from this.'

'You have saved me from worse,' said Gwendolen, in a sobbing voice. 'I should have been worse, if it had not been for you. If you had not been good, I should have been more wicked than I am.'

'It will be better for me to go now,' said Deronda, worn in spirit by the perpetual strain of this scene. 'Remember what we said of your task — to get well and calm before other friends come.'

He rose as he spoke, and she gave him her hand submissively. But when he had left her she sank on her knees, in hysterical crying. The distance between them was too great. She was a banished soul — beholding a possible life which she had sinned herself away from.

She was found in this way, crushed on the floor. Such grief seemed natural in a poor lady whose husband had been drowned in her presence.92

Part of Gwendolen's distress comes from Deronda's role — the role which David Carroll, Lisabeth During and other critics93 have stressed, his role as the keeper of her soul. But she is stricken here not just by the sense of herself as a sinner, but by the distance between them. In this scene, as she grows more emotional and confiding, Deronda shows more and more of a tendency to pull away from her, to become more distant. She pleads tearfully "Don't wish now you had never seen me" in an attempt to draw some warmth of response from him. Deronda's response, though, is on the level of serious but impersonal morality "I should despise myself for wishing it" he says: but

92Daniel Deronda, 766-767; bk. 7, ch. 57.

this response is more about judging his own conduct (it would be wrong for him to feel this way, he is saying) than any warm feeling towards Gwendolen. His explanation of why he would despise himself is even more distant: it is phrased in terms of "duties". He represents his relationship with Gwendolen, and his wish to help her, not in any warm personal way but as a formal obligation.

And it is an obligation which weary a him. He is "worn" by "the perpetual strain of this scene", and all too obviously shows his wish to escape it. Gwendolen reveals a growing desperation, and abases herself still further, saying in a "sobbing voice" that she would have been "more wicked" if not for Deronda. On the surface, this is all about repentance and remorse, and Deronda's role as her saviour. In fact, though, this is an attempt to draw an emotional response from Deronda: but the more Gwendolen abases herself, the more distant he becomes. His final advice, significantly, is that Gwendolen should try to become less emotional. The distance between them is not just the one the narrator underlines, the difference between a sinful life and a moral one: it is the inequality between a confider and a counsellor. Gwendolen does not want Deronda just to be a counsellor, a moral guide or (as Mab does) a moral example: she wants and needs his love, and she fails to achieve that. It is this failure which gives the scene its special poignancy, and ironically underscores the mistaken assumption that she is weeping for Grandcourt. Ironies underlie other words too: Deronda's dismissal of "foolish wishing" for what "might have been". Gwendolen's yearning for his love is made up of just such foolish wishes.

Mab and Gwendolen are both aware of the distance between themselves and Deronda; both regard him as a superior being. Mab, however, is entirely comfortable with this notion; while Gwendolen desperately wants to bridge this distance, to draw closer to Deronda. Just before she marries Deronda, Mirah feels free of her earlier jealousy about Gwendolen:

... she easily explained Gwendolen's eager solicitude about him as part of a grateful dependence on his goodness, such as she herself had known.94

As readers, we know that Mirah is too confident. Gwendolen's visit to Mirah earlier in the narrative was indeed energised by a desperate need to receive confirmation of Deronda's goodness, in the

94Daniel Deronda, 880; bk. 8, ch. 70.
face of Grandcourt's calumnies of him. Deronda's priest-like role is vital for Gwendolen. Nonetheless, Hans Meyrick is acute in thinking "that there really had been some stronger feeling between Deronda and the duchess than Mirah would like to know of". Hans's theorising about Deronda's and Gwendolen's relationship tends to reduce it to the level of romantic feeling, instead of the tangled reality, where, as Barbara Hardy has commented, rescuing and loving intertwine in difficult and embarrassing ways. It is clear that the narrator is accurate in commenting on Gwendolen's "ideal consecration" of Deronda, but Gwendolen also yearns to be closer to him. The closeness she needs is not just a need not to be a sinner, to be on the same moral level as Deronda. It is emotional closeness: a need we can see in her hypersensitivity to Deronda's indifference to her (when she almost cries at his failure to turn and speak to her; when she feels he is paying more attention to others than to her, "which was nevertheless not kind in him"). Her hypersensitivity indicates her desire for his special attention.

Mab's final dismissal of any suggestion of romantic feeling for Deronda is characteristically confident and delightfully humorous:

Mrs Meyrick . . . was there with her three daughters — all of them enjoying the consciousness that Mirah's marriage to Deronda crowned a romance which would always make a sweet memory to them . . . If Hans could have been there, it would have been better; but 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.

Hans, of course, is absent from the wedding because he has fallen in love with Mirah, rather than just seeing her as an ideal. Women, says Mab scornfully, are "not so ridiculous". It is a lovely dismissal of the possibility of confusing love and hero-worship, comic in its certainty. In Mab, Eliot

95 Daniel Deronda, 871; bk. 8, ch. 69.
96 Hardy, Introduction, Daniel Deronda, 7.
97 Daniel Deronda, 468-469; bk. 5, ch. 35.
98 Daniel Deronda, 476; bk. 5, ch. 35.
99 Daniel Deronda, 881; bk. 8, ch. 70.
shows the possibility of the two emotions remaining distinct; in Gwendolen she shows them painfully and unconsciously entwining.

As I said in the introduction to this thesis, my whole examination of Eliot's treatment of emotions is based on certain assumptions: including the assumption that literature is not unconnected with life, that it can aid us in reflecting on emotions. This may seem more persuasive if we compare Eliot's presentation of love and hero-worship in *Daniel Deronda* to the comments of a modern philosopher on emotion, Robert Solomon. In *The Passions*, Solomon declares that romantic love demands equality. Love requires that you think of the beloved as an equal: adoration and worship are not love.\(^\text{100}\) When we measure Solomon's comments against the presentation of emotion in *Daniel Deronda*, though, they may seem too simple, too dogmatic. Gwendolen clearly thinks of Deronda as a superior being throughout the book: but she nonetheless wants personal attention from him. She clings to him, and is chilled by the thought of the "distance between them". There is narratorial irony directed at Mirah's comfortable assumption at the end of the book that Deronda has merely been a "rescuing angel" to Gwendolen, and that Gwendolen's "eager solicitude" about him can be explained in these terms.\(^\text{101}\)

Can Eliot's treatment of emotion be treated as a serious counterweight to the work of Solomon and other philosophers of emotion? Is this merely a presentation within a text, with no external references other than intertextual ones? It is part of the argument of this thesis that it can, and here I am reiterating what Nussbaum has powerfully expressed, in her contention that literature can contribute to the exploration of some questions about life.\(^\text{102}\) To use a novel as testimony is always risky, and some readers, looking at this aspect of Gwendolen's relationship with Deronda, may simply wish to "condemn it as an improbable fiction".\(^\text{103}\) What I am suggesting,

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\(^{101}\) *Daniel Deronda*, 880; bk. 8, ch. 70.


though, is that we can weigh Eliot's presentation of emotion against Solomon's theories — and after this, decide which author we are more inclined to agree with.

The suggestion that Eliot's fiction can be used in a debate with philosophers of emotion is contentious, but there is another outcome for this chapter which is less controversial. It is simply that by paying attention to the way emotions are presented in George Eliot's fiction, we can illuminate and reinterpret some key relationships in both *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*.
Chapter Five
Valuing and distrusting emotions

Cognitive emotions

Within this chapter, we will be looking at various ways in which George Eliot explores the notion that emotions are cognitive: through ideas of thought affecting feeling, thought and feeling as inseparable, and through the concept of affective perception. George Eliot's exploration of emotions as cognitive is linked to the way her books present emotion as something to be both valued and distrusted.

Much of the work done on emotions by philosophers and psychologists in the last twenty years has either stressed the links between emotions and cognition, or has questioned the idea that a clear split can be made between these two concepts. Amélie Rorty, for example, summarising the views of more than twenty recent essays on emotion, says:

This anthology presents papers from several disciplines. All the essays presuppose the rehabilitation of the emotions. They take it for granted that emotions are not irrational feelings, disturbances, or responses to disturbances.¹

Claire Armon-Jones contrasts what she sees as the "traditional" view of emotions as passions (passions being defined as "involuntary, non-cognitive phenomena") with "the contemporary philosophical view . . . that emotions are dependent on cognitions".² She adds that disputes among contemporary philosophers focus on exactly how this dependence should be interpreted.

To refer to a "traditional" philosophical view of emotions that was non-cognitive is to oversimplify. Aristotle, Locke and Spinoza all take a cognitive view of emotions, regarding them as linked to thought. In the Rhetorica, Aristotle begins his definition of fear as follows: "Fear may be defined as a pain or disturbance due to a mental picture of some destructive or painful evil in the

¹Rorty, Introduction, Explaining Emotions, Rorty, 4.
²Claire Armon-Jones, "The Thesis of Constructionism" Harre, 41-42.
future”. This seems very close to Locke’s definition of fear as “an uneasiness of the Mind, upon the thought of future Evil likely to befal us”, and to Spinoza’s definition of fear as “an inconstant pain arising from the idea of a past or future thing, concerning the issue of which we are in some degree doubtful.” Aristotle, Locke and Spinoza all define fear as a feeling (“pain” or “uneasiness”) which is linked to a thought about the future.

The two philosophers whom Armon-Jones refers to as examples of the “traditional” view are Descartes and Hume. She quotes Hume’s statement “a passion is an original existence” in support of her claim that Hume regarded passions as simple non-cognitive impressions. The passage Armon-Jones quotes is part of the following famous paragraph from Hume’s *Treatise*, in which Hume does appear to be putting forward a non-cognitive view of passions:

> A passion is an original existence, or, if you will, modification of existence, and contains not any representative quality, which renders it a copy of any other existence or modification. When I am angry, I am actually possest with the passion, and in that emotion have no more reference to any other object, than when I am thirsty, or sick, or more than five feet high. ’Tis impossible, therefore, that this passion can be oppos’d by, or be contradictory to truth and reason; since this contradiction consists in the disagreement of ideas, consider’d as copies, with those objects, which they represent.

This paragraph puts forward a strongly non-cognitive view of emotions: Hume does not even admit the idea that one is angry about something. He says that one is merely angry, and that this anger does not have an object. It contains no ideas, and thus cannot be opposed to reason. However, as Annette Baier has noted, this paragraph is “at the very least, unrepresentative of Hume’s claims

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about passions in the preceding and following parts of Book Two."\(^7\) We can find many examples like the following, where Hume discusses passions as cognitive entities:

A soldier advancing to the battle, is naturally inspired with courage and confidence, when he thinks on his friends and fellow-soldiers; and is struck with fear and terror, when he thinks on the enemy.\(^8\)

Hume directly relates the soldier's possible feelings of confidence or fear to his thoughts. The soldier's passions, in this example, are clearly cognitive. Hume's *Treatise* does not, taken as a whole, support a non-cognitive view of passion.

There is, however, a further technical complication. Baier notes that Hume and his contemporaries used the term "emotion" to refer to a bodily disturbance, unconnected to thought.\(^9\) In this usage of Hume's, emotions are part of a more complex state (a passion), which is affected by cognition. Whether or not Hume always uses the word "emotion" in this non-cognitive sense is debatable: at times he appears to use the word emotion interchangeably with passion:

Besides these calm passions, which often determine the will, there are certain violent emotions of the same kind, which have likewise a great influence on that faculty. When I receive any injury from another, I often feel a violent passion of resentment, which makes me desire his evil and punishment, independent of all considerations of pleasure and advantage to myself.\(^10\)

The words "violent emotions" appear to refer to the later description of "a violent passion of resentment", which is clearly cognitive: directed towards a person who is resented, and inspiring wishes of ill-will. However, even if we accept Baier's contention about Hume's split in terminology between "emotion" and "passion", it is clear that Hume usually regards feelings such as fear, resentment, pride, love and hatred as affected by thought. We have already looked at Hume's analyses of fear and resentment; similarly, pride, love, and hatred all involve, Hume says,

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\(^{8}\) Hume, *Treatise*, 420.

\(^{9}\) Baier, *A Progress of Sentiments*, 164.

\(^{10}\) Hume, *Treatise*, 417-418.
"impressions and ideas".\textsuperscript{11} As these feelings are now included within our modern use of the term "emotion", it would be somewhat specious to regard Hume's terminology as proof that he takes a non-cognitivist stance on emotion.\textsuperscript{12} Amélie Rorty has stressed the broad scope of the modern term "emotion"\textsuperscript{13}; it certainly includes the feelings which Hume called "passions". We could call the modern cognitivist view of emotions less a reaction against Hume's philosophy, than a reaction against one interpretation of it: an interpretation which stresses an apparently non-cognitive view of passion. There seems to be a better basis for regarding modern cognitivist theories of emotion as breaking away from a Cartesian view of emotions. Descartes does seem to have viewed emotions as simple surges of feeling, unconnected to thought: and perhaps because of this, he pointedly dismisses "the ancients" view of emotions as false.\textsuperscript{14} Patricia Greenspan sees modern cognitivist theories of emotion as a "reaction to the Cartesian account of emotions as sensations".\textsuperscript{15}

Sabini and Silver, like Armon-Jones, see themselves as arguing against older non-cognitive views of emotion. The writers they use as points of contrast are Kant and William James, though they also contest the more recent work of Robert Zajonc. Sabini and Silver contrast their own belief that emotions are linked to cognition with Kant's belief that emotions are not subject to the will, that they are simple surges of feeling like pain.\textsuperscript{16} They also contrast their views with James's

\textsuperscript{11}Hume, \textit{Treatise}, 337.

\textsuperscript{12}The list of feelings which can be regarded as basic emotions is the subject of much debate (see, for instance, Ortony, Clore and Collins, 76; they refer to "liking" as an intensity factor, not an emotion). If we refer to common usage, though, the idea that pride, fear and anger are emotions will not seem controversial.

\textsuperscript{13}Rorty, Introduction, \textit{Explaining Emotions}, Rorty, 1.

\textsuperscript{14}René Descartes, \textit{The Philosophical Works of Descartes}, 2 vols., trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (London: Cambridge University Press, 1931-34) vol. 1, \textit{Passions of the Soul}, 331. Edwin Curley suggests the reason for this dismissiveness is that unlike Plato and Aristotle, Descartes believed the mind or soul was indivisible rather than composed of parts (Curley, 90).


\textsuperscript{16}Sabini and Silver, "Emotions, Responsibility and Character", Schoeman, 165-166.
theory that emotions are the perceptions of bodily states and with Robert Zajonc's recent work, in which Zajonc argues emotions are precognitive. Other writers who take a cognitive view of emotions point to different sources of the "traditional" non-cognitive view of emotions. W. George Turski points to the influence of some of Plato's writings as encouraging a split between emotion and reason and a distrust of emotions.  

Some theorists refer to a "traditional", non-cognitive view of emotions without specifying the proponents of this view. Joseph Forgas, for instance, writes:

In contrast to the traditional view that saw affect as either irrelevant to, or at best an intrusion into, normal, affect-less cognitive processing, many of the recent models seek to incorporate affective states as components of an information processing and retrieval system.  

Most modern theories of emotion, then, are cognitive: and many of the recent writers on emotion see themselves as reacting against "traditional", non-cognitive views of emotion. They also, as Turski points out, have a tendency to see themselves as writing about a topic which has been neglected and dismissed as of no importance.  

As we shall see later in this chapter, this reactive quality is important: it leads modern writers on emotion to try to rehabilitate emotions, and to value them highly. The implications of this valuing of emotions will be discussed in detail when we compare George Eliot's treatment of emotions with the views of one of the most important modern philosophers of emotion, Martha Nussbaum.

Typically, accounts of emotions as cognitive involve seeing links between emotions and cognition. Philosophers who discuss emotion in this way often think that a belief is necessary for an emotion. They think of emotions as evaluative judgements stemming from beliefs: I believe my car has been stolen; I feel anger; this anger can best be described as an evaluative judgement that a wrong has been done to me. As Patricia Greenspan points out, the idea of emotions as

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17 W. George Turski, Towards a Rationality of Emotions: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994) 2. Turski notes, however, that in the Phaedrus and in Timaeus Plato expressed "a sense in which emotions can be the ally of reason" (Turski, 2).


19 Turski, 1. Turski agrees that "emotions have not been a topic of high priority" (Turski, xi).
stemming from beliefs is somewhat constraining; it ignores the emotional reactions we may feel towards something where full belief that something has occurred is not warranted.\textsuperscript{20} Greenspan's account, however, is itself limited by her assumption that we can make a split between cognition and emotion. First we see something, then we react to it.

Raimond Gaita has questioned this split between perception and emotion. Speaking of a nun's behaviour towards some psychiatric patients, he says:

We rightly call such behaviour the expression of love. But in this case love should not be conceived as an affective state distinct from understanding or recognition, such that they together — the love and the recognition — produce such behaviour. Behaviour of this kind is the form of her recognition of the full human reality of the other; and love is the name we give to it.\textsuperscript{21}

Gaita queries the standard cognitivist view of emotion: the idea that the nun first has the thought that the patients are fully human, and then feels love for them. He suggests that we do not have a thought and a feeling here, but an inseparable form of affective recognition which is displayed in behaviour called love. Gaita asks us to consider, in cases where a form of moral understanding is involved, whether our thoughts can be separated from emotion.

Gaita recognises, of course, that we can have affectless thought about many things: artefacts, for example. (We can have a thought about a chair without feeling an emotion).\textsuperscript{22} In querying the common split between emotion and thought, Gaita is considering only thought about morally salient phenomena. He suggests, for example, that feeling sentimental about one's own prospective death is essentially a cognitive failure (rather than a thought being followed by an inappropriate emotion).\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{20}Greenspan, 3.


\textsuperscript{22}Raimond Gaita, Good and Evil: An Absolute Conception (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991) 171-172.

\textsuperscript{23}Gaita, Good and Evil, 270-275, 306-311.
Let us start our exploration of the concept of cognitive emotions by looking at the relationship between thought and feeling in George Eliot's fiction. Is her position on emotion like that of Descartes or Kant, who regarded emotions as passions: irrational, brute forces with no connection to thought? Or does her position have more in common with modern theories of cognitive emotion? If so, what variety of cognitivism has most in common with her position? Does Eliot take a standard cognitivist position like Greenspan's, where thought and feeling are separate? Or is her position more akin to Gaita's, where thought and feeling are at times inseparable?

**Thought and feeling**

If George Eliot did not support a cognitivist view of emotion — if she regarded emotions as irrational surges of feeling, unconnected to thought — she would be unable to explain her characters' emotions by referring to their thoughts. But we can see many examples in her novels where feelings are traced to particular thoughts. This is seen both with short-term emotions and longer term ones such as moods. Lydgate's increasing moodiness, for instance, is traced back to his thoughts about his accumulating debts:

Naturally the merry Christmas bringing the happy New Year, when fellow-citizens expect to be paid for the trouble and goods they have smilingly bestowed on their neighbours, had so tightened the pressure of sordid cares on Lydgate's mind that it was hardly possible for him to think unbrokenly of any other subject, even the most habitual and soliciting. He was not an ill-tempered man; his intellectual activity, the ardent kindness of his heart, as well as his strong frame, would always, under tolerably easy conditions, have kept him above the petty uncontrolled susceptibilities which make bad temper. But he was now a prey to that worst irritation which arises not simply from annoyance, but from the secondary consciousness underlying those annoyances, of wasted energy and a degrading preoccupation, which was the reverse of all his former purposes. 'This is what I am thinking of; and that is what I might have been thinking of,' was the bitter incessant murmur within him, making every difficulty a double goad to impatience . . .

It was because Lydgate writhed under the idea of getting his neck beneath this vile yoke that he had fallen into a bitter moody state . . .

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24 *Middlemarch*, 697-698; bk. 7, ch. 64.
Though the focus of the passage is on the thoughts which are making Lydgate bitter and irritable, there are also suggestions that some emotions have physical causes: Lydgate's "strong frame" is part of what normally makes him good-tempered. The phrase "the ardent kindness of his heart" suggests a natural disposition which may not be generated by thought. Nonetheless, we are chiefly being shown emotions which are linked to and caused by thoughts: including, of course, Lydgate's bitterness at not being able to devote his thoughts to what he considers worthy of his attention. The emotional impact of Lydgate's thoughts is severe: his "secondary consciousness" brings "that worst irritation". The word "irritation" suggests the physicality of emotions, and this suggestion is increased by the word "writhed". Lydgate writhes under an idea: the thought produces the effect of physical torture. Lydgate's thoughts create both painful short-term emotions and a general emotional state of moodiness and bad temper.

When Daniel Deronda first begins to think that he may be Sir Hugo's illegitimate son rather than his nephew, the thought creates painful emotion:

A new idea had entered his mind, and was beginning to change the aspect of his habitual feelings as happy careless voyagers are changed when the sky threatens and the thought of danger arises.25

The pattern of feeling following thought is clear in Daniel's case, and it is reinforced by the explanatory example which follows. The simile Eliot uses to illustrate the type of emotional change Deronda is undergoing is one where emotion is changed by thought: careless happiness vanishes with the thought of danger. We can imagine a slight alteration to this example, so that happiness vanished with physical causes, under the influence of the lowering weather. Here, though, it is thinking about the physical world, rather than the physical world itself, which alters the mood.

That patterns of thinking, or that new ideas should create emotions is not likely to strike us as surprising. We see something more unusual in other places in George Eliot's fiction: where the particular form a feeling takes is influenced by thought. Lydgate, for example, is in love with Laure

25Daniel Deronda, 205, bk. 2, ch. 16.
"as a man is in love with a woman he never expects to speak to".\textsuperscript{26} The particular style of being in love is defined by reference to Lydgate's thoughts, to his expectations. And it is not only defined but explained by this reference: it is this kind of being in love, not any other kind, because Lydgate does not expect to speak to Laure. Lydgate's initial feelings for Laure are apparently confined by his expectation that they will never have a relationship: he feels no more for her than "remote impersonal admiration". This seems an example of a character's feelings being shaped by his thoughts. Once Lydgate's expectation of never speaking to Laure is disproved, his feelings quickly change to a more ardent form. In examples like this one we see George Eliot presenting emotions as cognitive, rather than just blind surges of feeling unconnected to thought.

Karen Chase has commented that in George Eliot's novels, characters' feelings are shown typically shown as "transfused" through the mind\textsuperscript{27}: a pattern where a thought is followed by an emotion. This pattern of thought being followed by feeling suggests that George Eliot supports the standard cognitivist view of emotion: thoughts lead to feelings, but the two are seen as separate. K. M. Newton, in contrast, has claimed that for Dorothea, thought and feeling are "inseparable".\textsuperscript{28} Newton's claim seems to be an overstatement. We can see what seems to be an example of thought being followed by feeling, for instance, when the narrator describes the feelings aroused in Dorothea by Casaubon:

\begin{quote}
It had now entered Dorothea's mind that Mr Casaubon might wish to make her his wife, and the idea that he would do so touched her with a sort of reverential gratitude.\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

The thought here seems to be visualised as external, something which enters Dorothea's mind and which then causes the reverential gratitude. It is difficult to be sure, though. Is there really a temporal separation between the thought and feeling? Perhaps the two are merely linearly

\textsuperscript{26}Middlemarch, 180; bk. 2, ch. 15.

\textsuperscript{27}Chase, 141.

\textsuperscript{28}Newton, 124.

\textsuperscript{29}Middlemarch, 50; bk. 1, ch. 3.
separated in the sentence because readers would need careful initiation into the idea that such a thought could be accompanied by such a feeling.

A little later in the narrative, though, we come across an instance where the causal link between thought and feeling does seem to be intended. As in Dorothea's case, Celia's thoughts are visualised as external, and as entering the mind, causing the sense of shame which follows:

But now Celia was really startled at the suspicion which had darted into her mind . . . . Here was something really to vex her about Dodo: it was all very well not to accept Sir James Chettam, but the idea of marrying Mr Casaubon! Celia felt a sort of shame mingled with a sense of the ludicrous.30

In this instance, we seem to be seeing a chain of thoughts occurring within Celia, half-narrated ("Celia was really startled") and half-dramatised ("the idea of marrying Mr Casaubon!"). Celia's feeling of shame is only possible once she has understood all the implications of the "suspicion" that darted into her mind earlier.

We have seen some examples of thoughts leading to feelings in George Eliot's fiction. At other times, though, feeling seems to create thoughts, as in the scene where Dorothea dreams of her "visionary future" with Casaubon, where the pictures in her mind seem to arise out of the intensity of her feelings.31 As we watch Dorothea, we see thought creating feeling, feeling creating thought, and, on a number of memorable occasions, incidents where thought is not separable from feeling. For unlike Greenspan, who has a standard cognitivist position on emotion, George Eliot does not always assume there is a distinction between thought and feeling. There are passages in Middlemarch where feeling is inseparable from thought:

And by a sad contradiction Dorothea's ideas and resolves seemed like melting ice floating and lost in the warm flood of which they had been but another form. She was humiliated to find herself a mere victim of feeling, as if she could know nothing except through that medium: all her strength was scattered in fits of agitation, of struggle, of despondency, and then again in visions of more complete renunciation, transforming all hard conditions into duty.32

30Middlemarch, 71; bk. 1, ch. 5.
31Middlemarch, 49; bk. 1, ch. 3.
32Middlemarch, 230; bk. 2, ch. 20.
We saw earlier that in some passages in *Middlemarch*, like the one where Celia feels a sense of shame at the thought Dorothea might think about Casaubon as a lover, George Eliot treats emotions as if they were generated by thought. In that earlier passage, emotions were cognitive in the sense that they were caused by a particular thought. Here, though, feelings are cognitive in another sense. Dorothea's ideas (what we would normally call her thoughts) are lost in the warm flood of feeling "of which they had been but another form". Thought is here a type of feeling; it has a different shape, but they are essentially the same substance (water imagery is used for both).

Since thought and feeling cannot always be separated, it is not surprising to find that feeling and knowledge also cannot always be considered separately: a point which is related to the way emotion is both valued and distrusted by George Eliot. If feeling cannot be separated from knowledge, it has a stronger claim to be valued. Dorothy Atkins has claimed that George Eliot values knowledge more than feeling. Atkins' comment, however, neglects the possibility that knowledge and feeling are not necessarily separable concepts in George Eliot's fiction. K. M. Newton has noted that "There are numerous passages in George Eliot's writings which illustrate her view that feeling could be a direct means of knowledge, superior to reason or to religious systems". In the passage above, though, feeling is not just a means of knowledge. Instead, feeling cannot be separated from knowledge. Dorothea makes a firm split in this passage between knowledge and feeling, but the narrator does not. It is Dorothea who thinks, with some frustration, that the only path to knowledge for her seems to be through feeling. George Eliot's thinking about feeling does not rest with this concept.

Newton's idea that George Eliot views feeling as a means of knowledge also does not quite capture the fluidity of the passage below:

We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves: Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity, but yet it had been easier to her to imagine how she would devote herself to Mr Casaubon, and become wise and strong in his strength and

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34 Newton, 53.
wisdom, than to conceive with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling — an idea wrought back to the directness of sense, like the solidity of objects — that he had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference.\textsuperscript{35}

Here, feeling is put forward as a kind of imaginative knowledge which is deeper and more distinctly grasped than the insights which come from detached reflection. This kind of knowledge is like a sense-perception, like our sense of the solidity of objects. And the language George Eliot is using recreates this in the reader. For we are brought to feel that Casaubon has an "equivalent centre of self" through the language of sense-perception, by seeing (in a literal and metaphorical sense) that for him "lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference." The metaphor helps us visualise the lights and shadows described.

In both passages, feeling is not just a means to knowledge. Instead it is part of and inseparable from knowledge, a knowledge which is itself feeling.

There are other passages in \textit{Middlemarch} where knowledge and emotion cannot be separated. Where Rosamond first learns how Will feels about her in comparison to Dorothea, the pain is inseparable from the knowledge:

Rosamond, while these poisoned weapons were being hurled at her, was almost losing the sense of her identity, and seemed to be waking into some new terrible existence. She had no sense of chill resolute repulsion, of reticent self-justification such as she had known under Lydgate's most stormy displeasure; all her sensibility was turned into a bewildering novelty of pain; she felt a new terrified recoil under a lash never experienced before. What another nature felt in opposition to her own was being burnt and bitten into her consciousness.\textsuperscript{36}

In this passage, Rosamond does not learn about Will's feelings and then feel pain; nor is it quite accurate to say that she learns through pain. Her recognition of what Will feels and her pain are inextricably linked. What he feels is "burnt and bitten into her consciousness". Without this pain, Rosamond's knowledge would disappear.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Middlemarch}, 243; bk. 2, ch. 21.

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Middlemarch}, 836; bk. 8, ch. 78.
What George Eliot is exploring here is a concept of emotion I shall call "affective perception": a perception which is altered by emotion, and in this case, which has its existence in emotion. Rosamond's knowledge, her perception of what someone else feels, is experienced as "a lash". Pain and perception cannot be separated from each other.

**Emotion as affective perception**

The idea of emotion as affective perception is one of several different accounts of emotions as cognitive within George Eliot's fiction. We have looked at some of the ways in which cognitive emotions appear in Eliot's fiction. Sometimes they can be described as cognitive because we see a thought leading to a feeling, at other times they must be called cognitive because the emotion cannot be separated from thought.

Philosophers who describe emotions as cognitive are typically concerned to rehabilitate them, defend them from the charge of being irrational. As we saw earlier, Rorty identifies all the contributors to her anthology with this aim. This often means that such philosophers attempt to persuade their readers to value emotions more highly. The philosopher who has explored the notion of emotions as cognitive most thoroughly and who has linked this concept with literature, is Martha Nussbaum. Nussbaum, who titled one of her books *Love's Knowledge*, openly aims to convert her readers to a greater appreciation of emotions:

A central purpose of these essays is to call this view of rationality into question and to suggest, with Aristotle, that practical reasoning unaccompanied by emotion is not sufficient for practical wisdom; that emotions are not only not more unreliable than intellectual calculations, but frequently are more reliable, and less deeply seductive.\(^\text{37}\)

In Nussbaum's philosophical writing, rhetoric is employed on behalf of emotions, as she urges her readers towards a greater understanding and appreciation of them. I will be contrasting Nussbaum's defence of emotions with the treatment of emotions in George Eliot's fiction. In particular, I will argue that Eliot's exploration of emotion both as affective perception and as

\(^{37}\text{Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 40.}\)
creating affective perception shows more wariness towards emotions than Nussbaum does. In George Eliot's fiction, emotions are both valued and distrusted. Nussbaum pushes her argument towards simply valuing emotions.

Nonetheless, Eliot and Nussbaum share a good deal of common ground, as both are interested in the idea that emotions are cognitive. For Martha Nussbaum, the cognitivism of emotions is created by the relationship between emotions and beliefs. Nussbaum argues that a belief is a necessary precondition of, and a necessary part of, an emotional response:

There are various subtly different positions available (in both the ancient discussion and the contemporary literature) about the precise relationship between emotions and beliefs. But the major views all make the acceptance of a certain belief or beliefs at least a necessary condition for emotion, and, in most cases, also a constituent part of what an emotion is. And the most powerful accounts, furthermore, go on to argue that if one really accepts or takes in a certain belief, one will experience the emotion: belief is sufficient for emotion, emotion necessary for full belief. For example, if a person believes that X is the most important person in her life and that X has just died, she will feel grief. If she does not, this is because in some sense she doesn't fully comprehend or has not taken in or is repressing these facts . . .

Because the emotions have this cognitive dimension in their very structure, it is very natural to view them as intelligent parts of our ethical agency, responsive to the workings of deliberation and essential to its completion. (Dante's intelligenza d'amore is not an intellectual grasp of emotion; it is an understanding that is not available to the non-lover, and the loving itself is part of it.) On this view, there will be certain contexts in which the pursuit of intellectual reasoning apart from emotion will actually prevent a full rational judgment — for example by preventing an access to one's grief, or one's love, that is necessary for the full understanding of what has taken place when a loved one dies.38

Looking at Nussbaum's argument, we can see that the main thrust of it affirms that we need beliefs to have emotion: "the major views all make the acceptance of a certain belief or beliefs at least a necessary condition for emotion". What Nussbaum is claiming is that if we believe something fully, we will necessarily experience the emotion appropriate to it. Nussbaum is not exploring all beliefs here, of course (she is not including, for instance, factual beliefs about

38Nussbaum, Love's Knowledge, 41.
whether or not a chair is in the room). Nussbaum's particular philosophical inquiry is devoted to exploring beliefs about what is valuable in life — beliefs which have a clear connection to her general Aristotelian question "how to live" — and their connection to emotions.

Nussbaum's account of emotions does not lay much stress on the concept of attention. Some other modern philosophers of emotion, however, have stressed the role of attention in emotion. Ronald de Sousa suggests that "shifts in emotion are primarily shifts in salience". He claims that emotions "are in part patterns of attention". De Sousa suggests that we commonly hold ourselves responsible for our emotions because attention is to some degree in our control. He goes on to give a persuasive account of why we experience great difficulty in ridding ourselves of an unwanted emotion such as unrequited love, and more success in developing a new one:

   It does me no good to tell myself how foolish I am to miss her: for the thought is an enemy agent, as it were, calculated to fix my thoughts on just what I should forget. I should forget her smile, her eyes, her perfect breasts . . . . The best course is to fall in love with someone else: "it'll take my mind off her." Or failing that, to hate her: directing my attention onto her betrayal, her levity, her heartlessness . . . .

This analysis of emotions, focusing on how attention can be turned toward the appealing or the unpleasant characteristics of another person, shows how attention can aid in altering our beliefs and our emotions. In a clinical study of emotional disorders, Adrian Wells and Gerald Matthews report that "Emotional disorder is associated . . . with attentional bias." Leila Tov-Ruach focuses on the difference between love and attention, but nonetheless concedes that part of loving requires focused attention:

   There is some economy in love: one cannot love a great many people all at once . . . . Because concentrated attention is such a crucial feature of love, it is natural to confuse the two, and to

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40 De Sousa, "The Rationality of Emotions", *Explaining Emotions*, Rorty, 141.

41 De Sousa, "The Rationality of Emotions", *Explaining Emotions*, Rorty, 141.

suppose that the presence of one entails the presence of the other. But the economic logic of the two are distinct: a loving care for what is central to a person’s flourishing is not an all-or-none activity subject to a zero sum economy. What is such an activity is that part of loving which requires completely focused attention. Such attention is a precondition for loving: but it need not accompany every moment of loving activity. 43

Tov-Ruach’s example uses love, but other emotions usually require a certain amount of attentiveness. There are only a limited number of things which we can attend to at any one time, and thus only a limited number of things we can feel for. What we can feel for and the amount of attention we can give are not always dependent on cognitive factors: our emotional response is also influenced by physical factors like tiredness. Amélie Rorty, for instance, notes the influence of hormonal factors on emotions. 44

Eliot’s fiction dramatises the role attention can play in affecting emotion. Daniel Deronda, preoccupied with his own concerns, notes that he is not responding fully (that is, not responding emotionally) to Gwendolen’s tragedy:

For his own part, he thought that his sensibilities had been blunted by what he had been going through in the meeting with his mother: he seemed to himself now to be only fulfilling claims, and his more passionate sympathy was in abeyance. He had lately been living so keenly in an experience quite apart from Gwendolen’s lot, that his present cares for her were like a revisiting of scenes familiar in the past, and there was not yet a complete revival of the inward response to them. 45

At this moment, Daniel sees himself merely “fulfilling claims”, responding only in the form of outward behaviour, rather than with full sympathy. He is not able to fully focus on Gwendolen, and her troubles seem distant from his other passionate concerns.

As the flow of the narrative reveals, however, there is no precise limit to what we can feel for simultaneously. A little later, Daniel finds that his emotional response to Gwendolen’s plight is unbearably keen:

43Leila Tov-Ruach, “Jealousy, Attention and Loss”, Explaining Emotions, Rorty, 468-469.
45Daniel Deronda, 752; bk. 7, ch. 56.
He was completely unmanned. Instead of finding, as he had imagined, that his late experience had dulled his susceptibility to fresh emotion, it seemed that the lot of this young creature, whose swift travel from her bright rash girlhood into this agony of remorse he had had to behold in helplessness, pierced him the deeper because it came close upon another sad revelation of spiritual conflict... 46

Mysteriously, a personal connection has been made. Rather than feeling (as he did earlier) that his preoccupation with his mother's tragedy was dividing him from Gwendolen, Daniel now feels a connection between the two events. His sorrow for his mother increases the sorrow he feels for Gwendolen. He now joins the two women in his thought, rather than splitting his attention and his feelings between them.

George Eliot sometimes describes emotions in ways which place stress on the importance of attention; so do Tov-Ruach and de Sousa; while Nussbaum does not. Why is this of any importance? We shall only see the full import of this treatment of emotion in Chapter Six, when we look at the question of taking responsibility for emotions (an issue which has a significant impact on whether George Eliot's characters can be regarded as moral agents). Briefly, however, once attention is regarded as one of the causes of emotion, emotions can be plausibly regarded as partly chosen. Daniel Deronda, for instance, turns his back on resentment, concentrating instead on feelings of affection:

He saw a very easy descent into mean unreasoning rancour and triumph in others' frustration; and being determined not to go down that ugly pit, he turned his back on it, clinging to the kindlier affections within him as a possession. 47

Daniel is "clinging to" his more kindly feelings here: an act which involves determination and choice. De Sousa feels that our awareness that attention is involved in emotions explains why we hold ourselves responsible for our emotions, for attention is partly under our control. 48 De Sousa's belief that emotions are (at least in part) patterns of attention means that he thinks we have only limited power over them and that we are confined in the choices we can make about them. He

46 Daniel Deronda, 758-759; bk. 7, ch. 56.
47 Daniel Deronda, 323; bk. 3, ch. 25.
48 De Sousa, "The Rationality of Emotions", Explaining Emotions, Rorty, 141.
takes a pragmatic attitude towards emotions, suggesting, as we saw earlier, that dwelling on causes for hatred or resentment is the easiest way for a lover to rid himself of an unwanted passion. We might compare this to Nussbaum's attitude to the same phenomenon:

I do not say that resentment would always be unjustified in the context of love; and sometimes it is too inevitably a part of the experience of unhappily loving. But, even where justified and even where inevitable, I believe that resentment, directed at someone whom one has loved, is a morally ugly condition, and one incompatible with a certain sort of truthful seeing of the particular...

While de Sousa sees resentment as a practical way of falling out of love, Nussbaum sees it as always "morally ugly". One weakness in Nussbaum's argument is that she gives no explanation for why resentment towards someone who has been loved is worse than other kinds of resentment. The other weakness is that Nussbaum does not seem to be really committed to the meaning of the words "justified" and "inevitable". If something is justified, why is it also blameworthy? And how can it be untruthful? If something is inevitable, how can we be held responsible for it? Nussbaum seems to have only a nominal belief in these words. She uses them as though they were in quotation marks, in a similar fashion to the pattern which David Stove has criticised in the work of Popper, Lakatos, Kuhn and Feynabend. Stove suggests that these philosophers wrote about the history of science using words which denoted scientific certainty without believing in this certainty, and that their use of these words therefore became ironic:

Now, suppose you had undergone an analogous 'loss of faith' about science. You have come to believe that nothing in science is known for certain; but almost everyone else remains convinced that there is much in science which is certain. You will want to be able to talk about this common opinion (and if you want to write about the history or philosophy of science, you will have to do so), and you will want to be able to talk about it without periphrases, and without constantly drawing attention to your disagreement with it. It will then be natural to keep the words which connote certainty, such as 'irrefutable'; but, just as disbelief in gods tends inevitably to the ironization of religious words, your disbelief in certainty will inevitably tend to the ironization of words connoting certainty. In your usage,

49Nussbaum, Love's Knowledge, 334.

50Stove, The Plato Cult, 14.
'irrefutable', for example, will tend to acquire invisible quotation-marks; it will start to mean 'not irrefutable but believed (by so-and-so) to be irrefutable'.

Similarly, Nussbaum appears to be using "justified" as if it meant "not justified but justified in the eyes of the person feeling the emotion", for if she really believed that the feeling of resentment was justified, she would be unlikely to call it "morally ugly". Her apparently generous concession that resentment may be both justified and inevitable does not exert any force over the conclusions she draws about it.

Nussbaum's claim that resentment is "incompatible with a certain sort of truthful seeing of the particular" is also rather doubtful. In Daniel Deronda, Eliot's treatment of Gwendolen's resentful awareness of Daniel's unadmiring gaze is more complex:

The darting sense that he was measuring her and looking down on her as an inferior, that he was of different quality from the human dross around her, that he felt himself in a region outside and above her, and was examining her as a specimen of a lower order, roused a tingling resentment which stretched the moment with conflict.

There is considerable implicit criticism of Gwendolen in this sentence: the resentment she feels against Daniel's scrutiny is an index of her vanity. The discomfort she feels is an indication that she is shrinking under an uncomfortable realisation of her own faults. Yet within this tiny fragment, there is also considerable ground for criticism of Daniel (rather more, perhaps, than Eliot would wish us to endorse). Gwendolen's sense that Daniel is looking down on her is resentful: but it is also accurate. There is much here to make us uneasy about Daniel: Gwendolen is acute in sensing that superiority which many readers find an unappealing characteristic of Daniel. It would be hard to argue, for instance, that Gwendolen is unjust in thinking that Daniel "felt himself in a region outside and above her, and was examining her as a specimen of a lower order". Within Daniel Deronda, the narrator often throws considerable force into a moral commentary which suggests that Gwendolen should submit to unflattering estimations of herself; but the novel also works on other levels, and in this scene, we may become uneasy as we note Daniel's moral

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51 Stove, The Plato Cult, 17.

52 Daniel Deronda, 38; bk. 1, ch. 1.
judgement of Gwendolen is based on a view of himself as a higher being. Gwendolen's sharp awareness of Daniel's judgement of her is described as arousing resentment in her, and the connection between thought and feeling seems more intimate than that, for there is resentment involved in her mental description of Daniel's activity. It is arguable that this resentment involves an attentiveness which (to reverse Nussbaum's wording) results in an uncomfortably truthful way of seeing Daniel. In Eliot's novels, the narrator's comments often link the decisions a character makes about what to attend to with a judgement about that character's responsibility for his or her emotions. Both Nussbaum and de Sousa regard emotions as something we are at least partially responsible for: Nussbaum because she thinks emotions are linked to (or perhaps identical with) beliefs, and de Sousa because he believes emotions involve patterns of attention. In Chapter Six, we will look further at the connection between emotions and attention, and whether the link Eliot makes between them encourages us to hold her characters responsible for their emotions.

I have emphasised the controversial aspects of Nussbaum's discussion of emotions, but I am not challenging her central insight: which is that emotions are cognitive, that they are "intelligent parts of our ethical agency". Nussbaum also argues that in "certain contexts" full cognitive awareness involves emotion. She says that "Dante's intelligenza d'amore is not an intellectual grasp of emotion; it is an understanding that is not available to the non-lover, and the loving itself is part of it."53 Nussbaum's point is a powerful one, but we also need to consider the reverse of this position: that there may be an understanding which is not available to the lover.

Nussbaum's stress is on emotion providing knowledge. We can see the idea of emotion leading to knowledge dramatised in various passages in George Eliot's fiction: for example, where Fred Vincy's "remorse" makes him see himself "as a pitiful rascal who was robbing two women of their savings".54 We have also seen passages where emotion and knowledge are inseparable: the passage where Rosamond realises how contemptuously Will regards her, for example. In these passages, Eliot's treatment of emotion seems in tune with Nussbaum's stress on "an

53Nussbaum, Love's Knowledge, 41.
54Middlemarch, 281; bk. 3, ch. 24.
understanding that is not available to the non-lover". In other passages in George Eliot's fiction, though, we see that understanding may be denied to lovers: Rex's love for Gwendolen makes him blind to her lack of love for him:

As for Rex . . . he was too completely absorbed in a first passion to have observation for any person or thing. He did not observe Gwendolen; he only felt what she said or did, and the back of his head seemed to be a good organ of information as to whether she was in the room or not. Before the end of the first fortnight he was so deeply in love that it was impossible for him to think of his life except as bound up with Gwendolen's. He could see no obstacles, poor boy; his own love seemed a guarantee of hers, since it was one with the unperturbed delight in her image, so that he could no more dream of her giving him pain than an Egyptian could dream of snow.55

Rex's absorption in passion means that he ignores all else. He does acquire a sixth sense about Gwendolen's presence, but this is presented as somewhat comic: the notion that "the back of his head seemed to be a good organ of information as to whether she was in the room or not" has a touch of absurdity about it. The depth of Rex's feeling does not bring insight with it: instead it creates blindness. Rex cannot see any obstacles; he is blind to Gwendolen's lack of love for him; he sees nothing but perfection in her and is so lost in happiness that Gwendolen's love for him seems certain.

What we see, as we move between the impassioned and unimpassioned views of different characters, is often not a change in knowledge but a change in perception, in the way things are seen. Taking "perception" as a key concept allows a questioning approach which is more appropriate to George Eliot's fiction than Nussbaum's approach. Nussbaum is stressing the way emotion provides knowledge: George Eliot is interested in this, but she is also interested in the way emotions may create a distorted vision.

In many of George Eliot's scenes, we see a character's emotions altering his or her perception: a different type of perception will go along with different emotions. The unloving gaze sees the subject in a different way, a point of view which is simply not accessible to the lover. We have seen that Gwendolen's resentment towards Daniel Deronda produced an unflattering but

55Daniel Deronda, 88; bk. 1, ch. 6.
acute picture of Daniel's sense of moral superiority. Gwendolen's insight into Daniel vies with his insight into her. Neither of these competing insights is influenced by love. Daniel views Gwendolen in a particular way: influenced by his attraction towards her, not, however, influenced by love:

The inward debate which she raised in Deronda gave to his eyes a growing expression of scrutiny, tending farther and farther away from the glow of mingled sensibilities forming admiration... The darting sense that he was measuring her and looking down on her as an inferior, that he was of different quality from the human dross around her, that he felt himself in a region outside and above her, and was examining her as a specimen of a lower order, roused a tingling resentment which stretched the moment with conflict.\(^{56}\)

We are given possibilities here (suggested by Gwendolen's speculative thoughts) about the different kinds of perception which could have occurred here: each would have been linked to a different type of emotion. Gwendolen wishes to be admired, but has the unpleasant thought that Daniel may be "looking down on her as an inferior". She senses that he is "measuring her" in a way that would be impossible if he was simply in love with her. He sees her too coldly and clearly for her to feel comfortable. There is a suggestion here, strengthened by the discomfort we see in Gwendolen, that Daniel's unimpassioned gaze is judging Gwendolen more truthfully than the "glow" of admiration would have been able to. George Eliot is less certain of the affirming qualities of emotion (including love) than Nussbaum is; she is interested in it both as a source of insight and as a source of distortion. Daniel's initial lack of warmth towards Gwendolen does not necessarily mean he sees her less clearly, but it ensures that he sees her in only in one particular way: a way that involves more unfavourable judgement than admiration.

All this, however, may seem a little unfair to Nussbaum, for the "knowledge" she feels love provides is not primarily knowledge of individuals (although she does argue this)\(^{57}\) but knowledge

\(^{56}\text{Daniel Deronda, 38; bk. 1, ch. 1.}\)

\(^{57}\text{Nussbaum argues that David Copperfield's love for Steerforth allows him to see Steerforth more fully (Love's Knowledge, 334). This is part of a very odd interpretation of David Copperfield where Nussbaum sees Steerforth as a figure embodying magical, romantic and story-telling properties. Nussbaum does not draw attention to the doom-laden atmosphere of the book, and puts more emphasis on Steerforth's association with stories than David's (Love's Knowledge, 335-364).}\)
of emotions. Nussbaum explores the way that emotions are linked to knowledge in an analysis of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*:

Self-assured and complacent, carrying out his analytical scrutiny of the heart, Marcel hears the words "Mademoiselle Albertine has gone." Immediately the anguish occasioned by these words cuts away the pseudotruths of the intellect, revealing the truth of his love. . .

We now confront an ambiguity in Marcel's account. He has told us that certain self-impressions are criterial of psychological truth about ourselves. But this picture can be understood in more than one way. On one interpretation, the impression gives us access to truths that could in principle (even if not in fact) be grasped in other ways, for example, by intellect. We, perhaps, cannot so grasp them because of certain obstacles in human psychology. But they exist in the heart, apart from the suffering, available for knowledge . . .

There is, however, another possibility. For the Stoic the cataleptic impression is not simply a route to knowing; it is knowing. It doesn't point beyond itself to knowledge; it goes to constitute knowledge . . . we find that knowledge of our love is not the fruit of the impression of suffering, a fruit that might in principle have been had apart from the suffering. The suffering itself is a piece of self-knowing. In responding to a loss with anguish, we are grasping our love. The love is not some separate fact about us that is signaled by the impression; the impression reveals the love by constituting it. Love is not a structure in the heart waiting to be discovered; it is embodied in, made up out of, experiences of suffering. It is "produced" in Marcel's heart by Francoise's words . . . Love of Albertine is both discovered and created.58

The central point in Nussbaum's argument here is that pure intellectual thought is not the best way of exploring emotion. Some emotions cannot be understood from an intellectual distance: Marcel can only grasp his love for Albertine in the anguish he feels at her loss.

In reading George Eliot's fiction, we are often drawn into the emotional experiences of the characters, rather than remaining distant. We are encouraged by the narrator to identify with the characters and the emotions they are feeling. In *The Mill on the Floss*, as we saw in Chapter Two of this thesis, we were invited to mine our own experience of passionate childhood griefs so that we could understand and sympathise with Maggie. Nonetheless, in *Daniel Deronda*, doubts about

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the importance of subjective emotional experience are frequently expressed by the narrator — and
Gwendolen Harleth is often criticised for being unable to step outside her emotional concerns.
There is a certain wariness about emotion in George Eliot’s fiction, and the narrator’s tone is often
cool and detached. Emotions are often analysed from outside, and the narrative tone is calm and
authoritative:

The embitterment of hatred is often as unaccountable to onlookers as the growth of devoted love, and
it not only seems but is really out of direct relation with any outward causes to be alleged. Passion is
of the nature of seed, and finds nourishment within . . . 59

There is no identification by the narrator with the experience of irrational hatred, nor is the reader
encouraged to identify with this experience. Hatred is being analysed from outside, from a rational
height where no emotion obscures the vision. The authoritative tone comes from the forceful
phrase that hatred "is really" out of proportion to its outward causes. Hatred is judged rather than
imaginatively shared here. The rhythm of the sentences is calm, and they flow on smoothly, with
the soothing quality of analysis: "Passion is of the nature of seed . . . .". We do not enter into the
experience of hatred in these sentences: we remain onlookers, listening to a calm explanation.
Gradually, though, the tone changes and we are drawn into Gwendolen’s emotional experience,
able to imagine her sense of terror:

Such hidden rites went on in the secrecy of Gwendolen’s mind, but not with soothing effect — rather
with the effect of a struggling terror. 60

The vivid imagery here links Gwendolen not just with secret rites but with the struggling, terrified,
sacrificial victim of those rites. The agency within the sentence, though, is thoroughly ambiguous:
for there is also a suggestion that Gwendolen is a perpetrator, guilty of carrying out sinister rites
and that the terror is her terror of being discovered. The images are multiple and contradictory,
but each has a strong emotional impact, linking us imaginatively with Gwendolen.

59Daniel Deronda, 736-737; bk. 7, ch. 54.
60Daniel Deronda, 737; bk. 7, ch. 54.
There is a rhythm to the reader's emotional involvement in George Eliot's fiction, a rhythm which is frequently determined by the comments of the narrator. Often there is an imaginative sharing of emotional experience. We are drawn into Gwendolen's perspective, and then moved away again: reminded that there is a larger world which Gwendolen, caught up in her emotions, remains blind to. We follow the intricacies of the conversation between Gwendolen and Grandcourt during the archery contest in the Chase, only to be suddenly reminded by the narrator of how small this human drama is compared to the natural world:

I am not concerned to tell of... the glories of the forest scenery that spread themselves out beyond the level front of the hollow; being just now bound to tell a story of life at a stage when the blissful beauty of earth and sky entered only by narrow and oblique inlets into the consciousness, which was busy with a small social drama almost as little penetrated by a feeling of wider relations as if it had been a puppet-show.61

The reader is rebuked almost as much as the characters for paying no attention to the wider scene and for concentrating only on the play of impulses in Gwendolen's mind. The possibilities for misery or happiness which will come from Gwendolen's choice of marital partner are reduced to "a small social drama". The reduction is all the more startling because of our previous absorption with Gwendolen and her unpredictable changes of thought and feeling. The dramatisation of Gwendolen's emotions leads us to place importance and value on them, but the distancing techniques Eliot uses remind us of the tendency for emotions to blind us. Eliot's treatment of emotions is thus more ambivalent than Nussbaum's.

I have said that Nussbaum's focus is on emotions (especially love) providing knowledge, but there are places in her writing where this idea is qualified. In her earlier book, *The Fragility of Goodness*, Nussbaum clearly grasps the idea that emotional responses may be inappropriate, that they may lead to unfairness. In the passage below, she argues powerfully for the right to be unmoved by other people, and to care more for her own children:

If, for example, we could ever see clearly and be moved by the value of each unique person in the world, we could never without intolerable pain and guilt be able to act so as to benefit any one of

them rather than any other — as love, or justice, might in some cases require. (If I saw and valued other people’s children as I do my own, my own could never receive from me the love, time and care that she ought to have, that it is just and right for her to have.)

Here, as in Love’s Knowledge, Nussbaum shows some adherence to the view that the emotional reaction is the right one, the one which involves seeing “clearly” and being “moved by” each person in the world. But in contrast to her later position in Love’s Knowledge, Nussbaum exhibits a certain toughness here: total emotional responsiveness, she says, would bring injustice. Full emotional responsiveness would bring knowledge, allowing her to see the value of every person in the world; but it would also deprive her daughter of “the love, time and care that she ought to have”. Nussbaum acknowledges here that a non-emotional response is sometimes the only just one. Emotional response here is not seen purely as a matter of belief: it is partly a question of attention, of the time we can give to each person. There are limits, Nussbaum stresses, to the attention we can give each person — limits to what we can feel. To give proper attention to her daughter involves excluding other people.

This insight is (at certain times) endorsed in Love’s Knowledge. Nussbaum explores it most fully in her commentary on The Golden Bowl.

Amerigo has refused Charlotte not only his love, but also his response and his vision. He refuses to see her pain; he allows it to remain at a distance, receiving her as “Royalty” rather than as a woman who has arranged her life around her passion for him. What we now begin to see is that Maggie was wrong to think that it could, it should be otherwise. The demands of his love for Maggie will not, in fact, allow the moral luxury of clear sight and generous response. To love one woman adequately he cannot always be tormented by a consciousness of the other. He must, then, of necessity banish the other, wronging her not only, like Maggie, in act, but in the depths of his imagination and his vision. The demands of the new ideal of seeing are not always compatible with an adequate fulfillment of each of our commitments, for some loves are exclusive and demand a blindness in other quarters. Instead of being “finely aware and richly responsible” we may, in fact, have to become, as lovers, grossly insensitive and careless with respect to other, incompatible claims. The mere fact of being deeply engaged forces a blindness.

Nussbaum, Fragility of Goodness, 81.

Nussbaum's earlier stress on emotion being caused by belief has disappeared in this analysis, though we can still see that the emotions she is discussing here are cognitive. There is also a sense in which these emotions are willed: the Prince banishes Charlotte (Nussbaum's choice of this word suggests she feels this is a voluntary action). There is also a sense, in Nussbaum's discussion, that alternative emotions are possible. There is a suggestion that if the Prince saw Charlotte clearly he could not love Maggie fully. Full perception, perception without the "blindness" of love, would weaken his love for Maggie. Love of one is not compatible with full perception of another, in Nussbaum's view.

To call this "Nussbaum's view" may seem too simple: is this not rather Nussbaum's analysis of what James is saying in this novel? But (as Goldberg has pointed out in his comments on Nussbaum's method of analysis) one of the weaknesses of Nussbaum's practice as a literary critic is that she tends to draw abstract moral ideas out of the texts she analyses: ideas which often depend on what Goldberg describes as "over-generous" readings of the text. I think it is reasonably clear that Nussbaum does endorse the view that love of one is not compatible with full perception of another. She shows her endorsement of this idea by moving towards generalisations which spread outwards to take in our behaviour "as lovers" rather than merely the text. As she foreshadowed in her introduction to Love's Knowledge, Nussbaum is using The Golden Bowl here to answer her general Aristotelian question, "how to live". Goldberg has pointed to weaknesses in Nussbaum's interpretation of The Golden Bowl: her over-generosity to both the Ververs and James, and her confident readings of a highly ambiguous novel. Within this thesis, though, we will not be considering the merit of Nussbaum's interpretation of The Golden Bowl. Instead, we will be considering Nussbaum's reflections on love and perception.

Nussbaum is presenting a particular view of perception. It is a view which places a good deal of stress on seeing correctly, on avoiding "blindness". Perception here is equivalent to

65 Goldberg, Agents and Lives, 299.
66 Goldberg, Agents and Lives, 298-299.
correct vision. Love is in tension with this: in order to love deeply, we must be blind to some things.

Nussbaum makes a similar point in her analysis of The Ambassadors, though she notes here the possibility that love creates a deeper type of perception:

Lovers see, at such times, only one another; and it is not really deep if they can carefully see around them and about them . . .

Perception as a morality enjoins trust in responsive feeling: but its feelings are the feelings of the friend. (Strether's first question was about his friend; and the novelist's vision of him is a vision "kindly adjusted"). There is reason to suppose that the exclusivity and intensity of personal love would in fact impede the just and general responsiveness that these gentler feelings assist. And if they impede that, they impede the perceiver's contribution to our moral project, to our communal effort to arrive at perceptive equilibrium. But the recognition that there is a view of the world from passion's point of view, and that this view is closed to the perceiver, shows us that perception is, even by its own lights, incomplete. The perceiver as perceiver cannot see it all; to get the whole he must at times stop being the sort of person who cares about wholeness. 67

Nussbaum's commentary here stresses the importance of correct vision. This stress on correctness is very much in tune with Henry James's own concerns about correctness. Nussbaum's commentary seems rather too generous to James: her description, for instance, of the ideal of "just and general responsiveness" which she sees in Strether and which she feels is generally valued by the novel. This description does not press the issue of what James is actually doing in The Ambassadors very hard. We might wonder, for example, how many of James's characters' actions are really motivated by a concern for others and how much they are motivated by a self-conscious anxiety about perfect social performance.

Once again, we notice that in Nussbaum's commentary "perception" is equivalent to correct vision. Nussbaum modifies this position by pointing out that sometimes, in order to see more deeply, love rather than generalised "kindly" emotion is needed. This modification, however, turns out to be in aid of full vision. Love is needed, Nussbaum says, because without it perception

67Nussbaum, Love's Knowledge, 189.
would be "incomplete". In Nussbaum's writing, perfect perception is usually seen as something we should aim towards. In George Eliot's fiction, though, there is an awareness of the potential cost of full vision. Full vision, and complete emotional sensitivity to others would make life unendurable, as George Eliot is well aware:

That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind, and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity. 68

This is an interesting qualification from an author who declared that one of the aims of her fiction was to increase her readers' fellow-feeling. 69 It illustrates the distance between Eliot's thoughts about emotion and perception and Nussbaum's. The drive of Nussbaum's commentary is towards correct, complete vision: emotions are useful because they aid perception. This use of "perception" fits neatly with James's concerns in his novels: but can we use the same terminology when talking about George Eliot?

There are distinctions to be made here. In speaking about George Eliot's novels, I will be speaking about a change in perception which is brought about through emotion. I am calling this change in perception "affective perception". Perception should not be understood here in Nussbaum's sense, as equivalent to correct vision. Perception just means a way of seeing: whether or not affective perception is to be valued or distrusted is a question which is answered in differing ways by George Eliot. The way that emotion alters perception is explored in all of George Eliot's novels. At times, the emotion which alters a character's vision will be seen as something which deepens perception, which allows the character to see more deeply. We will see this in Gwendolen's re-visioning of her former home at Offendene. In some other passages from the

68 Middlemarch, 226; bk. 2, ch. 20.
69 George Eliot's comments on the potential for Art to awaken "social sympathies" in her essay "The Natural History of German Life" indicate that a wish to increase sympathetic feeling helped motivate her to write fiction. (George Eliot, "The Natural History of German Life", Westminster Review, 1856. Rpt in George Eliot: Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings, 111).
novels, emotion is seen as distorting vision. Finally, and possibly most interestingly, the way characters' emotions alter their vision is presented as a dramatic fact. Gwendolen's view of the world from Grandcourt’s yacht is strongly coloured by emotion, but to ask whether or not this makes her see more clearly or more deeply seems inappropriate. This is the way Gwendolen experiences that world, and there is considerable tension in the novel over whether or not she can be held responsible for this affective experience.

In Nussbaum's commentary, love and perception usually seem to remain separate. One can influence the other: we may need to become blind to the claims of others, she comments, to love one person fully. In George Eliot’s fiction, emotion and perception are sometimes separated and at others, inextricably entwined.

Eliot’s interest in affective perception is reflected in a recurring concern in her novels: the value of emotional attachments to the landscapes we have first known. In The Mill on the Floss, Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda we meet more than one passage with a Wordsworthian tone. In these novels, as in Wordsworth’s Prelude, we see a love of the landscape of childhood. For George Eliot, the feelings which develop first are often the deepest because they are unchosen. For both Wordsworth and George Eliot, these feelings become a vital part of adult emotions:

Life did change for Tom and Maggie; and yet they were not wrong in believing that the thoughts and loves of these first years would always make part of their lives. We could never have loved the earth so well if we had had no childhood in it,—if it were not the earth where the same flowers come up again every spring that we used to gather with our tiny fingers as we sat lisping to ourselves on the grass,—the same hips and haws on the autumn hedgerows,—the same redbreasts that we used to call ‘God’s birds’ because they did no harm to the precious crops. What novelty is worth that sweet monotony where everything is known and loved because it is known?

The wood I walk in on this mild May day, with the young yellow-brown foliage of the oaks between me and the blue sky, the white star-flowers and the blue-eyed speedwell and the ground ivy at my feet,—what grove of tropic palms, what strange ferns or splendid broad-petalled blossoms, could ever thrill such deep and delicate fibres within me as this home-scene? These familiar flowers,

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70Sam Goldberg points to tensions in Daniel Deronda over whether or not Gwendolen can be viewed as a responsible moral agent. (Goldberg, Agents and Lives, 129-134)
these well-remembered bird-notes, this sky with its fitful brightness, these furrowed and grassy fields, each with a sort of personality given to it by the capricious hedgerows — such things as these are the mother tongue of our imagination, the language that is laden with all the subtle inextricable associations the fleeting hours of our childhood left behind them. Our delight in the sunshine on the deep bladed grass today, might be no more than the faint perception of wearied souls, if it were not for the sunshine and the grass in the far-off years, which still live in us and transform our perception into love.\footnote{\textit{Mill on the Floss}, 94; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 5.}

The last sentence of the passage reveals one of the ways in which George Eliot regards feeling: as a deeper kind of perception. The language here is marvellously flexible, suggesting both that it is love that transforms perception, and that the transformed perception is itself love. Throughout the passage we can also see a valuing of feeling over reason: a valuing of the kind of love which is not chosen, which is not the object of deliberation. We love the landscape we grow up with, George Eliot says, simply because it is "known". Dispassionate evaluation — the kind which would rate the "splendid broad-petalled blossoms" as more beautiful — plays no part in this deep feeling.

In the passage below, this non-rational affection for the first-known things in our life is seen as a moral safeguard:

There is no sense of ease like the ease we felt in those scenes where we were born, where objects became dear to us before we had known the labour of choice, and where the outer world seemed only an extension of our own personality: we accepted and loved it as we accepted our own sense of existence and our own limbs. Very commonplace, even ugly, that furniture of our early home might look if it were put up to auction: an improved taste in upholstery scorns it; and is not the striving after something better and better in our surroundings, the grand characteristic that distinguishes man from the brute — or to satisfy a scrupulous accuracy of definition, that distinguishes the British man from the foreign brute? But heaven knows where that striving might lead us, if our affections had not a trick of twining round those old inferior things, if the loves and sanctities of our life had no deep immovable roots in memory. One's delight in an elderberry bush overhanging the confused leafage of a hedgerow bank as a more gladdening sight than the finest cistus or fuchsia spreading itself on the softest undulating turf, is an entirely unjustified preference to a landscape-gardener, or to any of those severely regulated minds who are free from the weakness of any attachment that does not rest on a demonstrable superiority of qualities. And there is no better reason for preferring this elderberry bush than that it stirs an early memory — that it is no novelty in my life speaking to me merely
through my present sensibilities to form and colour, but the long companion of my existence that wove itself into my joys when joys were vivid.\textsuperscript{72}

The narrator argues against the views of severely rational minds, portraying such rationality as impoverished. The narrator's loving vision sees more than unemotional eyes would. The beloved objects are "old inferior things", but it is nonetheless vital that our love for them is "immovable". Natural "delight" is opposed to "those severely regulated minds who are free from the weakness of any attachment that does not rest on a demonstrable superiority of qualities". The narrator protests that she has "no better reason for preferring this elderberry bush than that it stirs an early memory" — a reason which the whole passage argues is the most important possible.

George Eliot sees the absence of such emotional attachment in Hetty Sorrel as a moral deficiency. This view is very clear in the narrator's comments on Hetty's dreams of leaving the Hall Farm and becoming a lady:

Does any sweet or sad memory mingle with this dream of the future — any loving thought of her second parents — of the children she had helped to tend — of any youthful companion, any pet animal, any relic of her own childhood even? Not one. There are some plants that have hardly any roots: you may tear them from their native nook of rock or wall, and just lay them over your ornamental flower-pot, and they blossom none the worse. Hetty could have cast all her past life behind her and never cared to be reminded of it again. I think she had no feeling at all towards the old house, and did not like the Jacob's Ladder and the long row of hollyhocks in the garden better than other flowers — perhaps not so well. \textsuperscript{73}

It is unsurprising to see blame directed at a character for not thinking of her adoptive parents with love and gratitude; but there is something more unusual in this passage. Hetty's lack of feeling for the hollyhocks, her possible preference for flowers which were not part of her childhood, attracts the same kind of critical attention as her lack of feeling for her "second parents". Feelings of attachment are valuable in their own right: Hetty's detachment is wrong, but not just because it makes her neglect her uncle. George Eliot is suggesting that it is important for moral development to have an attachment to childhood surroundings. Hetty Sorrel and Gwendolen

\textsuperscript{72} The Mill on the Floss, 222, vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 1.

\textsuperscript{73} Adam Bede, 199-200, bk. 1, ch. 15.
Harleth are singled out for both blame and compassion because they do not have this kind of love of place, and their lack of it is linked to their limited moral development.

In commenting on Gwendolen's lack of love of place, George Eliot specifically casts doubt on the virtues of impartiality, and puts value on an emotional attachment which is independent of reasoned preferences:

Pity that Offendene was not the home of Miss Harleth's childhood, or endeared to her by family memories! A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge: a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection, and kindly acquaintance with all the neighbours, even to the dogs and donkeys, may spread not by sentimental effort and reflection, but as a sweet habit of the blood. At five years old, mortals are not prepared to be citizens of the world, to be stimulated by abstract nouns, to soar above preference into impartiality; and that prejudice in favour of milk with which we blindly begin, is a type of the way body and soul must get nourished at least for a time. The best introduction to astronomy is to think of the nightly heavens as a little lot of stars belonging to one's own homestead.

But this blessed persistence in which affection can take root had been wanting in Gwendolen's life.74

Some of the comments here are sharp hits at the view that impartiality must improve our insight. "At five years old, mortals are not prepared to be citizens of the world, to be stimulated by abstract nouns, to soar above preference into impartiality". The dry tone here casts doubt on whether we can ever "soar" (the grandiose verb is chosen to make such an idea seem a little ridiculous) into impartiality, regardless of our age. George Eliot's seriousness is reserved for another viewpoint: that which sees early, irrational attachments as important for moral development.

Gwendolen's final wish to return to Offendene is an emotional shift which is clearly valued above Sir Hugo's comments about Gadsmere. Sir Hugo's comments are made with a lack of emotion which becomes part of their falsity:

74Daniel Deronda, 50; bk. 1, ch. 3.
'I shouldn’t mind about the soot myself,' said the baronet, with that dispassionateness which belongs to the potential mood. 'Nothing is more healthy.'

As the narrator’s dry remark makes clear, Sir Hugo can only make such false statements because he is uninvolved emotionally. He can refer to the soot as healthy because he will never be affected by it. Dispassionateness is here the mode of complacent indifference.

Sir Hugo’s easy remarks form a contrast to Gwendolen’s silence as she listens to him, and thinks of Offendene. Gwendolen’s new feelings about Offendene allow her to re-vision it:

... this mingled, dozing view seemed to dissolve and give way to a more wakeful vision of Offendene and Pennicote under their cooler lights. She saw the grey shoulders of the downs, the cattle-specked fields, the shadowy plantations with rutted lanes where the barked timber lay for a wayside seat, the neatly-clipped hedges on the road from the parsonage to Offendene...

This vision of Offendene is clearly subjective, yet it is also truthful. The truthfulness is suggested by the language, which, in its emphasis on light and shadow and its reduction of cattle to specks, suggests the scene is being seen from a fuller perspective. The description includes a breadth of vision and an attention to nature which was previously not apparent in Gwendolen’s view of the world. Gwendolen’s emotional involvement with the landscape makes her see it in a new way, more deeply.

We might think here of Nussbaum’s suggestion that a change in belief is sufficient to alter our emotions. The notion of a change in belief does not seem to adequately account for Gwendolen’s changed perception of Offendene. It is something far more mysterious and indefinite than a change in belief which has caused Gwendolen to see Offendene so differently (although her beliefs at the end of the novel differ in many ways from the beliefs she has at its beginning). We could say, with little exaggeration, that the whole story of Gwendolen in the novel is needed to explain how she comes to see Offendene in this new light. It is something which cannot be reduced to beliefs.

\[75\] Daniel Deronda, 830; bk. 8, ch. 64.

\[76\] Daniel Deronda, 831; bk. 8, ch. 64.
Gwendolen's new attachment to Offendene has been prepared for by her growing tendency to love and value her family, which is itself a sign of moral growth:

And all the while this contemptuous veto of her husband's on any intimacy with her family, making her proudly shrink from giving them the aspect of troublesome pensioners, was rousing more inward inclination towards them. She had never felt so kindly towards her uncle, so much disposed to look back on his cheerful, complacent activity and spirit of kind management, even when mistaken, as more of a comfort than the neutral loftiness which was every day chilling her. And here perhaps she was unconsciously finding some of that mental enlargement which it was hard to get from her occasional dashes into difficult authors, who instead of blending themselves with her daily agitations required her to dismiss them. 77

We can see, too, that Gwendolen's new feelings of affection towards her uncle are partly created by a shift of attention, dwelling on the kindly qualities in Mr Gascoigne which form a contrast to Grandcourt's character.

**Distrusting emotions**

The passages selected so far indicate that there is a movement in *Daniel Deronda* which shows Gwendolen developing morally, gaining a deeper vision through her new attachment to people and places she had previously looked on with cold indifference. This might suggest that in *Daniel Deronda*, George Eliot was linking the idea of emotion as affective perception with the idea that emotional involvement could provide a deeper moral vision. However, George Eliot is also interested in the idea of emotion as blindness, and even more interested in whether or not we can call someone's vision blind or distorted:

Deposited as a *feme sole* with her large trunks, and having to wait while a vehicle was being got from the large-sized lantern called the Railway Inn, Gwendolen felt that the dirty paint in the waiting-room, the dusty decanter of flat water, and the texts in large letters calling on her to repent and be converted, were part of the dreary prospect opened by her family troubles; and she hurried away to the outer door looking towards the lane and fields. But here the very gleams of sunshine seemed melancholy, for the autumnal leaves and grass were shivering, and the wind was turning up the feathers of a cock and two croaking hens which had doubtless parted with their grown-up offspring

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77 *Daniel Deronda*, 609; bk. 6, ch. 44.
and did not know what to do with themselves. The railway official also seemed without resources, and his innocent demeanour in observing Gwendolen and her trunks was rendered intolerable by the cast in his eye; especially since, being a new man, he did not know her, and must conclude that she was not very high in the world. The vehicle — a dirty old barouche — was within sight, and was being slowly prepared by an elderly labourer. Contemptible details these, to make part of a history; yet the turn of most lives is hardly to be accounted for without them. They are continually entering with cumulative force into a mood until it gets the mass and momentum of a theory or a motive. Even philosophy is not quite free from such determining influences; and to be dropt solitary at an ugly irrelevant-looking spot with a sense of no income on the mind, might well prompt a man to discouraging speculation on the origin of things and the reason of a world where a subtle thinker found himself so badly off. How much more might such trifles tell on a young lady equipped for society with a fastidious taste, an Indian shawl over her arm, some twenty cubic feet of trunks by her side, and a mortal dislike to the new consciousness of poverty which was stimulating her imagination of disagreeables? At any rate they told heavily on poor Gwendolen, and helped to quell her resistant spirit. 

At first glance this passage seems to be an example of a distorted vision — everything in the landscape is regarded as depressing by Gwendolen. Yet there are elements here which encourage us to sympathise with Gwendolen. The passage does not merely display Gwendolen's egotistic outlook towards the world, or expose her snobbery. Those elements are there, of course: we are encouraged to view Gwendolen and her "fastidious taste" (a phrase which pinpoints her over-nicety) critically. There is a good deal of humour in the passage, however, and some of it is used to remind us of Gwendolen's charm, as when Gwendolen sees the personal application in "the texts in large letters calling on her to repent and be converted". On her more resilient days, of course, Gwendolen would have laughed at such notices, rather than seeing them as part of a "dreary prospect". Our awareness of this is part of what makes us, along with Gwendolen, reject the message of the texts and helps us sympathise with Gwendolen's vision of the station as dreary. We are not likely to fully sympathise with her viewpoint, though: the pathetic fallacy of the shivering grasses seems to be a self-centred reflection of Gwendolen's own misery. Other humour in the passage, however, helps us to see Gwendolen's faults as small and understandable ones, even as it exposes the fallacies in her thinking. Gwendolen's exaggerated dislike of the railway

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78Daniel Deronda, 269-270; bk. 3, ch. 21.
official, for instance, is presented amusingly: "The railway official also seemed without resources, and his innocent demeanour in observing Gwendolen and her trunks was rendered intolerable by the cast in his eye". The link made between the resourceless hens and the railway official, and the exaggeration in the phrase "innocent demeanour" pulls us into the world of comedy, where Gwendolen's dislike of a physical defect cannot be taken too seriously; while the word "intolerable" is clearly coming from Gwendolen's vocabulary of exaggeration, and is not meant to be taken literally.

There are, of course, two competing visions of the railway station: Gwendolen's and the narrator's. Gwendolen's vision loses against the greater power and scope of the narrator's vision. Yet it is part of the narrator's task to evoke as much sympathy for Gwendolen as possible, even while her vision is judged as lacking. As so often in George Eliot's fiction, a character's distorted vision is used to claim our compassion. Indeed, the narrator underscores the importance of the "Contemptible details" which depress Gwendolen. Gwendolen may be wrong in laying so much stress on these details, but we are also wrong, the narrator tells us, if we fail to understand the great importance of these details in the lives of most people.

Goldberg has pointed to what he sees as a confusion in George Eliot's vision — that she is inclined on one level to blame Gwendolen for her actions and stress her moral responsibilities and on the other, to value her as an individual and see these actions as an inevitable outcome of her nature.79 We could argue, however, that this is not a confusion on George Eliot's part and that part of the moral thinking in this novel is to make us aware of both viewpoints. We are not simply called upon to sympathise with Gwendolen while seeing her as mistaken — we also are induced to share her viewpoint. Gwendolen's vision of the station as dreary is obviously coloured by her feelings, but we can also see that emotional reaction as justifiable. We remain at some distance from her: the touches of comedy in the passage move us away from the affective mood in which Gwendolen is enclosed. Nonetheless, her vision is powerful enough to make it questionable whether she is mistaken in preferring Grandcourt to the Momperts. The disadvantages of the

Momperts are real enough. Gwendolen's tragedy is that she does not guess the other, more sinister dangers which may be lurking for her in marriage to Grandcourt.

The dangers of affective perception

One of the characters who is most interested in both the dangers and validity of a subjective emotional perspective is Mirah. Barbara Hardy comments that the style of Mirah is "in every way sentimental", but this is not quite true. When Mirah tells her story to Mrs Meyrick, the scene is damaged by sentimentality, but it comes from Mrs Meyrick's comments, not from Mirah's story. Mrs Meyrick's sentimental interjections ("The months and days pace over us like restless little birds"; "She's just a pearl: the mud has only washed her") are so cloying they are likely to alienate most readers, and unfortunately (as Hardy's remark indicates) this means many readers will be alienated from Mirah as well. If we concentrate on Mirah's speeches, however, we may well react differently, for Mirah's own story is powerfully told.

Mirah directly confronts the idea that she may be distorting her story through exaggerated emotional reactions. As she talks to Mrs Meyrick, we can see the balance Mirah makes between how she experienced reality and how it may have appeared to others:

'I was very miserable. The plays I acted in were detestable to me. Men came about us and wanted to talk to me: women and men seemed to look at me with a sneering smile: it was no better than a fiery furnace. Perhaps I make it worse than it was — you don't know that life; but the glare and the faces, and my having to go on and act and sing what I hated, and then see people who came to stare at me behind the scenes — it was all so much worse than when I was a little girl.'

The first statement Mirah makes here (part of a much longer description of her experiences) can be made simply, for it is the least contestable, being only a report of her feelings: "I was very miserable". The simple brevity of this statement moves us to accept it as a reliable report of her

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80Hardy, Introduction, Daniel Deronda, 15.
81Daniel Deronda, 251; bk. 3, ch. 20.
82Daniel Deronda, 264; bk. 3, ch. 20.
83Daniel Deronda, 258; bk. 3, ch. 20.
feelings. But now Mirah moves to reporting experiences which are more contestable, because they involve events which could have been seen and experienced differently by others. Mirah is aware of the subjectivity of her viewpoint: the plays she acted in were "detestable", but only "to me". (Gwendolen adds no such qualification in deciding the railway official's demeanour is "intolerable"). Some of Mirah's experiences can be reported directly, as matters of fact "Men came about us and wanted to talk to me"; others are matters of interpretation "women and men seemed to look at me with a sneering smile". Mirah's story is moving partly because of the mixture of direct, emotional reporting and her caution, as she stresses the subjectivity of her interpretation. For all her caution, Mirah flashes out for a moment in a passionate, resentful, dramatic assessment "it was no better than a fiery furnace". In the next sentence, however, she redisciplines herself: perhaps she is making it worse than it was? In this context, Mrs Meyrick's ignorance of Mirah's experiences ("you don't know that life") has an ambivalent status. It reduces Mrs Meyrick's right, as Mirah is aware, to say that Mirah is exaggerating and yet it also increases Mirah's responsibility to be as accurate and truthful as possible. Mirah returns to ground which is less disputable "it was all so much worse than when I was a little girl".

As she tells her story, Mirah makes claims for the validity of her subjective, emotional experience, while showing a keen awareness that her interpretation could be disputed. She can give no reasons for her horror of the Count, for example:

'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: I could not tell why he was so much worse to me than other men. Some feelings are like our hearing: they come as sounds do, before we know their reason.'

Her lack of external reasons makes her uneasy, and yet on another level, it reinforces her feeling that she is right. For the reader, of course, the very lack of reasons makes Mirah's reaction seem the right one. We link it, as Mirah does, to our sense of hearing, which can also act as a warning system before we see a danger. We feel the sense of horror, and jump to conclusions about the

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64 Daniel Deronda, 258-259; bk. 3, ch. 20.
Count's intentions, without needing further proof. Mirah is unable to articulate reasons for her emotional reaction. Instead she gives us a powerful description of her reaction ("his smile went through me with horror") and it is this which convinces us. Her description of the Count strengthens our aversion on an emotional, rather than a strictly rational level, for we are given no reasons for thinking him to be terrible. It is all achieved through suggestion. The Count, like Grandcourt, is a man of negations: he is "neither very young nor very old", "his face was heavy and grave except when he looked at me" and this list of negative characteristics invests him with a sinister quality.

The way Mirah swings between defending her feelings as valid and displaying some defensiveness about the subjectivity of her interpretations is not just put forward as part of a philosophical discussion, of course. Mirah's uncertainty — whether to trust her feelings, or to abide by the interpretations of others — lies behind her worry over whether or not she should act:

'My father's silence — his letting drop that subject of the Count's offer — made me feel sure that there was a plan against me... You will think that I had not enough reason for my suspicions, and perhaps I had not, outside my own feeling; but it seemed to me that my mind had been lit up, and all that might be stood out clear and sharp.'

Mirah's uncertainty about trusting feelings also lies behind her worry over how Mrs Meyrick will judge her when she hears her story. Mirah has acted not on "reason" but on "feeling", a line of conduct she both defends and worries about. Mirah has further grounds for uncertainty in her worry that she may be misjudging her father — as she misjudged, for example, the kindly intentions of the young workman who aided her during her journey. Mirah's very uncertainty, however, wins our sympathy, and makes us inclined to trust her view of the past. Her dramatic images ("it seemed to me that my mind had been lit up, and all that might be stood out clear and sharp") draw us into her experience, and allow us to see from her point of view. It is a subjective view, coloured by emotion, and Mirah often seems to wish for a more stable, objective picture.

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85Daniel Deronda, 260; bk. 3, ch. 20.
But it is just those episodes about which she feels most strongly (in her reaction to the Count, for example), that we are most likely to trust her vision.

**Conclusion**

In general, the emotions depicted in George Eliot's fiction are thoroughly cognitive. The way in which Eliot shows emotions to be cognitive varies: sometimes thoughts create emotions, while at other times emotions create thoughts or thoughts and emotions appear to be inseparable. One of the ways in which cognitive emotions are shown is through the dramatisation of affective perception. At times emotion alters perception, while at others it is inseparable from perception. Through her interest in affective perception, Eliot reveals that she both values and distrusts emotion. Emotion is valued in Wordsworthian passages which display a love of place, where the loving gaze of the narrator on a landscape known from childhood is valued over a strictly dispassionate vision. Through self-absorbed characters like Gwendolen Harleth, the dangers of emotion, the way it can distort vision is displayed. And yet, as we shall see in Chapter Six, emotion is sometimes presented as a dramatic fact which is simply the way a character experiences the world. Whether or not characters can be regarded as responsible for emotions is a matter of debate, one where we need to pay particular heed to the role attention plays in these cognitive emotions.
Chapter Six

Emotions and responsibility

In the Introduction to this thesis, we saw that there are several debates over the nature of emotions, including whether or not they are socially constructed, and whether or not they are cognitive. How do these debates bear on the question of responsibility for emotions? The social constructionist view of emotion does not rule out the possibility of agency: it does not automatically remove the responsibility from individuals and place it back with social practices. Nor, on the other hand, does a social constructionist position entail that people are responsible for at least some their emotions, although Armon-Jones has argued this:

If emotions are cognition-based, then this allows that they can be subjected to rational persuasion and criticism... This point is relevant to constructionism because it allows that emotions can be endorsed or condemned with respect to the social appropriateness of the attitudes by which the emotion is generated, and that agents can be held responsible for the possession or absence of those emotion attitudes which are socially required for a situation.¹

Armon-Jones argues that a cognitive basis for emotions means social constructionists can regard people as responsible for socially required emotions. Most cognitivist theories of emotion do stress our responsibility for at least some of our emotions. However, there are exceptions. Sabini and Silver, for example, are social constructionists who see emotions as linked to cognition. Nonetheless, they appear to think that an essential quality of an emotion is that it is unwilled: they identify an experience as an emotion because it is unwilled.² If an emotion is unwilled, presumably the person experiencing it is not responsible for creating it. Yet even if someone can not be held responsible for having an emotion, it could be argued that they should take responsibility for the emotions which they have. A person may not be culpable for feeling envy (in the sense that they may not have chosen to feel envy) but it then becomes a further (not entirely

²Sabini and Silver, "Envy", Harré, 177. In another paper, though, Sabini and Silver suggest that people are sometimes responsible for their emotions (Sabini and Silver, "Emotions, Responsibility and Character", Schoeman, 171).
separate) question as to whether they should take responsibility for this feeling, endeavour to discourage it and so forth. In this chapter, we will be looking at questions of both being responsible for emotions and taking responsibility for them. We will also be looking at the way emotions are portrayed in George Eliot's fiction: whether they are portrayed as socially constructed and linked to cognition, and what implications this portrayal has (in relation to the characters in her novels) for questions of emotions and responsibility.

One proponent of a theory of cognitive emotions, Robert Solomon, has proposed a strong view of responsibility for emotions. In "Emotions and Choice", he writes:

If emotions are judgments or actions, we can be held responsible for them. We cannot simply have an emotion or stop having an emotion, but we can open ourselves to argument, persuasion and evidence. We can force ourselves to be self-reflective, to make just those judgments regarding the causes and purposes of our emotions, and also to make the judgment that we are all the time choosing our emotions, which will "defuse" our emotions. 3

There are elements in Solomon's thinking here which we can find dramatised in Daniel Deronda. Daniel sharply criticises Gwendolen's self-absorption, for instance, urging her to actions which will take her attention away from her own concerns and out to larger interests.

When Gwendolen comments "the worst fault I have to find with the world is, that it is dull", Deronda's rejoinder is designed to make her develop better feelings towards it:

'I don't admit the justification,' said Deronda. 'I think what we call the dulness of things is a disease in ourselves. Else how could any one find an intense interest in life? And many do.'

'Ah, I see! The fault I find in the world is my own fault,' said Gwendolen, smiling at him. 4

Deronda's view is not simply endorsed, of course: Gwendolen's lively rejoinder, the deftness and speed with which she picks up his implicit criticism makes his comment look a little clumsy. Nonetheless, her rejoinder also clarifies his reproof, a reproof which insists on her responsibility for her feelings about the world.

3Solomon, "Emotions and Choice", Calhoun and Solomon, 325.
4Daniel Deronda, 464; bk. 5, ch. 35.
In one of the most powerful passages in the novel, however, Eliot shows us how the world is from Gwendolen's viewpoint. As we read this passage, Deronda's talk of Gwendolen being responsible for her feelings begins to seem seriously mistaken. There is a clear cause given for Gwendolen's state of mind, and that cause is Grandcourt:

To Gwendolen, who even in the freedom of her maiden time had had very faint glimpses of any heroism or sublimity, the medium that now thrust itself everywhere before her view was this husband and her relation to him. The beings closest to us, whether in love or hate, are often virtually our interpreters of the world, and some feather-headed gentleman or lady whom in passing we regret to take as legal tender for a human being may be acting as a melancholy theory of life in the minds of those who live with them — like a piece of yellow and wavy glass that distorts form and makes colour an affliction. Their trivial sentences, their petty standards, their loveless ennui, may be making somebody's life no better than a promenade through a pantheon of ugly idols.

Gwendolen had that kind of window before her, affecting the distant equally with the near. 5 Gwendolen is not blamed here as a moral agent. This is the way the world is for her and the force of this passage goes into showing that she is virtually helpless to change it. Gwendolen is not "choosing" her emotions here, as Solomon suggests we do "all the time": the world, seen through Grandcourt, is ugly and desolate. Goldberg suggests (in his analysis of Daniel Deronda) that the "moral weight" of the novel goes into comments like those of Deronda's, when he calls on Gwendolen to take up other duties or develop better feelings. 6 Goldberg recognises that there are elements in the novel which question Deronda's viewpoint, but he feels these come out of Eliot's dramatic thinking rather than the way she thinks about these issues intellectually. 7 This is frequently true, as we saw in the earlier exchange between Gwendolen and Daniel, where the rhythm of the dialogue makes Daniel seem a little sententious. In this passage, however, we do not have the unconscious revelation of an insight through dramatic thinking (Deronda's viewpoint is not being questioned through conversation, for example): instead we have the measured voice of the narrator, telling us how the world can be for other people. This is surely intellectual or

5 Daniel Deronda, 736; bk. 7, ch. 54.


7 Goldberg, Agents and Lives, 136-137.
"discursive" thinking, in Goldberg's terms.\textsuperscript{6} The passage is a crucial one in helping us moderate Goldberg's view that George Eliot makes "it seem as if one could always choose to do good to others by choosing to have, or to develop, better feelings towards them".\textsuperscript{5} Eliot's view of responsibility for feelings is not the same as Deronda's: this passage is a vivid reminder to the reader of how inadequate Deronda's advice to Gwendolen is in the face of the problems of her life.

The question which remains, though, is why Eliot chose such an inadequate adviser for Gwendolen and whether she realised just how inadequate he was. I think we cannot escape concluding that Eliot was very attracted to the notion that we can control many of our feelings, and that we can work to overcome our selfish emotions and encourage better feelings within us. So all Deronda's preaching to Gwendolen may not have appeared as sententious to his creator as it has to most readers, for the point of view he promotes was one which appealed powerfully to George Eliot. The novelist who wrote that "The greatest benefit that we owe to the artist . . . is the extension of our sympathies"\textsuperscript{10} was apt to underplay other insights. William Myers seems a little too generous to Eliot when he writes:

Her work is thereby constituted in Necessity or Submission to process on the one hand, and choice or discernment in resolve on the other. In their own formation the novels intimately and honestly exemplify the basic dilemma which is their main concern didactically — discernment of the laws of necessity and resolution in spite of them to conduct one’s life in their light.\textsuperscript{11}

Myers's formulation is most appealing, as he describes both Eliot's conduct as a novelist and her novels themselves as exemplifying resolve in a causally determined universe. Yet when we look at how the didactic concern Myers has identified shapes itself in Daniel Deronda, we may hesitate. For there is clearly some longing by the narrator (in, for example, the narrator's odd wish that

\textsuperscript{5}Goldberg, \textit{Agents and Lives}, 145-146.

\textsuperscript{6}Goldberg, \textit{Agents and Lives}, 116.


\textsuperscript{11}Myers, 241.
Gwendolen should pledge herself to Rex and not to Grandcourt\(^{12}\) for an easier and simpler world, one in which Gwendolen could be startled out of her egoism, follow Deronda's advice and find both purpose in her life and refuge from her misery. Yet, as Goldberg has commented, it is Eliot's imaginative strengths which often challenge her morality\(^{13}\) (or her "conduct-morality", in Goldberg's terms): and Gwendolen's misery is so vividly portrayed that it is difficult to imagine her successfully struggling against it. Nor is it easy to imagine Grandcourt allowing Gwendolen to take up wider interests which might be inconsistent with her position as his wife: she has enough difficulty in gaining his permission for Mirah to give her singing lessons. In Eliot's novels, in other words, a belief in the possibility of being resolute sometimes becomes wishful thinking, an evasion of the realities of the characters' lives. Daniel Deronda's most powerful imaginative life comes, in fact, when the drama pushes against Eliot's wishful thinking about our responsibility for our feelings: when we see the overwhelming misery of Gwendolen's life with Grandcourt, and realise just how impossible it would be for her to take up any interest which might lift her out of that misery. Grandcourt's death is an evasion of this difficulty, making it easier for Eliot to show Gwendolen repenting and successfully developing better feelings. It is an evasion because it is only possible for Gwendolen to begin following Deronda's advice and thinking about broader duties once she is released from Grandcourt's stranglehold.

George Eliot's most subtle thinking on responsibility for emotions, though, is not found in Daniel Deronda. We see it most fully explored in the way she presents different varieties of love in Middlemarch. We saw earlier that the question of whether or not Celia was responsible for her emotions — her romantic feelings towards Sir James Chettam — seemed to be an inappropriate question. It is, however, a question we are invited to ask about other characters in this novel: though the novel does not provide us with a simple answer to it.

**Rosamond's love**

\(^{12}\)Daniel Deronda, 99, bk. 1, ch. 7.

\(^{13}\)Goldberg, Agents and Lives, 116.
Let us begin with an early meeting between Lydgate and Rosamond, one we glanced at in Chapter Three. In the passage below, do we have any sense of whether or not Rosamond is responsible for her feelings?

She bowed and looked at him: he of course was looking at her, and their eyes met with that peculiar meeting which is never arrived at by effort, but seems like a sudden divine clearance of haze. I think Lydgate turned a little paler than usual, but Rosamond blushed deeply and felt a certain astonishment. After that, she was really anxious to go, and did not know what sort of stupidity her uncle was talking of when she went to shake hands with him.

Yet this result, which she took to be a mutual impression, called falling in love, was just what Rosamond had contemplated beforehand. Ever since that important new arrival in Middlemarch she had woven a little future, of which something like this scene was the necessary beginning. Strangers, whether wrecked and clinging to a raft, or duly escorted and accompanied by portmanteaus, have always had a circumstantial fascination for the virgin mind, against which native merit has urged itself in vain. And a stranger was absolutely necessary to Rosamond’s social romance, which had always turned on a lover and bridegroom who was not a Middlemarcher, and who had no connections at all like her own: of late, indeed, the construction seemed to demand that he should somehow be related to a baronet. Now that she and the stranger had met, reality proved much more moving than anticipation, and Rosamond could not doubt that this was the great epoch of her life. She judged of her own symptoms as those of awakening love, and she held it more natural that Mr. Lydgate should have fallen in love at first sight of her. These things happened so often at balls, and why not by the morning light, when the complexion showed all the better for it? Rosamond, though no older than Mary, was rather used to being fallen in love with; but she, for her part, had remained indifferent and fastidiously critical towards both fresh sprig and faded bachelor. And here was Mr. Lydgate suddenly corresponding to her ideal, being altogether foreign to Middlemarch, carrying a certain air of distinction congruous with good family, and possessing connections which offered vistas of that middle-class heaven, rank; a man of talent, also, whom it would be especially delightful to enslave: in fact, a man who had touched her nature quite newly, and brought a vivid interest into her life which was better than any fancied ‘might-be’ such as she was in the habit of opposing to the actual.

Thus, in riding home, both the brother and the sister were preoccupied and inclined to be silent. Rosamond, whose basis for her structure had the usual airy slightness, was of remarkably detailed and realistic imagination when the foundation had been once presupposed; and before they had ridden a mile she was far on in the costume and introductions of her wedded life, having determined on her house in Middlemarch, and foreseen the visits she would pay to her husband’s high-bred relatives at a distance, whose finished manners she could appropriate as thoroughly as she had done her school accomplishments, preparing herself thus for vaguer elevations which might
ultimately come. There was nothing financial, still less sordid, in her previsions: she cared about what were considered refinements, and not about the money that was to pay for them.\textsuperscript{14}

The way in which Rosamond’s emotions are presented is subtle. It is clear that, despite her pre-planning, not all her actions, nor all her feelings are controlled. Her blush embarrasses her, and was something she had not anticipated. It indicates that her feelings, too, may not have been exactly what she expected, despite her daydreaming beforehand. Felicia Bonaparte sees Rosamond as a character with little feeling, commenting that although Rosamond "likes Lydgate well enough, she has long before made her decision to marry a prominent stranger".\textsuperscript{15} What we see in the passage above is more complex than this. Rosamond does not merely like Lydgate well enough to tolerate him as a potential marriage partner: she is momentarily thrown off balance by her embarrassingly strong reaction to him. She finds that the real meeting with Lydgate is "much more moving than anticipation". Their eyes meet "with that peculiar meeting which is never arrived at by effort, but seems like a sudden divine clearance of haze" (my italics). The narrator insists that this mutual gaze could not have been arrived at deliberately. We are alerted to the spontaneous nature of these feelings: they have not been willed into existence. We also notice other suggestions about these feelings: their effect "seems like a divine clearance of the haze", but this may be an illusion. The way that Rosamond is shown ensures we cannot draw a simple dichotomy between what is natural and artificial in feelings, in the way Lawrence posited in his "Apropos of Lady Chatterley's Lover".

The social basis for Rosamond's feelings is made very clear. In judging her feelings to be those of "awakening love", she is clearly using socially approved categories for her feelings, in just the way Lawrence condemns. The narrator draws attention to the way Rosamond's feelings are socially constructed, noting in a later passage that Rosamond had "a great sense of being a romantic heroine, and playing the part prettily".\textsuperscript{16} Rosamond's idea of what a romantic heroine is,

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Middlemarch}, 145-146; bk. 1, ch. 12.


\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Middlemarch}, 331; bk. 3, ch. 31.
and what such a heroine should feel, is clearly derived from social conventions. However, society has not determined her emotions, eliminating any kind of agency on Rosamond's part. The element of choice and responsibility on Rosamond's part is suggested by the way she plays her part "prettily", enjoying acting this role. Gillian Beer comments that "Rosamond Vincy is a woman entrapped so completely that she is hardly aware of it, so smoothly does her compliance fit." Yet can we really claim, as Beer does, that Rosamond is trapped by her social conditions, or that she is merely complying with them? Is there not an element of implacable choice in the way Rosamond both behaves (in keeping with her sinister comment "I never give up anything I choose to do") and fosters her feelings?

The feeling of romantic love may always be at least partly a social construct, to use Harré's term, but through Rosamond, George Eliot exposes the shallower, more self-serving and more artificial varieties of this emotion. Rosamond's romantic feelings about Lydgate are clearly connected with her social ambitions: she is predisposed to fall in love with Lydgate, and certain that she could have no such feeling for anyone who was not a gentleman. She rigidly limits the romantic possibilities open to her, requiring someone who is "not a Middlemarcher", and begins to dream of a newcomer who is related to a baronet. The touch of absurdity in the last wish, though, (so evidently stemming from Lydgate's arrival) alleviates the seriousness of Rosamond's faults, and allows us to see their humorous side. The narrator's insistence that a stranger is "absolutely necessary" to Rosamond's romance makes her seem rigid, but also suggests she may not be in full control of her feelings.

At the end of the passage we see that Rosamond is not just a passive victim of feelings: she strengthens her feelings for Lydgate through daydreams. We are not allowed to separate ourselves completely from Rosamond here, for Rosamond's dreams have, as the narrator carefully points out "the usual airy slightness" (my italics). Interestingly, this moment of fellow-feeling is undercut by the vocabulary used about Rosamond's daydreams. Both Rosamond and

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17 Beer, George Eliot, 169.
18 Middlemarch, 385; bk. 4, ch. 36.
Dorothea spin daydreams about their future marriages, but in Dorothea's case the imagery used is that of natural growth, plants and flowers:

If it had really occurred to Mr Casaubon to think of Miss Brooke as a suitable wife for him, the reasons that might induce her to accept him were already planted in her mind, and by the evening of the next day the reasons had budded and bloomed.19

In Rosamond's case, the imagery is that of building, as George Eliot refers to her "detailed and realistic" imagination and the "foundation" which has been laid for her "structure". The use of building imagery makes Rosamond's daydreams seem more materialistic, more deliberate and less pleasant than Dorothea's: inclining the reader to judge Rosamond more severely. The actual content of Rosamond's daydreams, with the emphasis on wealth and social position, of course reinforces this reaction.

It is thus not merely the socially constructed nature of Rosamond's feelings which makes us unsympathetic to them, or which casts doubt on their seriousness. We react to characters in Middlemarch in widely varying ways, having far more sympathy for Mary's feelings for Fred than for Rosamond's feelings for Lydgate. As Mary Doyle points out, in the passage above, it is the narrator's diction here which acts as a critique of Rosamond's views.20 Rosamond's romance, for instance, is diminished by being referred to as a "social romance", her wish that any lover should be related to a baronet is a "demand" and she is revealed as wanting to "enslave" Lydgate.

In the passage below, the narrator seems to be making a plea for the naturalness of Rosamond's feelings — but those feelings are all presented in highly unpleasant imagery:

If you think it incredible that to imagine Lydgate as a man of family could cause thrills of satisfaction which had anything to do with the sense that she was in love with him, I will ask you to use your power of comparison a little more effectively, and consider whether red cloth and epaulets have never had an influence of that sort. Our passions do not live apart in locked chambers, but,

19Middlemarch, 46; bk. 1, ch. 3.

dressed in their small wardrobe of notions, bring their provisions to a common table and mess together, feeding out of the common store according to their appetite.

Rosamond, in fact, was entirely occupied not exactly with Tertius Lydgate as he was in himself, but with his relation to her; and it was excusable in a girl who was accustomed to hear that all young men might, could, would be, or actually were in love with her, to believe at once that Lydgate could be no exception.  

What seems to be a plea to the reader to think of Rosamond as being influenced by Lydgate’s social position only in the way many other girls might be — to think about the romantic influence a soldier’s uniform might have — becomes less charitable as the narrator continues. The vocabulary chosen is one which emphasises physicality and coarseness: “mess together”, “feeding”, “appetite”. The feelings which Rosamond has are identified as “thrills of satisfaction”. It is these thrills which give Rosamond “the sense she was in love” but this belief is not endorsed by the narrator. Instead, the narrator stresses how little Rosamond is concerned with Lydgate himself.

The narrator’s choice of language and similes is used to throw doubt on the genuineness of Rosamond’s love for Lydgate:

Rosamond became very unhappy. The uneasiness first stirred by her aunt’s questions grew and grew till at the end of ten days that she had not seen Lydgate, it grew into terror at the blank that might possibly come — into foreboding of that ready, fatal sponge which so cheaply wipes out the hopes of mortals. The world would have a new dreariness for her, as a wilderness that a magician’s spells had turned for a little while into a garden. She felt that she was beginning to know the pang of disappointed love, and that no other man could be the occasion of such delightful aerial building as she had been enjoying for the past six months. Poor Rosamond lost her appetite and felt as forlorn as Ariadne — as a charming stage Ariadne left behind with all her boxes full of costumes and no hope of a coach.

Some of Rosamond’s emotions here are given force and legitimacy: her unhappiness is presented simply and forcefully. Yet although we may not doubt Rosamond’s unhappiness or her feeling of terror, we do not believe that she is deeply in love. The narrator sows doubts subtly, refusing to

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21 *Middlemarch*, 196; bk. 2, ch. 16.

22 *Middlemarch*, 333-334; bk. 3, ch. 31.
back up Rosamond’s belief that she is beginning to know the pangs of disappointed love. Instead it is deftly suggested that Lydgate has merely been "the occasion" for some enjoyable daydreaming. The artificiality of Rosamond’s state and an element of self-dramatising pity in it is further emphasised by the comparison of her to a "stage Ariadne".

The narrator describes Rosamond’s round of thoughts over Lydgate’s absence as "alarmed conjecture and disappointment" and notes it is easy for this state to occur "in the elegant leisure of a young lady's mind". The narrator is reminding us of Rosamond’s idleness, her lack of occupation or vocation. This lack, Kathleen Blake feels, is emphasised by the narrator to make us sympathise with Rosamond. Blake’s interpretation, though, overlooks the satirical note in the phrase "elegant leisure", which makes this view of Rosamond less than sympathetic. Whether or not Rosamond’s feelings for Lydgate should be called love is left open at this stage, the narrator merely drawing our attention to the easy label "love" which we use for "many wonderful mixtures" of emotion.

A little later in the narrative, the mixture of artifice and naturalness in Rosamond’s feelings is suggested:

Lydgate instantaneously stooped to pick up the chain. When he rose he was very near to a lovely little face set on a fair long neck which he had been used to see turning about under the most perfect management of self-contented grace. But as he raised his eyes now he saw a certain helpless quivering which touched him quite newly, and made him look at Rosamond with a questioning flash. At this moment she was as natural as she had ever been when she was five years old: she felt that her tears had risen, and it was no use to try to do anything else than let them stay like water on a blue flower or let them fall over her cheeks, even as they would.

That moment of naturalness was the crystallizing feather-touch: it shook flirtation into love. There is a complex mixture here of the natural and the artificial; between what is involuntarily revealed by Rosamond, and what is half-consciously utilised by her. So she feels her tears have

23 *Middlemarch*, 334; bk. 3, ch. 31.
24 Kathleen Blake, "*Middlemarch* and the Woman Question" *George Eliot’s Middlemarch*, Bloom, 62.
25 *Middlemarch*, 335; bk. 3, ch. 31.
risen (a response over which she seems to have little control) but she then lets them stay, with some awareness of the effect they are likely to have on Lydgate. This is not plotting (at any rate it is not something which is planned in advance) but it is also not quite innocent. There are other routes Rosamond could have taken: she could have tried to suppress all signs of emotion. She takes instead the route which is to her advantage. Yet to say this, once again, is to judge Rosamond too harshly and too crudely — for much of the subtlety and interest of this passage comes from our sense that Rosamond is vulnerable, not fully in control, that she cannot help crying. That sense of helplessness (to which Lydgate responds so ardently) is, however, qualified by the suggestion that Rosamond has some awareness of the effect she has.

The narrator's diction, though, does not always contain this suggestion of criticism. In a later passage, we meet an image of young love-making which suggests its beauty and its delicacy:

Young love-making — that gossamer web! Even the points it clings to — the things whence its subtle interlacings are swung — are scarcely perceptible; momentary touches of fingertips, meetings of rays from blue and dark orbs, unfinished phrases, lightest changes of cheek and lip, faintest tremors. The web itself is made of spontaneous beliefs and indefinable joys, yearnings of one life towards another, visions of completeness, indefinite trust. And Lydgate fell to spinning that web from his inward self with wonderful rapidity, in spite of experience supposed to be finished off with the drama of Laure — in spite too of medicine and biology, for the inspection of macerated muscle or of eyes presented in a dish (like Santa Lucia's), and other incidents of scientific inquiry, are observed to be less incompatible with poetic love than a native dulness or a lively addiction to the lowest prose. As for Rosamond, she was in the water-lily's expanding wonderment at its own fuller life, and she too was spinning industriously at the mutual web. All this went on in the corner of the drawing-room where the piano stood, and subtle as it was, the light made it a sort of rainbow visible to many observers besides Mr. Farebrother. The certainty that Miss Vincy and Mr. Lydgate were engaged became general in Middlemarch without the aid of formal announcement.26

The images in this passage, I have suggested, are chosen for their beauty and delicacy. They are designed to create sympathy for "young love-making". The use of this universalising phrase, a phrase which connects Rosamond's feelings to those of other young lovers, is just one of many strategies used in this passage to ensure some sympathy for Rosamond's feelings. It is

26*Middlemarch*, 380; bk. 4, ch. 36.
worthwhile, however, considering a decidedly unsympathetic reader's response here. Robert Liddell comments that in *Middlemarch* "The web of love-making or mutual attraction is more precisely called a spider's web." He regards this as a "hideous phrase" and calls the passage quoted above "some of the most tasteless writing in the book". Liddell does not make it clear why the image of a spider’s web should be regarded as "hideous". His criticism presumably comes from a viewpoint which associates spider webs with darkness, horror and entrapment. There are, however, other associations with spider webs, and it is these which George Eliot primarily is using here (though the image is ambiguous, and perhaps also suggests mutual entrapment). The words "gossamer" and "rainbow" suggest that Rosamond's and Lydgate's love has a fragile beauty; the phrase "the points it clings to" suggests again fragility and perhaps tenderness. This is a web made in sunlight: it is made up of "rays" and "faintest tremors"; it casts a light which makes it beautiful and visible. The language used here invests Lydgate's and Rosamond's love with a certain value. Their love may be based on illusions, but it also is beautiful. And the feelings which make up their love are described in language which makes us inclined to regard those feelings with tenderness. They include "spontaneous beliefs and indefinable joys, yearnings of one life towards another, visions of completeness, indefinite trust".

This passage occurs late in the progress of Rosamond and Lydgate's courtship, and acts as a balance to less sympathetic presentations of Rosamond's feelings. This kind of movement within the novel means that feelings are seen from different viewpoints, rather than simply judged. Here, the images swing our sympathies towards Rosamond and Lydgate.

The passage works to evoke sympathy for both Rosamond and Lydgate, but the narrator encourages more sympathy for Lydgate than for Rosamond. Lydgate's overconfidence in his worldly experience is presented in a tone of affectionate irony: "Lydgate fell to spinning that web from his inward self with wonderful rapidity, in spite of experience supposed to be finished off with the drama of Laure". The portrayal of Rosamond lacks this tone of affection. She is ambivalently compared to a water-lily: "As for Rosamond, she was in the water-lily's expanding wonderment at

its own fuller life”. Rosamond is frequently associated with plants, and Barbara Hardy has traced some of the development of this imagery, to the point where Rosamond becomes associated with the pretty flowers which cover a swamp and finally with the basil plant which flourishes on a murdered man’s brains. The water-lily’s “expanding life” reminds us of the beauty of expanding petals — but the idea of a plant being in a state of “wonderment” seems improbable. It is possible, therefore, to reverse the ostensible suggestion of this image and associate Rosamond with forms of lower, unthinking life. The association with the water-lily, however, also links Rosamond’s feelings to the natural world, and makes us less inclined to blame her, or hold her responsible for them. Yet the question of responsibility is not dismissed: the picture of Rosamond spinning at the web stresses her active role in creating these feelings. The image of spinning the web, which is used of both Rosamond and Lydgate, shows the precision in George Eliot’s thinking about how their love has been created and developed. The spinning image stresses both their role in acting to strengthen this love, and its naturalness. Eliot’s images are often ambivalent. Here, the images of Rosamond both suggest and deny the possibility that she is responsible for her feelings.

The ambivalent images used of feelings, and the shifts between sympathetic and ironic presentations of feelings encourage the reader to try to understand the feelings of George Eliot’s characters rather than simply judging them. The passage below combines appealing images (which make us sympathise with Rosamond and Lydgate) with a distancing irony, as the mistaken nature of their thinking is exposed:

He touched her ear and a little bit of neck under it with his lips, and they sat quite still for many minutes which flowed by them like a small gurgling brook with the kisses of the sun upon it. Rosamond thought that no one could be more in love than she was; and Lydgate thought that after all his wild mistakes and absurd credulity, he had found perfect womanhood — felt as if already breathed upon by exquisite wedded affection such as would be bestowed by an accomplished creature who venerated his high musings and momentous labours and would never interfere with them; who would create order in the home and accounts with still magic, yet keep her fingers ready to touch the lute and transform life into romance at any moment; who was instructed to the true womanly limit and not a hair’s-breadth beyond — docile, therefore, and ready to carry out behests.

28Hardy, The Novels of George Eliot, 220.
which came from beyond that limit. It was plainer now than ever that his notion of remaining much longer a bachelor had been a mistake: marriage would not be an obstruction but a furtherance. 29

Again, some sympathy for Rosamond's and Lydgate's feelings is evoked here, by associating their love with natural beauty. The image of the brook "with the kisses of the sun upon it" evokes the dreamy sensuality of their feelings, and the way this moment seems to take them out of ordinary time. But irony is still present, and Rosamond's very certainty here raises doubts for us: "Rosamond thought that no one could be more in love than she was". The doubtfullness of this is underlined by parallelling of her thoughts with Lydgate's clearly mistaken ones, as he thinks that he has found "perfect womanhood". Both Lydgate and Rosamond are mistaken (as many critics have pointed out, perception and the problems associated with it is one of the most important themes in Middlemarch), 30 and their illusions are reinforced for us as readers by being shown together, allowing the development of strong narratorial irony. But the nature of their mistakes is different.

Lydgate is mistaken about Rosamond's character. The narrator stresses the deceptive nature of Rosamond's appearance; the way she is the perfect trap for "doomed man of that date"; 31 the way that everyone (except, significantly, her brother Fred) judges her to be "a rare compound of beauty, cleverness and amiability"; 32 the way that "her statements . . . were among her elegant accomplishments, intended to please" 33 and the way that "she even acted her own character, and so well, she did not know it to be precisely her own". 34 It is the last point which links Rosamond's own illusions to Lydgate's. In acting her own character, she is, like the Princess Halm-Eberstein in Daniel Deronda, disassociated from her own feelings. This makes it easier for

29 Middlemarch, 386-387; bk. 4, ch. 36.


31 Middlemarch, 301; bk. 3, ch. 27.

32 Middlemarch, 301; bk. 3, ch. 27.

33 Middlemarch, 301; bk. 3, ch. 27.

34 Middlemarch, 144; bk. 1, ch. 12.
her to be mistaken about them, or to decide that they are of a nature which fits the role she intends to play. She envisages a “social romance”, which her symptoms seem to match.

After Rosamond and Lydgate are married, we see a difference in the way they take responsibility for their changing feelings. Lydgate takes responsibility for his feelings and tries to hold on to his affection for Rosamond. He painfully gives up his idealised image of Rosamond — but he tries to retain both her love for him and, even more earnestly, his love for her. The narrator speaks of the “intense desire” Lydgate has that he should continue to feel love for Rosamond and notes that his “inward effort” goes towards excusing Rosamond, and controlling any angry feelings. Rosamond, in contrast, does not respond to Lydgate’s overtures to preserve affection in their marriage: except to note with satisfaction that she retains power over him. She quickly becomes disenchanted with Lydgate and thinks she would have been happier with someone else. But as the narrator explicitly tells us, she is mistaken: it is the conditions of marriage which make her dissatisfied. Although “Each lived in a world of which the other knew nothing”, the problem is not just lack of knowledge of each other. In Rosamond’s case, it includes over-confidence in the stability of her feelings, and an inflexibility about any feeling which does not fit with other social desires:

“I cannot give up my only prospect of happiness, papa. Mr. Lydgate is a gentleman. I could never love any one who was not a perfect gentleman. You would not like me to go into a consumption, as Arabella Hawley did. And you know that I never change my mind.”

Rosamond is not simply mistaken in saying that she “could never love anyone who was not a complete gentleman.” We are not invited, by this statement, to think of Rosamond falling in love with someone who was not a gentleman. Rather, we can accept her statement as accurate and see what it reveals: not just snobbery, but a certain limitation and rigidity, a mind which cannot

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35 *Middlemarch*, 702; bk. 7, ch. 64.
36 *Middlemarch*, 810; bk. 8, ch. 75.
37 *Middlemarch*, 195; bk. 2, ch. 16.
38 *Middlemarch*, 388; bk. 4, ch. 36.
move outside certain limits. It is Rosamond's rigidity, above all, which makes her refuse to take any responsibility for her feelings (even though she is at least partly responsible for their existence). She is not willing, as Lydgate is, to try to cultivate affection in her marriage. She does not try to preserve her love for Lydgate, as we will see Mary preserving her love for Fred; nor does she try to cultivate tenderness, as we will see Dorothea trying to do. Although Rosamond's feelings are occasionally presented sympathetically, sometimes in association with natural imagery or in ways which suggest they are unwilled, their artificial, self-serving nature is usually stressed. The character who tends to rigidly limit her feelings, or cultivate only those feelings which are to her advantage, is the character who refuses to take any responsibility for them.

Shaping love and hatred: the role of thought

The aptly named Will Ladislaw is used to suggest the very strong role of the will in shaping feelings, by either encouraging or dismissing trains of thought.

Among the feelings over which Will has some control is his love for Dorothea. We can see clearly, in many different passages in the book, the way he shapes this feeling: idealising it, shaping it to fit his ideal of courtly love.39

Does he have any control over its creation? Did he bring it into existence, or did it spring into independent life? The passage where we see the beginning of Will's attraction to Dorothea contains some interesting ambiguities:

He was conscious of being irritated by ridiculously small causes, which were half of his own creation. Why was he making any fuss about Mrs Casaubon? And yet he felt as if something had happened to him with regard to her. There are characters which are continually creating collisions and nodes for themselves in dramas which nobody is prepared to act with them. Their susceptibilities will clash against objects that remain innocently quiet.40

39Barbara Hardy notes that the analysis (in Chapter 47) of Ladislaw's love for Dorothea raises interesting questions about how far one can choose or control feelings. Hardy, "Middlemarch and the passions", Adam, 3-14.

40Middlemarch, 222-223; bk. 2, ch. 19.
We switch, in this passage, between Will's sense of events and the narrator's. Will feels himself as partly passive, partly active. He is irritated by what seem to be external causes — an interpretation which would emphasise his passivity — but he then notes (in an observation which fits neatly with George Eliot's own views on free will and determinism) that half these causes are "his own creation". The narrator's comments then offer an interpretation which both suggests and denies Will's responsibility for his feelings: "There are characters which are continually creating collisions and nodes for themselves in dramas which nobody is prepared to act with them." Will's feeling comes from his own nature, we are told, and we are left to wonder whether he could have changed that nature or not. There is no strong suggestion here of responsibility, despite Will's irritation at himself, because there is nothing in the passage which suggests the deliberate development of a feeling. Such development of feelings, however, becomes more and more prominent as Will's relationship with Dorothea progresses. It is in this sense we have that Will could alter his feelings, and that he deliberately develops them, that the "adulterous energies" of the story are suggested.

Will deliberately cultivates his feelings for Dorothea most obviously later in their relationship, as he images all his feelings for her in terms which will fit the conventions of courtly love. But his cultivation of particular feelings, a cultivation achieved through decisions, selection of thoughts, and behaviour which is likely to strengthen his feelings, begins during his first interview with Dorothea in Rome:

She was not coldly clever and indirectly satirical, but adorably simple and full of feeling. She was an angel beguiled. It would be a unique delight to wait and watch for the melodious fragments in which

41 Parker, *Ethics, Theory and the Novel*, 95. Parker, Barbara Hardy, W. J. Harvey and various other critics, have suggested that the question of adultery in *Middlemarch* is evaded; or at least that Eliot is only "restrictedly truthful" (Hardy, *Appropriate Form*, 106; Rpt. in Hardy, *Particularities*, 16; see also Harvey, 197) in her treatment of it.

42 Jeanie Thomas has noted the way Will transforms "his simple musings into a full-fledged medieval romance". (Jeanie Thomas, *Reading Middlemarch: Reclaiming the Middle Distance*, Nineteenth Century Studies Series (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988) 33.)
her heart and soul came forth so directly and ingenuously. The Æolian harp again came into his mind.  

We see Will strengthening his feelings through a characteristic pattern of thought and behaviour: a pattern which does not necessarily imply deliberate planning, but which does imply that he could have made other choices. He makes sudden judgements, decides that Dorothea has certain characteristics, and uses dramatic images to strengthen his feelings: so Dorothea moves from being "adorably simple" to being "an angel beguiled", and thus in need of rescue. The language Will uses strengthens his feelings: he imagines Dorothea as an angel because he is inclined to adore her, but what the narrator calls Will's "passionate prodigality of statement" in turn increases his adoration.

Not all Will's feelings are deliberately cultivated. The Æolian harp comes into his mind without his volition, suggesting a sense in which thoughts can appear (from the thinker's perspective) from nowhere. However, there is enough stress on Will's volitional role in shaping his feelings to make us feel uneasy and to strengthen our sense of what Jeanie Thomas calls the "disturbing doubleness" which is evident in his interviews with Dorothea.

Will's feelings towards Casaubon are shown in ways which stress Will's responsibility for them, and the role that deliberate thought plays in them. We can see this in his silent addition to the promise he gives Dorothea not to speak unkindly of Casaubon:

If he never said a cutting word about Mr Casaubon again and left off receiving favours from him, it would clearly be permissible to hate him the more. The poet must know how to hate, says Goethe; and Will was at least ready with that accomplishment.

It would be overstating, perhaps, to say that Will is actually planning to hate Mr Casaubon here: but he certainly expects to hate him, and is doing nothing to discourage that feeling. Instead, we

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43 Middlemarch, 241; bk. 2, ch. 21.
44 Middlemarch, 396; bk. 4, ch. 37.
45 Thomas, 30.
46 Middlemarch, 257; bk. 3, ch. 27.
see a move to self-justification: the thought that if he is no longer beholden to Casaubon financially, his feelings of hatred will be more "permissible". The word "permissible" reveals Will's awareness that he is doing something for which he could be blamed. This guilty awareness on Will's part suggests that he is responsible for his feelings of hatred: that he is deliberately encouraging them. Hatred is, if not an accomplishment, at least partly an activity.

George Eliot suggests Will's responsibility for his feelings by showing how he deliberately dwells on thoughts which will exacerbate those feelings. Will's dislike of Casaubon is not just a spontaneous, but a cultivated response:

Will Ladislaw on his side felt that his dislike was flourishing at the expense of his gratitude, and spent much inward discourse in justifying the dislike. Casaubon hated him — he knew that very well; on his first entrance he could discern a bitterness in the mouth and a venom in the glance which would almost justify declaring war in spite of past benefits. He was much obliged to Casaubon in the past, but really the act of marrying this wife was a set-off against the obligation. It was a question whether gratitude which refers to what is done for one's self ought not to give way to indignation at what is done against another. And Casaubon had done a wrong to Dorothea in marrying her. A man was bound to know himself better than that, and if he chose to grow grey crunching bones in a cavern, he had no business to be luring a girl into his companionship. 'It is the most horrible of virgin sacrifices,' said Will; and he painted to himself what were Dorothea's inward sorrows as if he had been writing a choric wail.47

If we are inclined to defend Will's dislike of Casaubon as natural (as either spontaneous or inevitable), this passage must give us pause. Will is engaging in a form of daydreaming: constructing precisely the kind of fantasy which is most likely to aggravate his dislike of Casaubon, and increase his adoration of Dorothea. He is not attempting to see beyond the candle-flame of his egoism: not attempting any kind of imaginative identification with Casaubon (an action which would necessarily modify his feelings), but instead indulging himself with selecting images which help him to justify his dislike. He declares — with a suspiciously absolute confidence — that he knows Casaubon's precise feelings for him: "Casaubon hated him — he knew that very well". Will's summing up of Casaubon's feelings towards him crudely simplifies the analysis of

47Middlemarch, 395-396; bk. 4, ch. 37.
Casaubon's feelings by the narrator which precedes this passage, an analysis where we are drawn into companionship with Casaubon, as the narrator links our own feelings to Casaubon's:

That is the way with us when we have any uneasy jealousy in our disposition: if our talents are chiefly of the burrowing kind, our honey-sipping cousin (whom we have grave reasons for objecting to) is likely to have a secret contempt for us, and any one who admires him passes an oblique criticism on ourselves. Having the scruples of rectitude in our souls, we are above the meanness of injuring him — rather we meet all his claims on us by active benefits; and the drawing of cheques for him, being a superiority which he must recognize, gives our bitterness a milder infusion.48

The narrator's exposure of Casaubon's feelings is complete and precise. Casaubon's jealousy is pinpointed as "uneasy"; a consciousness of superiority mitigates the bitterness he might otherwise feel. But it is not only Casaubon's feelings which are being exposed: the reader is included through the word "we". It is we who may have this kind of uneasy jealousy, it is our "grave reasons" which are being exposed here as being less disinterested than we had supposed. The suggestion that we may well share Casaubon's faults prevents us from complacently separating ourselves from him and moves us instead towards imaginative understanding of him. A touch of humour is added by the comically over-precise, elevated language — "Having the scruples of rectitude in our souls" — and through wry insights into human psychology (as we see complacency giving bitterness "a milder infusion"). The humour acts as a critique but allays our impulse to condemn. In contrast, Will's simple description of Casaubon's feelings separates and opposes him as a hating and hateful Other, not someone we can understand.

Will looks for behaviour which will justify his dislike, actively interpreting Casaubon's expression as a sign of malice: "on his first entrance he could discern a bitterness in the mouth and a venom in the glance which would almost justify declaring war in spite of past benefits". Given the stress throughout Middlemarch on the difficulties of correctly perceiving other people, we should be wary of accepting Will's interpretation. Will argues himself into dislike of Casaubon minimising past benefits, and dwelling on Casaubon's faults: "He was much obliged to Casaubon in the past, but really the act of marrying this wife was a set-off against the obligation." Will's

48Middlemarch, 395; bk. 4, ch. 37.
thoughts are set out for us as though they were arguments in a debate, but it is himself he is trying to convince. He needs to overcome his residual feelings of gratitude by cultivating his indignation. Overcoming gratitude is something he presents to himself as an action: it "ought" to give way to indignation. The use of the word "ought" implies that Will thinks this change of feeling lies within his realm of responsibilities. That he should need so much "inward discourse" to do so is a sign that he could have moved his feelings in another direction. Aristotle spoke of feelings as dispositions, which could be trained in particular directions. W. J. Dent, in his analysis of the virtues, has taken an Aristotelian position, speaking of the way we can cultivate the right feeling. Here we see Will training his feelings in one very decided direction, using exaggerated images of Dorothea's marriage to justify his dislike of what he has seen. The narrator's description of Will's thoughts stresses the parallel with other forms of deliberate artistry: "he painted to himself what were Dorothea's inward sorrows as if he had been writing a choric wail" (my italics). Behaviour and feeling intertwine, in a way which stresses Will's responsibility for his feelings. A writer of a choric wail aims to create a lachrymose response. Will is also bent on creating an affective response, but it is a response within himself rather than in an audience. Will dwells on an imaginary picture of the Casaubon marriage which both strengthens his sympathetic indignation on Dorothea's behalf and helps to justify (to himself) that indignation.

Yet what points to Will's culpability as an agent — the way he shapes his feelings — is exactly what may charm us about him as an individual. The two possible views, rather than producing a strain in the text, are united through the voice of the narrator. It is the humorous presentation of Will's feelings by the narrator which makes us aware both of the way he exaggerates them and the charm in his doing so. We are made aware that Will exaggerates his feelings, but in seeing this we are seeing something which is just part of Will: a tendency to dramatise himself and others which may encourage falsity, but which is also enlivening.

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49 Dent, 7-34.
Will shows an occasional guilty awareness of the way he shapes his feelings — and this guilt has its own charm. In the passage below, he reconstructs past events as a way of modifying his feelings, and rejecting any possible feeling of gratitude:

'Mr Casaubon always expressly recognized it as his duty to take care of us because of the harsh injustice which had been shown to his mother's sister. But now I am telling you what is not new to you.'

In his inmost soul Will was conscious of wishing to tell Dorothea what was rather new even in his own construction of things — namely, that Mr Casaubon had never done more than pay a debt towards him. Will was much too good a fellow to be easy under the sense of being ungrateful. And when gratitude has become a matter of reasoning there are many ways of escaping from its bonds.  

The way we tell stories about events influences our interpretation of them. Will, however, is a somewhat awkward and naive storyteller. He is conscious here of trying to tell Dorothea something which is "rather new", and of trying, by this means to affect Dorothea's feelings as well as his own. By dwelling on the injustice done to his grandmother, Will can minimise any sense of Casaubon's generosity towards him: not merely in Dorothea's mind, but also in his own. At this stage, Will is aware of the newness of this interpretation, but we sense that it will soon seem the natural way of interpreting these events. The reconstruction, as the narrator's comments inform us, has already been successful. Will has so far modified his feelings that gratitude has "become a matter of reasoning", not feeling. Will is slipping away from any sense of being ungrateful, because the narrator ironically informs us, he is "much too good a fellow" to feel comfortable in this position. Will's culpability here is clear, although it is lightly presented.

Will's culpability is used to set up a dramatic and comic contrast with Dorothea. This contrast is sometimes insufficiently stressed, and several critics have commented on the unrealistic purity of Will's relationship with Dorothea. Quentin Anderson declares it to be "full of high-flown nonsense".  

Barbara Hardy, more moderately, calls it "only restrictedly truthful".  

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50 Middlemarch, 401; bk. 4, ch. 37.  
51 Quentin Anderson, "George Eliot in Middlemarch", Creeger, 159.  
52 Hardy, Appropriate Form, 106. Rpt. in Hardy, Particularities, 16.
Brian Crick stresses the comparison between the lovers and children and sees this as a sign of Eliot's inability to depict mature passion.\textsuperscript{53} Jeanie Thomas, however, has suggested that Will is meant to be an unsatisfactory hero.\textsuperscript{54} Thomas's comments stress the ironic way in which Will's and Dorothea's romance is often treated. If we consider the way in which Will attempts to shape Dorothea's feelings in a direction which suits his purposes, we will notice that George Eliot is interested in revealing the egoistic demands of Will's romantic love and that she is not solely stressing the purity of her lovers' feelings.

Indeed, Dorothea's naivety or purity of thought needs to be considered as a foil to Will's impatient demands. The narrator notes that Dorothea did not know it was Love she was sobbing farewell to, and Hardy responds: "The appropriate comment seems to be that at this point in the story she should have known".\textsuperscript{55} In insisting on Dorothea's naivety, however, George Eliot was not simply trying to idealise her heroine: she was also trying to leave as much room as possible to show the selfish, possessive touches in Will's romantic love. If Will had really been contented to worship Dorothea from afar, we cannot imagine him having the disruptive effect he does on the Casaubon marriage. He has this effect because he is not contented with pure worship — he must have some form of recognition from Dorothea. It is easy to essentialise here, and to say that this wish for recognition is common to all forms of romantic love. But it is also part of Will's nature, the self-dramatising quality we noted earlier.

Will's wish for recognition develops almost immediately:

All Will's hope and contrivance were now concentrated on seeing Dorothea when she was alone. He only wanted her to take more emphatic notice of him; he only wanted to be something more special in her remembrance than he could yet believe himself likely to be. He was rather impatient under that open ardent good-will, which he saw was her usual state of feeling. The remote worship of a woman throned out of their reach plays a great part in men's lives, but in most cases the worshipper longs for some queenly recognition, some approving sign by which his soul's sovereign may cheer him without

\textsuperscript{53}Crick, 164.

\textsuperscript{54}Thomas, 27.

\textsuperscript{55}Hardy, \textit{Appropriate Form}, 126. Rpt. in Hardy, \textit{Particularities}, 30.
descending from her high place. That was precisely what Will wanted. But there were plenty of contradictions in his imaginative demands. It was beautiful to see how Dorothea’s eyes turned with wifely anxiety and beseeching to Mr. Casaubon: she would have lost some of her halo if she had been without that dutiful preoccupation, and yet at the next moment the husband’s sandy absorption of such nectar was too intolerable; and Will’s longing to say damaging things about him was perhaps not the less tormenting because he felt the strongest reasons for restraining it.  

At an earlier meeting, Will imagined the delight which would come from sitting and listening to fragments from Dorothea’s soul. Her presence would have satisfied him (though, we ought to note, this wish for proximity is already more possessive than simple delight in another’s existence). Now her presence is no longer sufficient (except in one of Will’s rare “perfect” moments): she must also value his presence. David Parker comments that Will’s love for Dorothea “is constantly being blurred... into a pure recognition of Dorothea’s pure adorableness, a kind of giving credit where it is due”. What we see in this passage, however, is not pure recognition or adoration. Pure adoration would not include a wish for some “queenly recognition”: the adorer would be content to simply adore, without any wish for contact or involvement with the adored object. If Will was just “giving credit where it is due”, he would be contented to think admiringly of Dorothea, rather than restlessly wishing for her to recognise him.

This wish for recognition is treated with humour in one of Eliot’s most successful scenes, where Dorothea’s unawareness of Will’s love, with its contradictory mixture of egoistic demands and idealistic yearnings, is used to comic effect:

‘Still, you don’t like me; I have made myself an unpleasant thought to you.’

‘Not at all,’ said Dorothea, with the most open kindness. ‘I like you very much.’

Will was not quite contented, thinking that he would apparently have been of more importance if he had been disliked. He said nothing, but looked dull, not to say sulky.

56 Middlemarch, 250; bk. 2, ch. 22.
57 Middlemarch, 241; bk. 2, ch. 21.
58 Middlemarch, 398; bk. 4, ch. 37.
59 Parker, Ethics, Theory and the Novel, 95.
60 Middlemarch, 255; bk. 2, ch. 22.
Will is reduced from the glamorous role of romantic hero to the part of a dull and sulky boy, but the humour here makes this a matter of amusement, rather than judgement. Dorothea's lack of guile is turned to comic effect, as she says "with the most open kindness" (and with none of the personal emphasis which Will would like to hear) that she likes him very much. We can see the amusing contrast in the way these two characters view their relationship a little later in this same scene when Dorothea responds to Will's fervent wish that he could serve her by assuring him "cordially" that this chance will come. Will is trying to declare what he feels for Dorothea personally — though, hampered by his wish that she should remain pure in thought and feeling, he does not dare to be too direct. But Dorothea's instant, unembarrassed and unselfconscious response shows that she does not interpret his words personally. Dorothea's ignorance of Will's feelings leaves her free to offer him unembarrassed reassurance. As Will notes impatiently, open, ardent goodwill is her normal state of feeling towards everyone, and she believes the same feelings lie behind his wish. She therefore gives him the advice which is appropriate to all well-wishers: there will be an opportunity to be of service. But it is not, of course, this kind of generous, impersonal assurance which Will is seeking. His declaration does not achieve its aim: Dorothea does not notice his exclusive interest in her. But we should notice that on another level Will's aim is met, for, as the narrator points out, his love is made up of contradictory demands which cannot be gratified simultaneously.

It is in Eliot's stress on the way Will wavers between incompatible feelings — his wish that Dorothea should continue to be a divine creature that he can worship, and yet his contradictory wish to possess all her attention — that Will is most fully realised as a character.

Where Will is excused from culpability, the dramatic and comic contrast with Dorothea is lessened. At these points the relationship between the lovers seems less convincing, because both characters are being presented as noble, instead of Dorothea's idealism providing a comic contrast to Will's somewhat selfish feelings. A typical example is where Will is declared to be

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61 *Middlemarch*, 250; bk. 2, ch. 22.

62 *Middlemarch*, 250; bk. 2, ch. 22.
exempt from the ordinary vulgar vision of marrying Dorothea. At moments like this, Will and Dorothea are linked in a way which is intended to emphasise their purity of feeling, but which weakens the imaginative presentation of them as characters. There is also some obvious idealisation of the romance, mainly focusing, as Barbara Hardy has pointed out, on disturbingly chaste images of flowers and comparisons between the lovers and innocent children. Most critics writing on Middlemarch have expressed some dissatisfaction with the relationship between Will and Dorothea, usually seeing it as over-idealised. Jeanie Thomas has argued for a different view of Will, commenting on his tendency to self-justification, and noting that he aggravates the difficulties of the Casaubon marriage. Without wishing to reject either view, I think a focus on the way Will is presented as being at least partly culpable as regards his emotions (in either not restraining, or indeed cultivating, less admirable emotional reactions) helps us to see some of the comedy in the relationship between Will and Dorothea. It is when Will is seen as behaving badly — reacting sulkily to Dorothea’s lack of personal interest in him, for example, or convincing himself that he really ought to hate Casaubon — that he is most vividly alive as a character.

The limits of responsibility

If Will Ladislaw is used to suggest the role of the will in shaping feelings, Dorothea’s marriage experience can be seen as a demonstration — at times a tragic demonstration — of the impossibility of simply willing feelings into existence. Yet Dorothea does bend her will to shaping her feelings: too much so, David Parker suggests, in the passage below.

Dorothea sat almost motionless in her meditative struggle, while the evening slowly deepened into night. But the struggle changed continually, as that of a man who begins with a movement towards striking and ends with conquering his desire to strike. The energy that would animate a crime is not more than is wanted to inspire a resolved submission, when the noble habit of the soul reasserts itself. That thought with which Dorothea had gone out to meet her husband — her conviction that he had been asking about the possible arrest of all his work, and that the answer must

63 Middlemarch, 509; bk. 5, ch. 47.

64 Hardy, Appropriate Form, 124-125. Rpt. in Hardy, Particularities, 30-31.

65 Thomas, 35.
have wrung his heart, could not be long without rising beside the image of him, like a shadowy monitor looking at her anger with sad remonstrance. It cost her a litany of pictured sorrows and of silent cries that she might be the mercy for those sorrows — but the resolved submission did come; and when the house was still, and she knew that it was near the time when Mr. Casaubon habitually went to rest, she opened her door gently and stood outside in the darkness waiting for his coming upstairs with a light in his hand. If he did not come soon she thought that she would go down and even risk incurring another pang. She would never again expect anything else. But she did hear the library door open, and slowly the light advanced up the staircase without noise from the footsteps on the carpet. When her husband stood opposite to her, she saw that his face was more haggard. He started slightly on seeing her, and she looked up at him beseechingly, without speaking.

'Dorothea!' he said, with a gentle surprise in his tone. 'Were you waiting for me?'

'Yes, I did not like to disturb you.'

'Come, my dear, come. You are young, and need not to extend your life by watching.'

When the kind quiet melancholy of that speech fell on Dorothea’s ears, she felt something like the thankfulness that might well up in us if we had narrowly escaped hurting a lamed creature. She put her hand into her husband’s, and they went along the broad corridor together.

Parker, in a detailed analysis of this passage, points to the way in which Dorothea has to force her feelings towards the desired result. He comments that these feelings are not felt spontaneously, but are aroused through Dorothea forcing herself to dwell on images of Casaubon, images which Parker believes involve sentimentality. Parker goes on to comment that these feelings “in some sense can be seen as forced or ‘unreal’ feelings.” He links this to another weakness he sees in the presentation of Dorothea: an insufficient awareness, by George Eliot, that Dorothea’s feelings towards Casaubon were not "the very best that any husband could be given". In particular, he points to Dorothea’s lack of spontaneous liking for Casaubon, and notes the accuracy of Casaubon’s analysis of Dorothea’s feelings:

She nursed him, she read to him, she anticipated his wants, and was solicitous about his feelings; but there had entered into the husband’s mind the certainty that she judged him, and that her wifely devotedness was like a penitential expiation of unbelieving thoughts — was accompanied with a power of comparison by which himself and his doings were seen too luminously as a part of things

66Middlemarch, 464-465; bk. 4, ch. 42.
67Parker, Ethics, Theory and the Novel, 103.
in general. His discontent passed vapour-like through all her gentle loving manifestations, and clung to that inappreciative world which she had only brought nearer to him.

Poor Mr. Casaubon! This suffering was the harder to bear because it seemed like a betrayal: the young creature who had worshipped him with perfect trust had quickly turned into the critical wife; and early instances of criticism and resentment had made an impression which no tenderness and submission afterwards could remove. To his suspicious interpretation Dorothea's silence now was a suppressed rebellion; a remark from her which he had not in any way anticipated was an assertion of conscious superiority; her gentle answers had an irritating cautiousness in them; and when she acquiesced it was a self-approved effort of forbearance.  

Parker comments here that "All of this is intended to show how Casaubon’s suspicious egoism turns even these 'gentle loving manifestations' into instances of mere outward dutifulness that conceal rather less 'loving' attitudes and impulses towards him. But then Casaubon is surely closer to the truth than George Eliot supposes. As we have seen, 'her wifely dutifulness' often does require something 'like a penitential expiation of unbelieving thoughts', because in her heart Dorothea does judge Casaubon, at times with irresistible hostility. And in her acquiescence there is a 'self-approved effort of forbearance'."

Parker's analysis depends partly on a link he makes between "forced" and "unreal" feelings. George Eliot is not sufficiently aware of other possibilities for Dorothea's feelings, in Parker's view: he comments that the novel does not lead us to ask about the possibility of Dorothea spontaneously delighting in Casaubon. Yet, if we look at these passages in the wider context of the novel, we can see them as part of a larger pattern: a pattern in which George Eliot is exploring the relationship between decisions and feelings.

It does seem significant that, as Parker points out, Dorothea does not feel spontaneous affection for what Casaubon is: but this does not necessarily point to a weakness in the novel, nor does it mean that George Eliot saw Dorothea's feelings for Casaubon as the best possible. George Eliot is interested in exploring the relationship between will and feeling, and one of the

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68 *Middlemarch*, 455-456; bk. 4, ch. 42.

ways she does this is by showing characters willing — to a greater or lesser extent — feelings into a particular form. It is the extent to which feelings can be shaped by the will which is particularly interesting. We sometimes speak, for instance, of people "willing feelings into existence". This phrase implies not just the shaping, but the creation of feelings by the will. Is this kind of thinking about feeling endorsed in *Middlemarch*? Why, for example, can Dorothea not feel liking for Casaubon? Parker says that the novel does not invite us to ask that question. Yet that question does seem to be invited, through the contrasts which are set up between Dorothea and other characters.

In an earlier chapter I argued that Dorothea is in love with Casaubon during the early part of their relationship, even though that love quickly dissipates. Dorothea believes that her feelings towards Casaubon are the right ones to have for a future husband. This belief becomes a source of comedy as her expectations clash with Celia's. Dorothea reacts violently, for instance, to Celia's comment that Sir James is "very much in love" with her:

>The revulsion was so strong and painful in Dorothea's mind that the tears welled up and flowed abundantly. All her dear plans were embittered, and she thought with disgust of Sir James's conceiving that she recognized him as her lover. There was vexation too on account of Celia.  

>'How could he expect it?' she burst forth in her most impetuous manner. 'I have never agreed with him about anything but the cottages: I was barely polite to him before.'

>'But you have been so pleased with him since then; he has begun to feel quite sure that you are fond of him.'

>'Fond of him, Celia! How can you choose such odious expressions?' said Dorothea, passionately.

>'Dear me, Dorothea, I suppose it would be right for you to be fond of a man whom you accepted for a husband.'

>'It is offensive to me to say that Sir James could think I was fond of him. Besides, it is not the right word for the feeling I must have towards the man I would accept as a husband.'

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70 *Middlemarch*, 59; bk. 1, ch. 4.
The stormy quality of Dorothea's outburst adds to the comedy here: the very word "fond" has become "odious" to her. Her violent objections to Celia's mild, conventional language underscore the amusing contrast here between Celia's placidity and Dorothea's passion. Yet there is a serious point underlying the comedy. Dorothea does not feel fondness towards "the man I would accept as a husband" (whom she has already identified as Casaubon). Unlike Celia, Dorothea does not see any need for this feeling to be part of the marital relationship. As Parker has pointed out, this lack of fondness is a serious flaw in Dorothea's feelings for Casaubon. It means that once she has fallen out of love with him, she has no liking or fondness to fall back on. In Dorothea's frequent disagreements with Celia, she has an underlying store of fondness which she can draw upon (the kind of fondness which makes her think, for example, that Celia is "hardly more in need of salvation than a squirrel"71). Because Dorothea's feelings for Casaubon do not include fondness or liking, it is very easy for her to travel (as Will sees) "into the remoteness of pure pity and loyalty towards her husband".72 Pity, because all along it is Casaubon's greatness which Dorothea has been in love with: once this is revealed to be non-existent, there is nothing left to like, only a lack which she can pity.

So is George Eliot unfair, as Parker suggests, in implying that Casaubon is wrong to distrust Dorothea's "affection"? And does Eliot's criticism of Casaubon mean that Eliot sees Dorothea's feelings as "the very best any husband could be given"73? The Casaubon marriage is a very unhappy one. What Eliot is trying to show is the extent to which Dorothea can force herself to feel some emotion which allows her to continue to live with Casaubon. Significantly, this emotion is pity; and the "affection" which Eliot also refers to seems to be tenderness and compassion rather than fondness or liking. Casaubon is criticised mainly for making the marriage even worse than it need be: for sensitively searching out the gaps in Dorothea's feeling for him, rather than accepting what she is able to give him. Dorothea is not blamed for her lack of fondness for Casaubon, and

71 *Middlemarch*, 58; bk. 1, ch. 4.
72 *Middlemarch*, 402; bk. 4, ch. 37.
this lack of blame suggests that Eliot believed that some feelings could not be created, no matter how much they might be wished for.

Nonetheless, a certain amount of casuistry may be detected in the argument I have just put forward: for, as Parker says, Eliot's use of the word "affection" to describe Dorothea's feelings towards Casaubon really is questionable. It becomes more so, when we note that both George Eliot and Dorothea acknowledge that Dorothea does not feel any fondness for Casaubon. Given that "fondness" and "affection" are normally used interchangeably, isn't "affection" really the wrong word for Dorothea's feelings for Casaubon? Doesn't it imply a degree of personal liking and warmth which is simply missing from her feelings? The problem becomes worse still when we notice that George Eliot occasionally speaks about people as though they were either deserving or undeserving of affection. This tendency is evident as the narrator describes Casaubon's suspicions about Dorothea's real feelings towards him:

And who, if Mr Casaubon had chosen to expound his discontents — his suspicions that he was not any longer adored without criticism — could have denied that they were founded on good reasons? On the contrary, there was a strong reason to be added, which he had not himself taken explicitly into account — namely, that he was not unmixedly adorable. He suspected this, however, as he suspected other things, without confessing it, and like the rest of us, felt how soothing it would have been to have a companion who would never find it out.74

The weakness in this passage is that it blurs together the two ways in which a person can be "unmixedly adorable". One is the feeling which Dorothea initially had for Casaubon (or which Will has for Dorothea): the belief that the person is completely admirable, "worthy to be perfectly loved".75 But there is another way in which a person can be adorable, and this kind of adorableness does not rest in great achievements or noble qualities. It is an adorableness which can only be seen by a loving gaze, the kind of irrational affection which we saw George Eliot valuing so much in her Wordsworthian "love of place" passages. There is something very unfair, then, in the narrator's comments on Casaubon. Casaubon is blamed for two things: firstly, for

74Middlemarch, 456; bk. 4, ch. 42.
75Middlemarch, 398; bk. 4, ch. 37.
wanting to keep Dorothea's original blind hero-worshipping love of himself, for not wanting his true failings to be known, for shrinking from her sympathy. This kind of shrinking, as we saw in an earlier chapter, was instrumental in dissipating Dorothea's original love for him. It might therefore be reasonable to describe Casaubon as responsible for this. The second point Casaubon is blamed for, though, is less reasonable. Essentially he is blamed for being imperfect, and it is implied that it is unreasonable of him to wish for unmixed adoration when he is so imperfect. The narrator seems to be appealing to fellow-feeling in the final sentence of the passage, with the comment that Casaubon "like the rest of us, felt how soothing it would have been to have a companion who would never have found it out". This is less an appeal for sympathy, though, than exposure of Casaubon's vanity. The narrator is effectively claiming that Casaubon is vain because he won't admit that he is not unmixedly adorable. Yet this criticism seems rather unfair, for someone can be seen as utterly adorable without this depending on a belief that the recipient is perfect. There are kinds of love and liking displayed in George Eliot's fiction which do not depend on any assessment of worth: the childhood flowers which the narrator of The Mill on The Floss loves more than the "splendid broad-petalled blossoms" with which they are contrasted. Casaubon is never given that kind of love.

The point I am making here is quite similar to ones which both Parker and Goldberg have made, with one difference. Parker protests against Eliot's condemnation of Casaubon for something which is not conduct, but an essential part of his being: Eliot implies, Parker says, that Casaubon's "whole mode of being is ultimately a matter of moral choice".\(^76\) Goldberg puts his case (in reference to Eliot's treatment of Grandcourt) even more bluntly: "And of course an individual can hardly be blamed for lacking certain life-moral excellences, certain capacities of life, certain powers or virtues . . . a person who merely lacked them could only be judged a limited, or mediocre, or narrow, or even deficient, human being."\(^77\) Goldberg is trying to distinguish here between what we can be blamed for (our conduct) and what we can be judged on (our particular

\(^{76}\) Parker, *Ethics, Theory and the Novel*, 105.

mode of being). His position is very similar to Sabini and Silver's, who write: "We blame, reproach and punish someone who has committed a moral delict; we withdraw from, feel revulsion toward, someone with an ugly soul."\textsuperscript{78} Sabini and Silver say that the second type of judgments are aesthetic, and that we make them regardless of whether we hold the person responsible for their characteristics. Goldberg's accusation against Eliot is that she blurs together these judgements, and writes (at times) as though her characters were responsible for both what he terms their "conduct-moral" and "life-moral" defects. When we look back at Goldberg's formulation, though, we may feel some unease. Isn't there some factitious separation between blaming and judging in his comments? To say that someone "could only be judged a limited, or mediocre, or narrow, or even deficient, human being": what is the force of the word "only" here? Clearly Goldberg means it to stand against the heavier word "blamed", with judgement being seen as a gentler activity. But isn't Goldberg's judgement in fact a complete condemnation of the person in question? Would that person feel the judgement of himself as limited, mediocre, narrow or deficient was a judgement which was made \textit{without} blame? Only from the viewpoint of an insensitively patronising judge (Daniel Deronda, perhaps?) could such a judgement be seen as one without blame. Unlike Goldberg and Parker, then, I am not accusing Eliot of unfairly blaming her characters for personality traits which they cannot change. The problem inherent in Eliot's thinking about Casaubon is not that Eliot thinks Casaubon is responsible for not being unmixedly adorable, but that Eliot sometimes seems to think that affection depends on a person's flawlessness. This is the danger inherent in that earlier phrase used about Dorothea, where Will sees her as "\textit{worthy to be perfectly loved}"\textsuperscript{79}(my italics).

In the presentation of Casaubon, the thought that people may be responsible for other people's feelings about them becomes an imaginative weakness in the novel. Questions about an individual's responsibility for his or her feelings are usually explored through the unfolding of the characters' lives, with insights offered through the life of one character often being implicitly

\textsuperscript{78}Sabini and Silver, "Emotions, Responsibility, and Character", Schoeman, 172.

\textsuperscript{79}Middlemarch, 398, bk. 4, ch. 37.
challenged through the life of another. Through the lives of a range of characters, we are shown how feeling can be encouraged (or discouraged). Bulstrode, Mrs Bulstrode, Rosamond, Fred, Will, Casaubon — these characters and many more show us how feeling can be influenced through thoughts, daydreams, actions, inattentiveness and many other methods. Parker has suggested that Eliot is not fully aware of the danger of false feeling: of what is implied by willing feelings into existence. But Dorothea's marriage experience seems to suggest just the opposite: that certain feelings simply cannot be willed into existence. That feelings of love cannot be created, that Dorothea can never feel spontaneous liking for Casaubon, is part of what makes the marriage tragic. Dorothea is used, in other words, to show the limits of the will: it can shape, but not create, feeling.

Watching over feelings

There is an interesting contrast between Dorothea's feelings for Casaubon and Mary Garth's feelings for Fred. That we are meant to compare their love stories is sufficiently obvious from the titles of the various books: Book 4 is titled "Three Love Problems". The role of the will in determining feelings is brought out strongly in Mary's case:

There was no time to say any more before Mr. Farebrother came back with the engraving; and Fred had to return to the drawing-room still with a jealous dread in his heart, but yet with comforting arguments from Mary's words and manner. The result of the conversation was on the whole more painful to Mary: inevitably her attention had taken a new attitude, and she saw the possibility of new interpretations. She was in a position in which she seemed to herself to be slighting Mr. Farebrother, and this, in relation to a man who is much honoured, is always dangerous to the firmness of a grateful woman. To have a reason for going home the next day was a relief, for Mary earnestly desired to be always clear that she loved Fred best. When a tender affection has been storing itself in us through many of our years, the idea that we could accept any exchange for it seems to be a cheapening of our lives. And we can set a watch over our affections and our constancy as we can over other treasures.

'Fred has lost all his other expectations, he must keep this,' Mary said to herself, with a smile curling her lips. It was impossible to help fleeting visions of another kind — new dignities and an
acknowledged value of which she had often felt the absence. But these things with Fred outside them, Fred forsaken and looking sad for the want of her, could never tempt her deliberate thought. 80

"Mary earnestly desired to be always clear that she loved Fred best": George Eliot is highlighting the role of the will, the role of deliberate decision-making in retaining feelings. It is impossible for Mary not to be aware of new, tempting possibilities, but she acts with the strength which is possible for any agent within George Eliot's determined universe. That strength is considerable: as George Eliot points out in one of her letters, determinism does not imply human helplessness. The law of causality does not mean, in practical terms, that we cannot resolve on anything. 81

Mary has a choice in this passage. She can choose to keep her feelings for Fred in focus, and try to strengthen them; or she can let other inclinations develop. The word "firmness" is significant here: it emphasises the focus on resoluteness, and the other possibility — the possibility of Mary acting in a weak-willed manner. For action is possible in regard to feelings, George Eliot insists: "we can set a watch over our affections and our constancy as we can over other treasures". 82 Feeling is not invariably spontaneous: it can be strengthened or weakened by "deliberate thought". The passage draws our attention to different types of thought: "fleeting visions" which can not be controlled, but also thoughts which can be as deliberate and voluntary as an action. Mary's partial control over her thoughts means she can guard and preserve her love for Fred; but Dorothea's marriage experience suggests that no matter how much you may discipline your thoughts, you cannot simply call affection or liking into existence.

The idea that feeling can be strengthened or weakened by deliberate thought is suggested even in the passages where Eliot seems to be presenting feeling as a spontaneous growth. Fred's love for Mary, for example, began in boyhood: but he could have let his larger knowledge of "rank

80 Middlemarch, 625, bk. 6, ch. 57.
81 George Eliot Letters, Vol 6, 98.
82 Middlemarch, 625, bk. 6, ch. 57.
and income affect it. The implicit contrast here is with Rosamond, who does not encourage feelings which are incompatible with such requirements.

Conclusion

There seems to be a tendency in George Eliot's fiction to view people as responsible for their emotions (in the sense of being culpable) or as having at least the capacity to take responsibility for their emotions, no matter how they may have arisen. This is a tendency which sometimes leads to weaknesses in the novels — it makes Deronda's preaching to Gwendolen seem convincing to his creator, but not to readers of the novel — but also frequently to interesting and often comic clashes between characters. It is when Will is seen as shaping and cultivating his less admirable feelings, for example, that we find most of the comedy in his relationship with Dorothea. The treatment of Rosamond is more serious, and the artificial nature of her feelings and the way in which they serve her purposes is usually stressed. There are, however, a few passages where the growth of her feelings is seen as natural and beautiful, swinging some of our sympathy towards her. In Mary Garth's feelings for Fred, and Dorothea's feelings for Casaubon, we have explorations of the role of the will in regard to feeling. Mary successfully shuts out the possibility of loving Farebrother, but Dorothea can only force herself to feel pity, not fondness, for Casaubon. It is possible that Eliot's strong interest in questions of responsibility for emotions made the treatment of Casaubon in the novel rather unfair. Dorothea's lack of fondness for him is justified, in the narrator's eyes, by Casaubon's unlikeability. This complete lack of likeability, which Parker has drawn attention to, and Eliot's inclination to see it as the cause of Dorothea's feelings, goes against some of her other insights into emotion: where she saw the possibilities of a loving gaze seeing objects differently, in a way that could challenge dispassionate evaluation.

83Middlemarch, 168; bk. 2, ch. 14.
84Parker, Ethics, Theory and the Novel, 102.
Conclusion

In this thesis, I have tried to redirect attention towards something which I feel has been half-forgotten: the enormous power literature has to illuminate complex psychological and philosophical issues, such as those we encounter when we begin to think about emotions. This thesis only deals with one tiny facet of this, as it focuses almost solely on the novels of George Eliot. The point, however, is more widely applicable: and I hope that people will sometimes turn back to novels, rather than to the books of theorists such as Foucault, when they are searching for thoughtful contributions to modern debates. I hope this thesis has shown one example of this: that Eliot's fiction can make a distinctive contribution to the modern debate about emotions, perhaps less by providing solutions than by providing challenges to modern theories about emotions.

Eliot's work presents an indirect but still powerful challenge to the work of philosophers on emotion. As George Eliot is a novelist and not a philosopher, ideas about emotion are not presented as a rigorously worked out theory in her fiction. Rather various possibilities are suggested, explored or challenged. The medium of fiction allows emotions to be explored in a fluid, rather than a rigid manner. Fiction can indicate possibilities which may make philosophical theories (such as Solomon's theory that love is only possible between equals, or Nussbaum's theory that resentment diminishes our ability to see particularities truthfully) seem rigid or limited.

This thesis aims to contribute to two areas: to the study of emotions, and to the study of George Eliot's fiction. Thus, part of this thesis has been devoted to showing how George Eliot's fiction can be illuminated by focusing on her treatment of emotion. A focus on the question of how characters both shape and justify some of their feelings, for example, draws attention to the comic aspects of Will's relationship with Dorothea in *Middlemarch*. But this thesis is not solely confined to interpreting George Eliot's fiction: for inevitably, in focusing on George Eliot's treatment of emotion, we become aware of the illumination her fiction sheds on human emotions. This illumination is not universal. We should not expect it to shed light on all emotions in all cultures, or even to add much to the debate currently being conducted by linguists and anthropologists around the world on whether or not there are universal emotions. People who come from a culture where romantic love is not a central concept, for example, are unlikely to find much to interest
them in Will's relationship with Dorothea, except as a cultural oddity of those peculiar people, the English. For other readers, especially those familiar with the "higher love poetry" which has charmed Will's fancy, such as the sonnets of Petrarch and Dante, there is something fascinating in seeing how Will shapes his feeling for Dorothea to fit with a particular literary tradition, and comedy in seeing how difficult it is to fit his experience entirely within the accepted bounds of courtly love.

There is more work to be done in the area sketched out in this thesis, and the research possibilities in other, related areas are virtually endless. Within the scope of this thesis, for instance, there has not been time to fully examine George Eliot's treatment of love: while other emotions such as shame, despair, guilt, regret and jealousy have been left aside for want of space. More broadly, though, what can other novelists (and playwrights, and poets) contribute to debates over emotions? Which authors might shed light on issues raised in Jerome Neu's recent essay "Jealous Thoughts"?¹ It would perhaps be better not to turn to Othello, as this classic picture of jealousy is almost over-cited: but could Dostoevsky provide new insight? Or Henry Handel Richardson? Or Proust? This thesis has focused on just one facet of much broader research possibilities: possibilities for showing how literature can illuminate many of the issues raised in contemporary debates — and not just debates about emotion.

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