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GEORGE ELIOT: CLIO AS NOVELIST

An investigation into the uses of history
in three of George Eliot's novels: Romola,
Middlemarch, and Daniel Deronda

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	PAGES 1-8
CHAPTER ONE:	
HISTORY AS PRESERVATION: <u>ROMOLA</u>	PAGES 9-78
CHAPTER TWO:	
HISTORY AS PROCESS: <u>MIDDLEMARCH</u>	PAGES 79-180
CHAPTER THREE	
HISTORY AS PROPHECY: <u>DANIEL DERONDA</u>	PAGES 181-236
BIBLIOGRAPHY	PAGES 1-10

GEORGE ELIOT: CLIO AS NOVELIST

An investigation into the uses of history
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The novels of George Eliot are lucrative source materials for investigating literature's relation to history. Her works offer a spectrum of possibilities in the approach to the past. Felix Holt, the Radical, for example, describes the awakening of political consciousness in early Victorian rural England; The Mill on the Floss depicts the power of traditional class ties in shaping social mores; Daniel Deronda renders the zeitgeist in budding Zionism; Romola is a tidy set piece on the closing years of fifteenth-century Florence, and Middlemarch projects a Heraclitean reality with close-ups on the capillary action of process, dissolution, and change. When Henry James read Middlemarch, he paid it a high compliment by observing: "If we write novels so, how shall we write History" ("Three Reviews," The Future of the Novel, p. 89)? Though meant to be rhetorical, James's question is a goad. The following three chapters will take up the challenge implicit in his words by exploring the uses of history in George Eliot's imaginative re-creation of the past in Romola, Middlemarch, and Daniel Deronda.

What does the novelist share with the historian in the creative interpretation of bygone days? Methodological problems such as the handling of time, the techniques of selection, the interaction of individual and social will, continuity in the art of narrative, needless to say, concern both. The novelist and the historian have an avid

curiosity about sources, origins, and beginnings; that is, they are genetically oriented. Both seek, like Tristram Shandy, to tell their story ab ovo. On the whole, both view institutions as evolving projections of changing social needs and regard man and society as inextricably interwoven. And both affirm that however much a man may go ". . . transacting his particular affairs with the narrow pertinacity of a respectable ant," to use George Eliot's words, "he subserves an economy larger than any purpose of his own" (Impressions of Theophrastus Such, Ch. 7).

More important, however, are the very assumptions which the historian and the novelist entertain towards the nature of the historical process itself. Is history an antique gallery of outworn attractive merchandise still worthy of attention? Is history a senseless horror story, a nightmare, to paraphrase James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, from which we are trying to escape? Or is history a critical reservoir in the flow of human experience, a reservoir whose contents exhibit a patterned direction of mankind's future course? The writer's attitude towards history not only influences the structural dimensions of his work but also acts as the supreme fiat controlling the unity of his composition, be it fact or fiction.

Eliot is impressed by the subtle yet vital links between men as functioning cells within the body politic. Her novels are permeated with the awareness that though she ravel and unravels the skeins of particular lives, these lives form part of a larger social whole. In the third chapter of Felix Holt, the Radical, she comments: "This history is chiefly concerned with the private lot of a few men and

women, but there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life. . . ." Middlemarch abounds with references to the "web" of relations binding characters to their social environment. In Romola, the network of interaction between part and whole is also referred to as "a tangled web," though Eliot in this novel prefers to use images drawn from botany to illustrate the correspondence between the individual and the collective:

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

(Book Two, Ch. I)

History has repeatedly professed its allegiance to truth, and so has the novel. While other forms of fiction have been content to entertain, the novel has doggedly insisted on assuming a more ambitious role: that of a meticulous diagnostician of human manners and morals. No genre has more loudly flaunted its truth-to-life and its devotions to the sober canons of probability and verisimilitude. And no genre has presumed with more effrontery to declare its kinship with realism or with greater impertinence asserted it knew precisely what "realism" was.

One of the least dogmatic testimonials of this way of thinking appears in George Eliot's Adam Bede, when the author in an oft-quoted aside declares her purpose to be the faithful rendering of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in her mind. Eliot admits that her mirror may be defective and her reflection faint or confused, but she feels bound to tell the truth about the past "as if I

were in the witness-box," she writes, "narrating my experience on oath" (Ch. XVII). Considering the dramatic intensity inherent in the courtroom analogy, there seems to be little doubt that Eliot means to tell the whole truth and nothing but. Yet it is obvious to Eliot and to most of her readers that this goal in no way excludes the fictional reconstruction of the past, and that truth and fiction far from being contraries are in fact quite compatible.

This point of view has long been anathema to the professional historian. Rooted in a literary past, history has viewed its own genealogy with mixed feelings. Aware of its shared pedigree with fiction, its ancient kinship with the epics, the prose sagas, folk tales, and legends, history has, nevertheless, done its utmost to exorcise the fictional strains from its family tree. In the opening pages of Middlemarch, the genial dilettante, Mr. Brooke, asks the historian, Mr. Casaubon: "But talking of books, there is Southey's 'Peninsular War.' I am reading that of a morning. You know Southey?" Replying "no" to the query, Mr. Casaubon adds: "I have little leisure for such literature just now." Casaubon's response reflects a prevalent attitude among "serious" historians towards literature. At best, history has treated fiction as a frivolous adornment which graces the ancestral manse, at worst, a family skeleton about which the less said the better. Literary historians, such as Carlyle, Macaulay, or Froude, for example, have long been regarded by self-respecting historians as slovenly scholars, who shaped the evidence hastily according to their heated fancies. Or, as Mr. Casaubon would say:

It had been easy for me to gain a temporary effect by a mirage of baseless opinion; but it is ever the trial of the scrupulous explorer

to be saluted with the impatient scorn of chatterers who attempt only the smallest achievements, being indeed equipped for no other.

(Ch. 20)

In the nineteenth century, these sentiments were echoed in the pages of Droysen, Niebuhr, Fustel de Coulanges, and John Seeley, all of whom cautioned against giving history the vivid artificial coloring and the dramatic interest of fiction. In our own day, a vociferous spokesman for this position is Harry Elmer Barnes, who states emphatically:

Least of all should literary artistry be confused with historical prowess. The clever essayist, as such, is no more a historian than a painter who produces a chromatic masterpiece designed to reproduce the likeness of St. Peter or Charles I. Van Dyke was as much entitled to rank as a historian as Carlyle. Hogarth was as truly a historian as Macaulay.

(A History of Historical Writing, p. 386)

Curious to say, literature has remained singularly impervious to the efforts of historians to show it the door. Instead it has stubbornly reaffirmed its old family ties by offering what it felt was a legitimate heir to history's demesne in the form of a brand new mutant genre: the novel. It is no accident that the novel blossomed in the eighteenth century, when widespread interest in the professional study of history arose. It is no accident that novelists over and over again refer to their works as histories and refer to themselves as historians. Henry James underscores this kinship in an essay censoring Anthony Trollope's suicidal satisfaction in reminding the reader that fiction is, after all, only make-believe. "It is impossible to imagine what a novelist takes himself to be unless he regards himself as an historian and this narrative as a history," James writes. "It is only as an historian that he has the smallest locus

standi ("Anthony Trollope," The Future of the Novel, p. 248).

To history's claim that it is based upon documentary evidence, the novelist replies that documents can lie, or that good fiction is more authentic than "paste and scissors" truth. For Swift's Gulliver, modern historians were "prostitute writers, " who ascribed "the greatest exploits in war to cowards, the wisest counsel to fools, sincerity to flatterers. . . piety to atheists, chastity to sodomites, truth to informers" (Gulliver's Travels, Part III, Ch. 8). History's claim that it is dispassionate and objective is parried by the novelist's retort that selection is the first blow to the theory of the whole truth. In Jane Austen's Northanger Abbey, Catherine finds it odd that history ". . . should be so dull, for a great deal of it must be invention." Her companion, Miss Tilney, replies with unconscious irony:

I am fond of history and am well contented to take the false with the true. In the principal facts they have sources of intelligence in former histories and records, which may be as much depended on, I conclude, as anything that does not actually pass under one's observation. . . ."

(Ch. 14)

In his Notes on Life and Letters, Joseph Conrad also attacks the credentials of historians as qualified appraisers of the past:

Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing. But it is also more than that; it stands on firmer ground, being based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena, whereas history is based on documents, and the reading of print and handwriting -- on second-hand impressions. Thus, fiction is nearer truth. But let that pass. A historian may be an artist too, and a novelist is a historian, the preserver, the keeper, the expounder, of human experience.

(p. 17)

With the growth of cultural history in recent years, there has been a tentative rapprochement in the estranged relations between

the novelist and the historian. Itself a victim of the historical process, history has watched its cherished assumptions crumble, attacked not only by the new physics and psychology but also by members within its own ranks. For example, Carl Becker's essay, "What are Historical Facts?" explodes materialistic shibboleths about empirical data: ". . . the simple historical fact turns out to be not a hard, cold something with clear outline and measurable pressure, like a brick. It is so far as we can know it, only a symbol. . ."

(Detachment and the Writing of History, p. 45). R. G. Collingwood's The Idea of History is a compelling account in favor of the creative imagination in historical research, though he insists that the historian's aim radically alters the nature of the artistic product. "As works of imagination, the historian's work and the novelist's do not differ. Where they do differ is that the historian's picture is meant to be true" (p. 246), a distinction which would impress a George Eliot and a Joseph Conrad but little.

While the gulf between the two disciplines has narrowed, it would be rash to conclude that the phrase "historical novel" is redundant, because the novel with few exceptions describes the recent or distant past. And it would be equally rash to conclude that the phrase "literary history" is redundant, since the historian's vision is a highly-colored personal one, being conditioned by his own race, temps, milieu, as well as a plethora of unconscious causes within the Freudian paradigm.

George Eliot's novels illuminate the gray limbo shared by the creative artist and the creative historian. Her novels offer a

diversity of literary techniques which embody the multiple roles of history in fiction. The ensuing chapters will explore how she projects a three-pronged view of the past: of history as preservation in Romola, of history as process in Middlemarch, and in Daniel Deronda, a view of history as prophecy.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORY AS PRESERVATION: ROMOLA

The study of Romola's artistic structure discloses a methodology bent on presenting an ahistorical view of a segment of time, namely, late fifteenth-century Renaissance Florence. This chapter will examine those literary techniques which contribute to Eliot's non-developmental historical outlook in this novel.

Paradoxical as it may seem, an interest in the past in no way guarantees the possession of a sense of history, that is, a consciousness of change. Men and women have looked backwards in time in myriad modes, not all of which could be called historical. While the novels of George Eliot are imbued with a deep regard for former days, her works vary markedly in their projection of historical change. A glance at the range of time spanning Eliot's description of the past reveals a curious correlation between the remoteness of her fictional settings and her historical point of view. The further back the novel's milieu appears in the time scale, the more hostile is the author's attitude towards change, and the more inflexible are her structural shapings of the sinews of movement and flux. Conversely, the closer the temporal stage, the more receptive the author is to the march of events, and the more eager she is to render palpable the propellers of social transformation. To illustrate, Romola, set in Renaissance Florence, is of all Eliot's novels the most remote in time. And of all Eliot's novels, Romola is generally singled out as

bonafide historical fiction, yet, strange to say, this work is barely tinged with a sense of historical change. Instead, Romola is a paean to permanence. On the other hand, Daniel Deronda, cast in the Victorian "age of crinoline," is the most contemporary of Eliot's settings, yet this novel is drenched with wonder at the inexorable power of the historical process as it affects the present.

Between these extremes in the temporal range of Eliot's fiction lie two clusters of novels. The opening decades of the nineteenth century provide the backdrop for the first group, which includes Scenes of Clerical Life, Adam Bede, and Silas Marner. Like Walter Scott's Waverley, these works might very well bear the subtitle, 'Tis Sixty Years Since, and could by a rather crude chronological gauge be classified as historical fiction, since they re-create an age just prior to the author's birth. The action in the second cluster, which embraces The Mill on the Floss, Felix Holt, the Radical, and Middlemarch, centers about the Reform era of late Georgian England, a time paralleling Eliot's early girlhood years. To some degree, each of these six novels is concerned with the transmutations wrought by the industrialization and the democratization of England. Middlemarch, in particular, peers with its fine microscopic eye into the gradual modifications of cellular structure in a small provincial city responding to the pressures of social change. If George Eliot's intellectual biography is a "graph" of the emerging philosophical ideas of her century, as Basil Willey convincingly argues in his Nineteenth Century Studies (Ch. VIII, pp. 208-9), then it is fair to assume that her imaginative flights into former times took full

measure of the prevailing winds and crosswinds of her day.

The development of her historical outlook follows the gradual pattern of conversion typical of her century. This pattern rose from a picture of the past as a storehouse of antiquarian treasures and then grew into a conception of history as a prolific womb of evolutionary flux. The most exaggerated forms of this pattern regarded history as a universal dynamo, a Prime Mover energizing and regulating the future. Needless to say, these three stages are convenient abstractions which have rarely existed in their pure forms. Nor are these stages necessarily consecutive, but rather they represent steps in the growing intensity of feeling which history kindled in the enthusiasms of men over a century ago. In George Eliot's novels, the first stage of this pattern is best pinioned in Romola, the second in Middlemarch, and the third is most sympathetically portrayed in her last novel, Daniel Deronda. The remaining pages of this chapter will concentrate on the first stage, which is embodied in Romola.

Using the title of a poem by Swinburne, Jerome Hamilton Buckley, in a recent book, dubs the Victorian age, The Triumph of Time, a fitting epithet for the nineteenth-century obsession with the anatomy of change. Mr. Buckley states that Victorians had an unprecedented awareness of themselves in time and either celebrated or reviled history as the harbinger of progress or the kernel of decay. "The conviction is already not far from being universal," John Stuart Mill wrote in 1831, "that the times are pregnant with change; and that the nineteenth century will be known to posterity as the era of one of the greatest revolutions of which history has

preserved the remembrance, in the human mind, and in the whole constitution of human society . . ." (Richard L. Schoenwald, ed., "The Spirit of the Times," Nineteenth-Century Thought: The Discovery of Change, p. 17). In such an atmosphere, the mood of Ecclesiastes would seem alien and anachronistic. That generations come and generations go and there's nothing new under the sun would strike the Victorian mind as gross and fatuous generalizations, which flatly ignore the stunning profusion of revolutionary innovations emerging every day. "Events are now so momentous, and the elements of society in so chemically critical a state," George Eliot exclaimed in a letter written in 1840, "that a drop seems enough to change its whole form" (Haight, ed., The George Eliot Letters, Vol. I, p. 72).

The contrast between then and now is a persistent leitmotif in Eliot's fiction. In Adam Bede, for example, she compares the strenuous pace of modern life, a pace in which ". . . even idleness is eager now . . .," with an old kind of leisure "free from that periodicity of sensations which we call post-time," a leisure which is "gone -- gone where the spinning wheels are gone, and the pack horses, and the slow waggons, and the pedlars, who brought bargains to the door on sunny afternoons" (Ch. LII). Similarly, in the opening pages of Felix Holt, the Radical, she contrasts the vanished era of five-and-thirty years ago, when ". . . the glory had not yet departed from the old coach roads . . .," with the questionable benefits accrued by so-called "improved" methods of travel: "Posterity may be shot, like a bullet through a tube, by

atmospheric pressure from Winchester to Newcastle. . . , but the slow old-fashioned way of getting from one end of our country to the other is the better thing to have in the memory." Like most Victorians, Eliot mourned or lauded, feared or braved, thwarted or greeted the unrelenting march of events, but rarely if ever questioned whether or not there was a march at all.

One significant exception is the novel, Romola. Rather than stress the differences between the present and the past, Eliot shifts her customary outlook on change to picture what she describes in the first paragraph of Romola as ". . . the broad sameness of the human lot, which never alters in the main headings of its history, -- hunger and labour, seed-time and harvest, love and death." Her characteristic nineteenth-century habit of accentuating the heterogeneity of history, the uniqueness of the historical event, and the progressive though gradual growth of society is, in Romola, metamorphosed into a Classical Greek appreciation of the uniform and abiding essence, the immutable world of permanence. To transmit this conception of the universe, Eliot employs a compositional strategy with the following literary devices: 1) the emphasis of repetition, similarity, and identity in the cyclical rhythms of Renaissance community life; 2) the use of rhetorical aids which underscore the notion of eternal return; 3) the ample provision of figurative language connoting the idea of rootedness; 4) extensive parallelism of plot and subplots, of themes and leitmotifs to accentuate likenesses between past and present; 5) the delineation of character as a fixed rather than an evolving entity; 6) the rendition

of time as a reaper, a servant of nature rather than a dynamic impresario of infinite future potential. Each of these techniques will be examined in turn.

Romola's introductory Proem is a tribute to the spirit of identity, to an ideal Platonic substratum of changeless forms, to a changelessness made viable through the concrete visual evidence of landscapes and skylines and through the concrete visceral evidence of the experiences of men. For example, Eliot speaks of Florence, the urban backdrop of the novel, as a city, "which has hardly changed its outline since the days of Columbus, seeming to stand as an almost unviolated symbol, amidst the flux of human things, to remind us that we still resemble the men of the past more than we differ from them." To illustrate the notion of eternal recurrence stylistically, Eliot uses massive parallel constructions, which contain identical syntax and repeat identical words. Too long to quote fully, the following abstracts of the opening sentences of Romola will serve to illustrate this point. In the first sentence, ". . . the angel of the dawn . . . saw nearly the same outline of firm land, . . . saw the same great mountain shadows, . . . saw olive mounts, . . . saw the domes. . . ." In the second sentence, ". . . the faint light fell . . . on the rosy warmth, . . . on the haggard waking, . . . on the hasty uprising, . . . on the late sleep of the night student. . . ." In addition, the repetition of syntax is matched by the repetition of one predominant qualifier: the word "same." With unrelenting insistence, this adjective hammers at the reader's mind and reinforces with monotonous regularity the

underlying idea of uniformity, which is fundamental to the novel's philosophical point of view. In the first paragraph, the adjective is repeated no less than seven times: "the same outline," "the same great mountain shadows," "the same valleys," "the same spots," "the same great needs," "the same great loves," and "the broad sameness of the human lot."

The extensive use of alliteration further compounds the impression of recurrence in phrases such as "sedge-like masts on the many-curved sea-coast," "break through the barrier of man's brief life," and "spires of cities rising by the river-sides," to mention but a few. Also contributing to the air of changelessness on the opening page of the novel is the prose rhythm, which is punctuated with the monotonous movement of the pendulum, see-sawing back-and-forth, to-and-fro, in such couplings as "firm land and unstable sea," "olive mounts and pine forests," "young corn or rain-freshened grass," "domes and spires," "sorrow and sickness," "light and glory," "ebb and flow," "loves and terrors," as well as the sextet already quoted, "hunger and labour, seed-time and harvest, love and death." In Romola, reality is conceived of as a vast immobile Eleatic lake, undisturbed by currents or tides, or by the infusion of tributaries, or even by the soft stirring of fish. This conception is ahistorical, because it downgrades the passing experience of the particular, the ephemeral, the fleeting, into a third-rate realm of "mere" phenomena, which are at best illusory shadows of what is real.

A traditional classical picture, this view has drawn potent spokesmen down through the ages, spokesmen who drowned out dissenting voices which protested that the universe was more like a river than a lake and that there was nothing permanent except change. Gradually gaining ascendancy, this second conception of reality ousted its competitor in the nineteenth century and spawned a luxuriant progeny, which culminated in the radical relativism of Eliot's contemporary, Walter Pater. In the "Conclusion" to The Renaissance, Pater celebrated a pointillism in time, a splendid world of "unstable, flickering, inconsistent" impressions constantly passing, dissolving, vanishing, and continually weaving, unweaving, and re-forming themselves, a world "in perpetual flight," a world in which "all melts under our feet. . . ." In the nineteenth century, Becoming eclipsed Being; Heraclitus eclipsed Plato; flux was king. The Heraclitean outlook, however propitious to the historical temper in the recognition of change, in the appreciation of the unique moment, and in the enthusiasm for the singular phenomenon, created as many problems as it solved. The classical world view of Romola's Proem, which acknowledged only permanence, would sooner or later have to account for the presence of change. Similarly, a world view such as Pater's, which acknowledged only evanescence, would sooner or later have to account for the presence of continuity. The first was all substratum with no movement; the second all movement and no coherence. The old problem of the One and the Many became the new problem of the Many and the One. The critical issue of the interrelationship between the two remained much

the same. Only the emphasis had shifted and had become a question as Humpty Dumpty would say, of which was to be master -- that's all.

If time had triumphed in the nineteenth century, if time was master, then the narrator of the past, either as novelist or historian, had to trace the intrinsic connections which governed process and the threads which ran through change. The author of Romola, however, had to pursue a reverse course. Having committed herself in the Proem to the vision of an enduring universe of amaranthine forms, of immutable geographical panoramas, of unaltered cities and unfading human patterns of life, Eliot is confronted with the staggering testimony of the cataclysmic historical changes which occurred in the six-year span the novel describes. With the exception of a short epilogue which extends the period by eleven years, Romola covers the interval from 1492 to 1498 in the annals of Florence. Far from being arbitrarily chosen, this hexad of years commemorates three monumental events in Florentine history: the death of Lorenzo de' Medici in 1492, the entrance of Charles VIII, king of France, into Florence in 1494, and the execution of Girolamo Savonarola in 1498. Eliot does not ignore these convulsions, as the mood of her Proem would suggest. On the contrary, she divides her novel into three books, each of which centers on one of these three prominent episodes in the life of the city. Eliot is faced with the paradox which, on the one hand, flatly denies that changes have occurred, a belief which she braces by describing the stability of the landscape, by portraying Florence as an

"unviolated symbol" of stasis amidst the flux, and by assuming that human affairs are fundamentally the same. On the other hand, she concentrates with blatant inconsistency on the revolutionary aspect of late fifteenth-century Florence in a nugget of time which marked an epoch not only in the history of Italy but of western civilization as well. Had Eliot confined her feelings about the immutability of things to the world of nature, she might well have avoided this paradox. For example, another Victorian novelist, Thomas Hardy, who seeks to render the atmosphere of timelessness in his novels, avoids Eliot's pitfall by confining his notion of permanence to distinctive fragments of nature, not to the affairs of men and society. In the first chapter of The Return of the Native, Hardy depicts Egdon Heath as follows:

To recline on a stump of thorn in the central valley of Egdon, between afternoon and night, as now, where the eye could reach nothing of the world outside the summits and shoulders of heathland which filled the whole circumference of its glance, and to know that everything around and underneath had been from prehistoric times as unaltered as the stars overhead, gave ballast to the mind adrift on change, and harassed by the irrepressible New. The great inviolate place had an ancient permanence which the sea cannot claim. Who can say of a particular sea that it is old? Distilled by the sun, kneaded by the moon, it is renewed in a year, in a day, or in an hour. The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, and the people changed, yet Egdon remained.

It is one thing for a novelist to assert, as Hardy does, that certain aspects of the scenery endure, but quite another to convey the impression, as Eliot does in the Proem, that everything endures despite paroxysms of social change. How does Eliot cope with this paradox? Her initial reaction is simply to contradict herself. To illustrate, the immutable panorama of the opening scene of the novel

is viewed first by a soaring "angel of the dawn" and later by a deceased but still curious Florentine citizen, who returns from the realm of the shades to find out what is new in his old city. Looking down from the hill of San Miniato in 1492, the shade sees the same abiding spectacle witnessed by the angel of the dawn and affirms the same philosophy of permanence set forth by the author. Anxious to have a closer look at his beloved marmi and to listen to the familiar gossip of his townspeople, the shade begins to descend the hill, whereupon the narrator suddenly bursts forth with the following admonition: "Go not down, good spirit! for the changes are great, and the speech of Florentines would sound as a riddle in your ears." This abrupt switch of attitude is a jarring reversal of what has gone before. Is Eliot's logic a momentary victim of a Whitmanesque mood: "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself"? Such a whimsical aboutface is foreign to Eliot's scrupulous habit of mind. Is she perhaps unaware of the contradiction implicit in her outlook? Her subsequent advice to the Florentine citizen indicates not, and that indeed she is aware:

Or, if you go, mingle with no politicians on the marmi or elsewhere; ask no questions about trade in the Calimara; confuse yourself with no inquiries into scholarship, official or monastic. Only look at the sunlight and shadows on the grand walls that were built solidly, and have endured in their grandeur; look at the faces of the little children, making another sunlight amid the shadows of age; look, if you will, into the churches, and hear the same chants, see the same images as of old, -- the images of willing anguish for a great end, of beneficent love and ascending glory; see upturned living faces, and lips moving to the old prayers for help. These things have not changed.

(Final paragraph of the Proem)

In this paragraph, Eliot harks back to her former theme of permanence, this time in references to grand solid walls, the faces of little children, old chants, prayers, and aspirations. Despite this reaffirmation of her earlier convictions, her admission to the Florentine shade that ". . . the changes are great . . ." has weakened the tenacity of her stand, especially since the action in Romola converges on those very changes which Eliot wishes the Florentine shade to avoid. Her illogical position, however, may be explained in terms of differing metaphysical perspectives. For example, the angel of the dawn as well as the resurrected shade belong to the realm of the immortal and therefore observe things sub specie aeternitatis and not as participants in the stream of history. In any case, one thing is clear: the novelist and the historian cannot completely disavow the passage of time, for the novelist's very choice of genre, the historian's very choice of discipline, betrays a keen interest in the make-up of the temporal scene.

Lured by the field of time, the novelist and the historian both enter a thicket of increasingly thorny issues. The prior attractions of time as the womb of becoming, of time as a catalyst transforming the past into the present, of time as a secular providence governing the direction of the future, have withered under the onslaughts of twentieth-century thought. The conception of time as the prime coordinator of the sequence, the continuity, and the direction of historical events has been dispossessed and relegated to a limbo of discarded ideas at the bottom of Einstein's wastebasket. In short, nothing is permanent, not even time; time too has changed. This

state of affairs may be propitious for the advancement of physics but unsettling for the reconstruction of the past. How does a writer render the succession of historical events if the very notion of temporal passage is obsolete? His quandary is epitomized in T. S. Eliot's first of Four Quartets, "Burnt Norton," in the lines:

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.

In an effort to rescue the writing of history from the quagmire of the relativistic time scheme implicit in T. S. Eliot's words, many current theorists of historical methodology have turned their attention to the art of narration in order to provide the idea of continuity with a more stable footing. These writers interpret the nature of historical explanation as resembling a story rather than a verifiable proof. "The moment historical facts are regarded as instances of general laws, history is dismissed," writes M. Oakeshott in Experience and its Modes, a point of view quoted and seconded by William Dray (Laws and Explanation in History, 1957, pp. 49-50). "History is the narrative statement of happenings in the past . . . ," states Frederick J. Teggart, and "the intelligibility which the historian thus introduces into the materials which he selects for his composition is of the same order as that provided by the author of a historical novel or drama" (Theory and Processes of History, 1960, pp. 18, 78). Another advocate of this belief, W. H. Walsh, comments, "Just as a good novel or a good play appears to consist

not in a series of isolated episodes, but in the orderly development of the complex situation from which it starts, so a good history possesses a certain unity of plot or theme (Philosophy of History, 1960, p. 33). And again, in the words of Paul Weiss, a similar comparison appears:

His [the historian's] artistry is something like that of a novelist or a playwright, who tries to drive his audience past the divisions of his discourse, and to accept a book or play as an articulated or manipulatable unity. And like the novelist and playwright, the historian is inclined to attend to pivotal figures, to employ unexpressed norms, to give different weights to different items.

(History: Written and Lived, 1962, p. 106)

These theorists envisage the interpretation of the past as a selective re-creation and support the philosophical convictions of Benedetto Croce and R. G. Collingwood. The combined comments of these historians represent a swelling opposition to the strong tide of opinion which rejects history as a member of the humanities and plants it squarely within the arena of the social sciences. One of the most recent champions of history as a form of narration is W. B. Gallie, who declares that while in science there is always a theory, in history there is always a story. In his Philosophy and the Historical Understanding (1968), W. B. Gallie tries with painstaking ingenuity to describe what it means to follow a story. He concludes that the holding power of a story is its "teleologically-guided form of attention," pulled by human sympathy and human interest in a context involving a sequence of actions or experiences of a number of people reacting to change. In his attempt to seek out the imponderables in the art of narration, Gallie concentrates less

on the importance of chronology than on the idea of internal coherence, a sense of the whole. Like Gallie, Collingwood also stresses coherence as being an essential element in the reconstruction of the past:

The hero of a detective novel is thinking exactly like an historian when, from indications of the most varied kinds, he constructs an imaginary picture of how a crime was committed, and by whom.

(The Idea of History, p. 243)

These eight theorists seem bent on salvaging the idea of continuity from the wrecks of outmoded scientific paradigms of time by regarding continuity as a feature of the individual historical narrative rather than as a feature of an objective reality delineated by quantum mechanics and thermodynamics. If history aspires to the status of a social "science," the historian must reckon with the meaning of time as modern physics conceives it, a meaning which threatens the very foundations of history as a formal discipline, since concepts such as pastness, succession, irreversibility, continuity, order, and direction have been roundly challenged in the scientific sphere. Yet by turning to the art of narration, to the storyteller's "once upon a time . . ." kind of time, the historian regains a certain measure of security, since time in a narrative structure is an indispensable instrument of intelligibility. In the preface to his book, Time in Literature (1960), Hans Meyerhoff described how he was struck by the startling contrast between the scientific meaning of time and le temps humain, when he attended a seminar on the analysis of time in science, an academic course given by his friend and colleague, Hans Reichen-

bach. Meyerhoff writes:

While listening to the lectures, I began to think about how remote the scientific, logical construction of the concept of time was from certain aspects of time in human experience which literature has often singled out for analysis. What seemed most significant in terms of the experience of time was quite irrelevant to the logical concept of time as formulated by science; per contra, the scientific concept seemed to have little to say about the most significant aspects of time in the lives of human beings.

Meyerhoff exhibits the dilemma, which to a certain degree faces all writers who attempt to transcribe the passage of events in time, but, in particular, faces the so-called "scientific" historian, who seeks to ground his account of the past according to the objective reality described by modern physics. By centering his interest on the art of narrative, however, the historian views time as a condition of communication, a critical lens, a Kantian "category," through which human activity is focused and understood. In narration, such notions as "before," "now," "then," "after," "order," "sequence," "direction," "duration," "succession," are still bona-fide entities respected by the literary artist. "Scheherazade avoided her fate because she knew how to wield the weapon of suspense -- the only literary tool that has any effect upon tyrants and savages," E. M. Forster comments wryly in the second chapter of Aspects of the Novel. "She only survived," Forster goes on to say, "because she managed to keep the king wondering what would happen next." Forster insists that every successful novel has a clock, no matter how well it is hidden. His position is sensible and to a large extent true. Few clocks tick as loudly in literature as in the chaotic stream-of-consciousness novels, for example, Big Ben's striking of the hours in Mrs. Dalloway's London, or the timepieces which

punctuate the day in Leopold Bloom's Dublin. Few chronological sequences are as meticulously wrought as in those novels which overwhelm the reader with a bewildering disarray of events, as in The Sound and the Fury or Wuthering Heights.

If historians look to the art of the storyteller to stabilize the shifting sands of scientific ideas of time, they must still acknowledge that the very manner of narration adjusts in certain measure to those same shifting sands. Narration, which derives from the Latin root gnarus, knowing, is itself a mode of seeing which depends on the knower's angle of vision. However much the novelist may use chronological tools to tell his story, however much he may insist on the reality of a personal time stream which is alien to the constructs of the physical sciences, the narrative thread of his novel will be conditioned not only by his temperament, his beliefs and feelings, but also by the idiosyncrasies of the fleeting moment. In each of George Eliot's novels, for instance, the sensitive antennae of her creative artistry respond even to the subtlest variations of temporal outlook, variations which alter the structure of her stories. In a letter to her publisher, John Blackwood, she writes of Silas Marner:

My chief reason for wishing to publish the story now, is, that I like my writings to appear in the order in which they are written, because they belong to successive mental phases, and when they are a year behind me, I can no longer feel that thorough identification with them which gives zest to the sense of authorship.

(Haight, ed. The George Eliot Letters, Vol. III, pp. 382-3)

In Silas Marner, time is regarded as a great moral teacher, a philosopher teaching by example, as Bolingbroke, the eighteenth-century statesman, would say. Middlemarch, on the other hand, draws

its pace from Spencer and Darwin, while Daniel Deronda draws heavily from the German romantics, Herder and Hegel. To use a modern instance, Marshall McLuhan's view of time where, "everything descends upon us from everywhere all at once," is foreshadowed in the eternal "pressant" of Finnegans Wake and dramatized in the spontaneous, unrehearsed, unstructured, unrelated sequences, "happenings" of the "now-pop-fluid-action-accidental-cool" theater of the late sixties (paraphrase of "Is American History a Happening?" by Marshall Fishwick, Saturday Review, May 13, 1967, pp 19-21). If the historian looks to the art of narration for clues to the nature of time, he must confront the same hurdles which face the novelist. Each writer must determine which particular narrative framework best suits his singular account of the past, which narrative framework best reflects the unique bias of his historical point of view.

In what way does the static world-view presented in Romola's Proem shape the structure of the novel? What is the nature of the historical process in a work which shrinks the roles of time and change by engulfing them in a universal panorama of immutability? How is movement conveyed in an atmosphere of motionlessness, novelty in a climate of stasis, uniqueness in a pattern of uniformity? One basic strategy of a storyteller espousing such a world view is to dim the luster of epoch-making historical events by emphasizing their transiency. Such a storyteller attempts to mitigate the awesome psychological effects of an important happening by accentuating its ephemerality in an effort to assure the reader that however convulsive, however turbulent and extraordinary the historical event,

it too will pass. The momentous occurrence thus shrinks into the momentary episode.

A significant narrative technique which George Eliot uses to dwarf the prominence of outstanding incidents in the history of late fifteenth-century Florence is to juxtapose the "eternally" recurring rhythms of religious festivals, peasants' fairs, commemorative anniversaries of favorite figures, and the familiar weekly activities of butchers, cheese-mongers, vendors of macaroni, vegetables, milk, and dried fruit, on market day. In the bustle and chatter of the townspeople and the vendors on this very day, the reader is first apprised of the death of Lorenzo, the Magnificent. Wisps of conversation caught between the incessant buying and selling register the divergent feelings of Florentine citizens towards the passing of the Medici leader. Some are frankly worried about the ominous portents surrounding Lorenzo's death, for are not fallen waxen images, still-born calves, thunder in the starlight, and lightning striking the Duomo sure signs of the coming scourge of God? Others are relieved to be rid of a ruthless tyrant, a hawk who squelched the rights of Florentines and drained the public treasury for his personal interests. Still others admit he was a hawk but add that he was ". . . a crested hawk, and there are plenty of hawks without crests whose claws and beaks are as good for tearing" (Book One, Ch. I).

To offset the keen excitement in the topic of the hour, Eliot opposes the overriding weight of her description of the Mercato Vecchio, the old market itself, a perpetually reappearing spectacle

of time-honored vintage. The piazza, she writes, had been ". . . the scene of a provisional market from time immemorial, and may perhaps, says fond imagination, be the very spot to which the Fesulean ancestors of the Florentines descended from their high fastness to traffic with the rustic population of the valley. . . ." Because it now was Lent, the butchers were in abeyance, Eliot goes on to say, yet the picture was familiar:

. . . in all seasons there was the experimental ringing of pots and pans, the chinking of the money-changers, the tempting offers of cheapness at the old-clothes stalls, the challenges of the dicers, the vaunting of new linens and woollens, of excellent wooden-ware, kettles, and frying-pans; there was the choking of the narrow inlets with mules and carts, together with much uncomplimentary remonstrance in terms remarkably identical with the insults in use by the gentler sex of the present day, under the same imbrowning and heating circumstances.
(Book One, Ch. I)

Seen against a background of activity which stems "from time immemorial" and which is repeated "in all seasons . . . under the same imbrowning and heating circumstances," the historical impact of Lorenzo's death wanes considerably, and the preeminence of "Il Magnifico" is diminished in the recurring pageant of human industry with roots deep into the past.

The annual religious holidays of Carnival, Lent, and Easter, as well as the mid-summer festival of San Giovanni, also reinforce the cyclical temporal pattern of the novel. For example, the plot action of three chapters is pitted against the spectacular procession of elaborate mechanical floats, gigantic whirling towers, and triumphal cars representing the arts, the guilds, the governing bodies of Florence, in a communal outpouring to celebrate the feast day of San Giovanni, who had been patron saint of Florence for the last

eight hundred years. Eliot conveys the solemnity and majesty of this "ancient church festival already venerable in the days of St. Augustine" by describing the holiday in profuse detail. The petty lot of the individual dwindles in significance in the face of the author's powerful recognition of the city's puissant corporate life paying annual homage to San Giovanni. One of the spectators comments:

. . . the great bond of our Republic is expressing itself in ancient symbols, without which the vulgar would be conscious of nothing beyond their own petty wants of back and stomach, and never rise to the sense of community in religion and law. There has been no great people without processions, and the man who thinks himself too wise to be moved by them to anything but contempt, is like the puddle that was proud of standing alone while the river rushed by.

(Book One, Ch. VIII)

As the Florentines are made to pause before the passing exhibition, so the reader is made to pause and weigh the perishable actions of short-lived mortals against the background of hallowed and enduring traditions.

Another annual holiday which helps frame the action in Romola is the feast of the Fierucola, on September 7th, in honor of the nativity of the Virgin. Unlike other religious celebrations, this day is a rough-and-tumble peasants' fair, a confused din of hooting, whistling, and buffoonery, as peddlars, quack doctors, magicians, and mountebanks, ply their arts, and street-boys indulge in their favorite Florentine sport: stone throwing. Again Eliot underlines the enduring quality of this popular rustic event, as, once a year, the peasant women descend into the city with their

. . . sun-dried, bronzed faces, and their strange, fragmentary garb, dim with hereditary dirt, and of obsolete stuffs and fashions, that made them look, in the eyes of the city people, like a way-

worn ancestry returning from a pilgrimage on which they had set out a century ago.

(Book One, Ch. XIV)

Even the "unprecedented," "unexampled" entrance into Florence of Charles VIII of France on the 17th of November 1494, is viewed in the context of the past rather than as an unparalleled historical event heralding a new era of change. The reader beholds Charles through the minds of the Florentines, some of whom think of the king as a new Charlemagne, "reputed rebuilder of Florence," while others prefer "the comparison to Cyrus, liberator of the chosen people, restorer of the Temple." Only two weeks prior to Charles's entry, Eliot writes, "the spirit of the old centuries seemed to have re-entered the breasts of Florentines . . . ," as they expelled the corrupt Piero, son of Lorenzo, from the city. The French king served "to revive in the breasts of men the memory of great dispensations by which new strata had been laid in the history of mankind" (Book Two, Ch. I). Her use of the words, "revive," "rebuilder," "re-entered," "restorer," and "spirit of the old centuries," serves as a subtle reminder that while the appearance of the French was "unprecedented," the Florentine mind saw very little that was new in the advent of Charles, excepting perhaps the exterior trappings.

Another dramatic event, which embodied the quintessence of novelty in the history of this period, Savonarola's dramatic burning of the Pyramid of Vanities, is looked upon as a form of imitation, a "sacred parody of the old." Eliot writes:

Had there been bonfires in the old time? There was to be a bonfire now, consuming impurity from off the earth. Had there

been symbolic processions? There were to be processions now, but the symbols were to be white robes and red crosses and olive wreaths. . . . Had there been dancing in a ring under the open sky, to the sound of choral voices chanting loose songs? There was to be dancing in a ring now, but dancing of monks and laity in fraternal love and divine joy, and the music was to be the music of hymns. As for the collections from street passengers, they were to be greater than ever, -- not for gross and superfluous suppers, but for the benefit of the hungry and needy. . . .
(Book Three, Ch. XXIX)

In the above description, the burning of the Pyramid of Vanities is not so much a change as an inversion of old Carnival customs.

Viewed as a sacred parody, the singularity of this phenomenon is minimized, for the very existence of parody as a form of expression is grounded in the spirit of mimesis, a copy of what has gone before. In addition to religious ceremonies, anniversaries also transmit the idea of yearly return. The humanists of the Platonic Academy celebrate the alleged date of Plato's death: November 13th (Book Two, Ch. XIX), while Romola, the heroine of the novel, each May commemorates the date of Savonarola's martyrdom (Epilogue). From beginning to end, the novel pulsates with the periodic rhythms of deeply entrenched recurring cultural patterns, whose drawing power sets the emotional pace in favor of a cyclical rather than a linear time scheme in which to set the plot.

Another narrative device used by the storyteller to convey the impression of permanence is to underscore ideas of rootedness, immobility, fixity. Sprinkled throughout the story of Romola are references to old families, old habits, familiar symbols, and enduring themes. Eliot frequently uses plant imagery, especially vegetables, in order to anchor in the reader's mind the picture of concrete living roots, as in the following examples:

. . . I come of a Greek stock planted in Italian soil much longer
than the mulberry-trees which have taken so kindly to it.
(Book One, Ch. III)

Because he was a large melon, every other Florentine is not a
pumpkin, I suppose.
(Book One, Ch. III)

Certain of our scholars hold that your Greek learning is but a
wayside degenerate plant until it has been transplanted into
Italian brains. . . .
(Book One, Ch. III)

. . . a man who'll keep his word to you, even to the halving of
a fennel seed:. . . .
(Book One, Ch. III)

. . . looking no fresher than an apple that has stood the winter.
(Book One, Ch. III)

But an old Florentine family was many-rooted. . . .
(Book One, Ch. V)

. . . for I carry within me the fruits of that fervid study. . .
which would have been the vintage of my life. . . .
(Book One, Ch. V)

. . . -- which pithy remark, it seems to me, was not an herb
out of his own garden.
(Book One, Ch. XIII)

We are not the heads to plant such carrots as those in.
(Book One, Ch. XVI)

These picturesque images figured prominently in the idiom of
fifteenth-century Florence, an idiom which Eliot found in such
sources as the Novelle of Sacchetti, Varchi's Storie, Machiavelli's
Mandragola, and the jests and sayings in Lippi's Malmantile (J. W.
Cross. George Eliot's Life, Vol. II, p. 264). She referred to
these books in her intensive researches for the novel in the Maglia-
bechiana library of Florence during May and June of 1861. To this
day, foods are conspicuous in the metaphorical expressions of daily
Italian speech, so that the imagery of carrots, apples, pump-

kins, melons, and herbs in Romola serves Eliot's purpose admirably in making viable the idea of rootedness which is basic to the novel's temporal scheme. The plant metaphor also alludes to the system of binding ties between the individual and the community. On the first page of Book Two, Florence is pictured as a living tree, and Florentine citizens as buds, blossoms, or fruit, which depend for their destinies "on the primary circulation of the sap" (full quotation on p. 4). Eliot's comparison is reminiscent of the "belly" analogy in the opening scene of Shakespeare's Coriolanus, in which the Roman Senate is conceived of as a storehouse of food for the whole body of Rome:

But, if you do remember,
I send it through the rivers of your blood,
Even to the court, the heart, to th' seat o' th' brain
And, through the cranks and offices of man,
The strongest nerves and small inferior veins
From me receive that natural competency
Whereby they live;

(I, i, 135-141)

Since biological metaphors have been a favorite poetic device for expressing the organic relationship between microcosm and macrocosm, between man and cosmos, between man and nature, and between man and society, it is important to discover how Eliot uses this analogy. It would be hasty to assume that because biological comparisons between living structures and social aggregates were rampant in the social Darwinism of Eliot's day that her plant metaphor implied a developmental theory of history. And it would be hasty to assume that because Eliot was quite familiar with the evolutionary philosophy of her good friend, Herbert Spencer, that the tree metaphor implied a developmental series of transfor-

mations in which a community progressively improved through time. A correlation between the "body" politic and the life process can betoken any one of a host of diverging historical outlooks, each of which depends on those specific points of resemblance which a thinker has in mind when he likens a living organism to society. Is he perhaps picturing a self-contained unity, or perhaps a growth pattern, or maybe a structural similarity? What exactly does he see in the figure of a tree? Oswald Spengler, for example, would envisage barren branches on a withering plant, which had once been a vigorous sapling. Spencer would fix his attention on the seed pods and glory in the emerging forests of the future. Bergson would find a resemblance between the creative thrust of society and the tree's vital sap. In Romola, Eliot sees a strong, stable trunk with fast roots, which manifest an imperceptible and virtually negligible growth through time. Nevertheless, she peers closely at the maturational behavior of the tree's individual buds, blossoms, fruits, and flowers, which ripen and die in a short season. It is in this sense that Eliot perceives the tree of society in Romola. While changes do occur, the basic outline remains steady and unchanging. Though individual vicissitudes constitute the bulk of change, they do not radically alter the fundamental structure of the communal organism or the cyclical nature of history.

Time in Romola is a ripening process for human beings and their unique and perishable life stories; time is not a ripening process for society as a whole. The meaning of the tree image in this novel is much closer to such fixed classical configurations as

the Great Chain of Being, or the Scala Naturae, rather than any particular brand of nineteenth-century historicism with which Eliot was familiar. Like the Great Chain, the tree is finite and stable, a form of being which time does not affect. Movement and becoming are characteristic of passing individual particulars, not of the eternal pattern. Change is Aristotelian, that is, an unfolding of inherent and limited potential, a self-fulfillment of the latent nature of each fleeting phenomenon. Time is the medium through which the life cycle of a specific person, a specific thing, deed, or event is brought to fruition. History is thus imbedded in the natural process and becomes a harvesting ground with time as the reaper.

While mirroring a philosophy of society as old as Pythagoras, Eliot's idea of the community as a rooted organism was far from being an anachronism in her day. The traditional historical outlook and the conservative temper of mind which finds expression in Romola stem from intellectual currents crystallized by a late eighteenth-century figure, Edmund Burke, whose counter-revolutionary ideas struck responsive chords in nineteenth-century English thought. For example, echoes of Burke resound in the pages of Samuel Coleridge's The Constitution of Church and State (1829), J. H. Newman's The Ideal of a Christian Church (1844), Matthew Arnold's essay on "Democracy" (1861), as well as Eliot's conservative political novel, inappropriately named Felix Holt, the Radical (1866). In his Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), Burke writes:

Our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world, and with the mode of

existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts; wherein, by the disposition of a stupendous wisdom, moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole, at one time, is never old, or middle-aged, or young, but in a condition of unchangeable constancy, moves on through the varied tenour of perpetual decay, fall, renovation, and progression. Thus, by preserving the method of nature in the conduct of the state, in what we improve we are never wholly new; in what we retain we are never wholly obsolete.

(pp. 45-6)

Change affects the "transitory parts," not the "unchangeable constancy" of the "permanent body," just as change in Eliot's Romola influences the leaves and fruit, not the framework of the tree.

This concept of the social organism not only recognizes but stresses the quality of uniqueness in each expression of corporate life and the distinctiveness of each cultural aggregate. Such a view champions the importance of historical context but only in a limited sense. Context becomes a consciousness of difference in location, of "local color," rather than a consciousness of difference between past and present during which time human frames of reference and basic patterns of human behavior change and evolve. Historical context in Romola, for example, is rendered by a punctilious attention to countless numbers of external concrete details: accurate descriptions of dress, for instance, faithful descriptions of architecture and painting, idiosyncrasies of speech, rituals, or habits of work and play. Yet the novel does not penetrate very deeply into that prodigiously creative Florentine élan, which helped spark the Renaissance spirit and helped shape the beginnings of the modern mind. In a letter to Richard Holt Hutton about Romola, Eliot writes:

It is the habit of my imagination to strive after as full a vision of the medium in which a character moves as of the character itself. The psychological causes which prompted me to give such details of Florentine life and history as I have given, are precisely the same as those which determined me in giving the details of English village life in 'Silas Marner' or the "Dodson" life, out of which were developed the destinies of poor Tom and Maggie. . . . [yet] great, great facts have struggled to find a voice through me, and have only been able to speak brokenly.

(Haight, ed. The George Eliot Letters, Vol. IV, p. 97)

While she attempts to give a full vision of the Florentine medium, her description succeeds in a physical rather than a "psychological" way. Romola is a magnificent Baedaker of fifteenth-century Florence, but a sense of the greatness of this era, strangely enough, is lacking. Steeped in historical criticism, Eliot was thoroughly convinced that each age had a faith and symbolism suitable to its stage of development, a belief she affirmed on repeated occasions in connection with her translation of David Strauss's Das Leben Jesu in 1846, and her book reviews of Robert Mackay's The Progress of Intellect in 1851 and Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl's The Natural History of German Life in 1856. Yet in Romola, Eliot evinces none of the profound appreciation for the incredible "rebirth" of values epitomized by the Florentine milieu of that time, none of the profound admiration of fifteenth-century Italian culture which fills the pages of her contemporaries, Jakob Burckhardt, Walter Pater, and John Addington Symonds. In The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy (1860), Burckhardt praises Florence as a "unique" and "remarkable State," a cradle of "intellectual freedom and independence":

The most elevated political thought and the most varied forms of human development are found united in the history of Florence, which in this sense deserves the name of the first modern State in the world. Here the whole people are busied with what in the despotic cities is the affair of a single family. That wondrous Florentine spirit, at once keenly critical and artistically creative, was incessantly transforming the social and political condition of the State, and as incessantly describing and judging the change.

(Part I, "The State as a Work of Art," p. 48)

John Addington Symonds supports Burckhardt's view of the Renaissance as a grand awakening of freedom and independence in the human spirit. In his History of the Renaissance in Italy (1875-86), Symonds states that in the fourteenth century, the Western races ". . . awoke as it were from a slumber. . . , " from a dormant period when men lived in a cowl, blind to the beauty of the world: "The arts and the inventions, the knowledge and the books, which suddenly became vital at the time of the Renaissance, had long lain neglected on the shores of the Dead Sea, which we call the Middle Ages" (p. 4). Pater's The Renaissance (1873) celebrates the splendid freeing of the senses, the epicurean ". . . care for physical beauty, the worship of the body, the breaking down of those limits which the religious system of the middle age imposed on the heart and the imagination," all of which Pater finds compressed in the Italy of the fifteenth century:

. . . in that solemn fifteenth century which can hardly be studied too much, not merely for its positive results in the things of the intellect and the imagination, its concrete works of art, its special and prominent personalities, with their profound aesthetic charm, but for its general spirit and character, for the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type.

(Preface)

By contrast, Eliot's conception of the same era in Romola is conspicuous by the omission of such praise. Her cyclical philo-

sophy of history militates against the admission that the Florentine contribution of that time was an advance in the civilizational process of mankind. More important, however, is the real likelihood that Eliot adopted a non-developmental theory of history for Romola in the first place, because, like John Ruskin and many other Victorians, she had no taste for the very values which Burckhardt, Symonds, and Pater extolled. Eliot had a quick eye for the cruelty and egoism which masqueraded under the guise of the vigorous individualism which Burckhardt admired. She unveiled the lurking signs of uncontrolled self-indulgence in the freeing of the senses and exposed the spiritual aridity of much that passed for the classical humanism which Pater so esteemed. She was far too sensitive to the ideas and traditions which men hold dear to dismiss the rich heritage of the Middle Ages to the "Dead Sea" of Symonds's metaphorical equation. While she tried to do justice to the "great, great facts" of the fifteenth century, her inherent distaste for the Renaissance temperament caused a conflict of interest which constrained her to ignore the implications of historical change in favor of a philosophy of history which recognized nothing that was essentially new. Thus her picture of fifteenth-century Florence resembles an exotic plant, a wholly self-contained species in a remote temporal setting, an isolated and fixed organism, with movement and change applying only to the seasonal pattern of the plant's "transitory parts."

The inexorable rhythm of the life cycle in society's "buds" and "blossoms" applies not only to the eternal tempo of human life but to human behavior as well. Just as individuals are born, grow

up, grow old, and die, human character germinates, develops, and matures from its inner proclivities compounded with its power of free choice. All actions have consequences, which return unrelentingly to please, punish, or ". . . plague the inventor." For ". . . our deeds," Eliot writes in Romola, "are like children that are born to us: they live and act apart from our own will. Nay, children may be strangled, but deeds never: they have an indestructible life both in and out of our consciousness;. . . " (Book One, Ch. XVI). By "indestructible life," Eliot does not mean that actions have never-ending consequences in the world at large, like the ever-widening ripples from a stone thrown in a pond. She refers instead to the inevitable payment which attends each moral choice, call it "nemesis," or "fate," or the "even-handed justice " Macbeth speaks of, which ". . . commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice/ To our own lips" (I, vii, 10-12). Sometimes late in coming, the day of reckoning invariably arrives. Even if the gods take a holiday and postpone their judicial decisions, they always redress the moral balance in the end. In Romola's Proem, Eliot quotes the Florentine proverb, Iddio non paga il Sabato, that God does not pay on the Sabbath, a curious old saying which can, on the one hand, be taken to mean that life should be made into a series of carefree perpetual days of rest, because the Day of Judgment is a long way off; or the adage can be interpreted in the stern admonitory sense that the Sabbath is followed without fail by six sober workdays during which old debts are conclusively settled. Eliot, needless to say, supports the second view. A quick glance at some of the

chapter titles in Romola reveals the slow, patient, infallible process of moral retribution which permeates the novel: "The Shadow of Nemesis" (Book One, Ch. XIII), "Fruit is Seed" (Book Two, Ch. XI), "No Place for Repentance" (Book Two, Ch. XIV), "Waiting" (Book Three, Ch. XXXV), "Ripening Schemes" (Book Three, Ch. XLIII), and "A Masque of the Furies" (Book Three, Ch. XLVI).

Cause and effect are linked in the moral order as integrally and as indissolubly as in the natural order: ends contain their means, conclusions their premises, results their agencies, deeds their inception, issue its genesis, choice its motives -- in short, "Fruit is Seed." To reinforce the idea of retribution in the moral scheme of things, Eliot saturates the novel with the language of exchange and barter, the language of the marketplace. That everything has a price, that you get precisely what you bargain for, apply to all gradations of human choice from selecting a course of conduct to selecting a bunch of radishes. Buying and selling, bidding and trading, redeeming and defaulting, are activities which form the essential core of human behavior throughout the plot, activities which range from the serious to the frivolous, from the ransom of a man's life to the redemption of a worthless trinket. The imagery of barter is transposed from lower to higher registers of significance, each range interacting with the other to enrich the prevailing ethical principle: balance of payments. For example, the statement, "He did not like the price, and yet it was inevitable that he should be glad of the purchase" (Book Two, Ch. XIX), does not refer to a commercial transaction involving an object, but rather to the buying

of personal security at the expense of a sacred trust.

The shopkeeper mentality of getting and spending, the couching of human values in terms of marketable commodities, is continuous throughout the novel. The first voice heard in the opening chapter of Romola is that of a secondhand dealer in junk, Bratti Ferravecchi, who hawks his wares in the lingo of an aggressive bargain-hunting peddler:

But it remains to be seen what is my profit in the matter. Nothing for nothing, young man. . . . Three years ago, the Saint sent a dead body in my way, -- a blind beggar, with his cap well lined with pieces, -- but, if you'll believe me, my stomach turned against the testoni [silver coins] I'd never bargained for, till it came into my head that San Giovanni owed me the pieces for what I spend yearly at the Festa; besides, I buried the body and paid for a mass, -- and so I saw it was a fair bargain.

Bratti's chatter is soon followed by other persons whose dialogue is rife with commercial allusions such as: "It appears the Magnifico is dead -- rest his soul! -- and the price of wax will rise?" and "when the Church is purged of cardinals and prelates who traffic in her inheritance that their hands may be full to pay the price of blood," or "Florence is the best market in Italy for such commodities [classical scholarship] as yours." Images of materialistic worth, money, taxes, jewels, dot the entire narrative and serve as leitmotifs which support the underlying rhetoric of exchange basic to the novel's commitment to the idea of debits and credits in the moral order. The rhetoric extends to divine actions as well; even God, in the quoted Florentine proverb, "does not pay" on the Sabbath. In the festival procession of the patron saint, San Giovanni, the principal triumphal car, which bears the figure of St. John the

Baptist, is that of the Zecca or Mint. "For where could the image of the patron saint be more fitly placed than on the symbol of the Zecca? Was not the royal prerogative of coining money the surest token that a city had won its independence" (Book One, Ch. VIII)? Money and divinity are thus coupled in the religious pageantry of Florentine life; divinity sanctions the fine art of barter; divinity sanctions the quid pro quo.

The vocabulary of trade used by Eliot in Romola is not a verbal embellishment of abstract ethical norms but rather an incarnation of them. The novelist, sometimes deliberately, sometimes unconsciously, selects words which are verbal co-ordinates of his unique intellectual stance, co-ordinates which do not depend upon but, on the contrary, control the very tenor of his abstract assumptions or his moral judgments. That the style reveals or more often betrays the man is no less true of the historian than of the novelist. As Kenneth Burke puts it in his Attitudes toward History:

A man organizes an essay. He necessarily chooses certain pivotal verbalizations about which he hinges his discussion. He chooses these particular verbalizations because they appeal to him. Some other terms might be substituted in their place, so far as the pure logic of the case is concerned. But he makes a selection in accordance with subtle, personal tests of "propriety." Though the words are, on their surface, neutral, they fit together into an organic interdependent whole precisely because of their common stake in some unifying attitude of his. We may get cues prompting us to discern the underlying emotional connotations of words that even the user may consider merely "scientific" or "neutral." By locating these, we get glimpses of a subtler organization than is apparent when we take the words at their face value.

(Part III, Ch. Two, p. 237)

Like literary criticism, historical criticism seeks out the cues which characterize a writer's language set, the pivotal terms

which shape his value judgments. In applying the tools of critical analysis to the historical documents at hand, the historian must also consider what verbal frame best suits his own "attitude" in discussing his material. To resist the iron grip of metaphor in an effort to be objective and dispassionate in writing history is an honorable but somewhat short-sighted aim. To resist making moral judgments in writing about the past, as Burckhardt, for example, so ardently advocates, is often to substitute one set of norms for another. In the vocabulary of his The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy, Burckhardt's words for "good" cluster about the imagery of "newness," "birth," and "awakening," while words for "bad" involve "decay," "veils," and "bondage." We read, for instance, that the Italian ". . . was the firstborn among the sons of modern Europe . . ." (Part II, p. 81), that Dante dreamed of a "newborn political speculation" (Part I, p. 49), that Sigismondo ". . . seemed born to all that he undertook" (Part III, p. 136). We picture the Middle Ages as a period which ". . . lay dreaming or half awake beneath a common veil . . ." (Part II, p. 81), and that this ". . . veil of illusion was torn asunder, when once the dread of nature and the slavery to books and tradition were overcome . . ." (Part IV, p. 174). Phrases such as "the breath of life," "the resuscitation of antiquity," "fruitful union," "a reproduction of the whole ancient view of life," "gasp to be back in modern air," "a wholly new element in society," "the new monumental spirit," "the new passions," "the new learning," "a new cause in the world and a new class of men to maintain it" pervade the text. While Burckhardt's buoyant

vocabulary prompts the reader to join in the general congratulatory éclat on the birth of a new era, Eliot's choice of a commercial idiom in Romola induces the reader to question closely just what kinds of bargains were engaged in by the Florentines of the Renaissance, bargains which just as easily swapped spiritual as well as worldly goods, bargains made for immediate gain but often carrying the heavy price tags of long-range Faustian contracts.

If Eliot saw the debit side of the ledger in the Florentine quattrocento, if she chose to portray the poverty of classical humanism, the grossness of the mercantile mentality, and the self-absorption of the epicurean spirit, it would seem fitting that she embody these negative values in a personality, a "bud" which flourished in such a society. If "fruit is seed," and schemes "ripen" under "the shadow of nemesis," as the chapter headings of Romola suggest, it would be natural for Eliot to observe at close range the blossoming, maturation, and demise of a figure who epitomized the worst features of the age: its unbridled egotism, its irresponsible pragmatic ethic, and its craving for a life of well-padded sensual comfort, the life of sybaritic ease, which Italians have dubbed la dolce vita. Eliot creates such a figure in Tito Melema, a character whose deplorable career constitutes the marrow of the plot. Despite the novel's title, it is not Romola but Romola's husband, Tito, whose behavior forms the dramatic and thematic hub of the story. Tito Melema is a strangely familiar twentieth-century blend of opportunist, a mixture of the "con" man, the playboy, and the flunkey. As subtle in the arts of treachery as

any Elizabethan "machiavel," Tito's brand of villainy is stamped with a peculiarly modern penchant for "soft" living, an aversion to anything unpleasant or unduly arduous, and a strong compulsion to follow, in any given instance, the path of least resistance. Tito sins less in the conscious zest for evil characteristic of his Tudor successors than in his disinclination to exert himself in behalf of good. His immorality is rooted in sloth and cowardice, ugly traits which are, nevertheless, confounded by a resplendent façade, for Tito is an extraordinarily handsome young man and an accomplished Greek scholar. Perhaps because of her own physical limitations, Eliot was sensitive to the charismatic appeal of physical beauty, for she is pitiless in exposing the defects of character which often accompany allure, witness her portraits of Hetty Sorrel in Adam Bede, Rosamond Vincy in Middlemarch, and Gwendolen Harleth in Daniel Deronda.

Eliot creates un bel giovane, a "Phoebus Apollo," "a bird of rare plumage," "a Bacchus," to use a few of the epithets used to describe Tito in the novel, yet Eliot's scalpel lays bare the kind of beauty which masks the most insidious form of treachery, a beauty which bribes the senses of the beholder, whether male or female, into mistaking an unblemished front for an untainted spirit. The name, "Melema," is rich in connotative overtones, since the Indo-European root mel refers to softness, to darkness, to evil, and to deception. In addition, the Italian word for "apple" is mele, an allusion not only to the loss of Eden, but also a punning reminder that Tito is a fruit of the Florentine milieu. What makes Tito a

captivating study is not that he is a prince in a world without principle, but that he develops from a morally irresponsible fledgling into a full-blown traitor through a progressive series of rationalizations by which he justifies his actions throughout the novel. Tito is not presented as a born betrayer, but a betrayer in the making. Because Eliot believes that character is destiny in the sense that human nature is a fixed component of mixed resources, which are shaped in greater measure through the exercise of free individual choice than by environmental pressures, she persistently seeks to uncover the embryonic habits of mind which govern the direction of moral growth. The formation of character far from being adventitious is predictable, if the psychologist but study the incipient sources, the early clues to behavior. Eliot sees human nature in Romola as a stationary quantity molded by warring stresses from within rather than from without. While she delves deeply into the springs of human motivation, Eliot's concept of character is based essentially on a traditional point of view, one which is impressively summed up by Warwick in Shakespeare's The Second Part of Henry the Fourth:

There is a history in all men's lives,
Figuring the nature of the times deceas'd;
The which observ'd, a man may prophesy,
With a near aim, of the main chance of things
As yet not come to life, which in their seeds
And weak beginnings lie intreasured.
(III, 1, 80-85)

Interested in observing the seeds of psychological development, Eliot introduces Tito at the outset as a neutral moral entity rather than as a consummate wrongdoer. Entering Florence as a

shipwrecked stranger, Tito attempts to sell his jewels with the noble intention of ransoming his stepfather and benefactor, Baldassare Calva, a classical scholar who has been taken prisoner by a Turkish ship off the coast of Greece. Tito's success in disposing of the gems for a substantial sum and his success in gaining entry into exclusive Florentine social circles tempt him into a self-centered reappraisal of his position. Lulled by the ingratiating prospects of Romola's love as well as a promising political career, ought he, he begins to ask, to risk himself for his father's sake? If it were certain that his father were alive, he would of course try to rescue Baldassare, but nothing could be further from that certainty. Did he not owe something to himself before giving up all he thus far had gained? If he were to quit Florence, he might himself be seized and have to spend all his money on ransom and again be a destitute wanderer, this time with no gems to sell. After much rumination along these lines, Tito conveniently chooses to think that his father is lost beyond a reasonable hope and sees little purpose in admitting either to himself or to anyone else the remote and irksome possibility that Baldassare may still be alive. This string of rationalizations conforming to the bent of his wishes is Tito's first prolonged colloquy with himself, a colloquy which constitutes his initiation into the habit of faithlessness and self-deception which spreads and deepens throughout the novel. "Under every guilty secret," Eliot writes, "there is hidden a brood of guilty wishes, whose unwholesome infecting life is cherished by the darkness. The contaminating effect of deeds often lies less in the commission than in the conse-

quent adjustment of our desires, --the enlistment of our self-interest on the side of falsity; . . ." (Book One, Ch. IX). When a friar brings news that Baldassare is alive awaiting rescue, Tito's former experience in fabricating ingenious excuses to suit his pleasure serves again to absolve him from feelings of guilt. Why, after all, was he bound to search for Baldassare? Tito's line of reasoning encompasses a whole chapter, the argument in substance being this:

What, looked at closely, was the end of all life, but to extract the utmost sum of pleasure? And was not his own blooming life a promise of incomparably more pleasure, not for himself only, but for others, than the withered wintry life of a man who was past the time of keen enjoyment, and whose ideas had stiffened into barren rigidity? Those ideas had all been sown in the fresh soil of Tito's mind, and were lively germs there: that was the proper order of things, -- the order of Nature, which treats all maturity as a mere nidus of youth. Baldassare had done his work, had had his draught of life: Tito said it was his turn now.
(Book One, Ch. XI)

Tito's pattern of self-exculpation leads him to sink deeper and deeper into deceit, a deceit directed not only towards his stepfather, but also towards his wife, Romola, to his father-in-law, Bardo de' Bardi, to Savonarola, and to the three contending political parties, each of which trusts Tito as its own loyal confidential agent. Ironically, the tissue of lies which shields Tito from unpleasant responsibilities contributes to his lack of self-command in a fateful moment when a well-contrived falsehood would have freed him from the fatal consequences of his stepfather's vengeance. Tito's hedonism rather than his delight in depravity causes his early downfall, for the thought of inflicting pain on anyone was distasteful to him:

He had simply chosen to make life easy to himself -- to carry his human lot, if possible, in such a way that it should pinch him nowhere; and the choice had, at various times, landed him

in unexpected positions. The question now was . . . whether all the resources of lying would save him from being crushed by the consequences of that habitual choice.

(Book Two, Ch. III)

In Romola, character is determined by the "reiterated choice of good or evil." Just as the body may become habituated to customary routines, so the spirit may become addicted to moral practices impossible to remold. Tito's hedonism, fed by duplicity, undermines his nerve and his cunning. The young Niccolò Machiavelli, who appears briefly in Romola in the role of an astute political realist, would later render a verdict on men like Tito in The Prince. An opportunist who craves constant success must be a feigner, a dissimulator, must seem to be all mercy, faith, humanity, sincerity, and religion, must imitate the fox in order to protect himself from traps, must imitate the lion in order to frighten wolves. Tito's collapse, Machiavelli would say, is caused by the failure to master the example of these two beasts; Tito lacks the full measure of the lion's daring and the fox's guile. While Machiavelli implies that men exist who do possess the necessary qualifications to be wholly successful, Eliot believes that such "success" is illusory at best, that the price of "the means" is too high for the rewards of "the end." When she states that Tito's ". . . conduct gave the character of an epoch to him, . . ." and that he had "the air of a fallen prince," not only does Eliot have Machiavelli's "prince" in mind but also the fallen prince of Milton's Paradise Lost. The human psyche in Romola is made up of finite and unchanging components, which resemble Plato's myth of human nature as a chariot pulled by the passions and the will but controlled for good or for ill by reason, the

charioteer, through the reins of free choice. Character is a stable compound rather than a fountain of endless creative potential, in which the personality unfettered by inherent restrictions can explore infinite reaches of novelty. Character is self-formed, self-determined, and is based on the voluntary acceptance or rejection of options offered by the innate make-up of man as well as options offered by the make-up of the world in which he lives.

Eliot's conception of human nature in Romola as a universal and timeless complex of unevolving characteristics corresponds to her over-all vision of history in the novel as essentially static and unchanging. The influence of environment, the influence of impersonal forces in the form of trends, tendencies, universal laws, or "the spirit of the age," play but minor roles in fashioning the bent of the individual personality. A critical historical change such as the Reformation or the French Revolution may serve as fodder for certain human traits to feed, fatten, and multiply, but on the whole, the historical course of events is given little credit for altering the basic spiritual composition of man or for molding his personal destiny. Environmental pressures, which exert indomitable mastery over the human being in the naturalistic novel, have little relevance in Romola. If man is a victim, he is a victim of his own lack of self-control instead of being a helpless prey to the pulls and pushes of his surroundings; if he has peace of mind, he has himself to thank. Despite the pervasive Greek trappings of "nemesis," "fate," and "the furies," in Eliot's creative work, it would be hasty to interpret the use of these terms as being identical to their application in Greek drama,

if indeed these concepts could at all be considered identical amongst the Greek dramatists themselves. In Eliot's lexicon, the portrayal of nemesis does not resemble an external power stalking in the outer world, meting out due rewards and punishments, as does Hardy's "President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase." In Romola, nemesis is internalized in the seeds of character, seeds which mature in accordance with the individual determination to resist temptation or to submit to sin. Nemesis is thus viewed from a subjective and personal standpoint rather than from a supernatural or external perspective. Character determines its own fate and creates its own future as a field of torment or bliss, in the same sense that Milton's lost Archangel boasts of:

A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.
(Paradise Lost, Book I, 253-5)

Lucifer's exhilarating pronouncement on the unconditional freedom of individual volition must, like Eliot's position on human nature in Romola, confront massive evidence which argues against the unmitigated capacity of man's power to hold sway over his own development. Determinism in its many guises, to wit, "implacable" nature, "inexorable" historical laws, the decrees of science, pre-ordaining providence, and the impelling "group-think" of social masses and classes, all clash to some degree with more sanguine estimates of man as a free moral agent. Nevertheless, Eliot's concept of character as an efficient cause of action enhances and preserves the idea of causality in human affairs; an idea which has continued to be a source of consternation to scientists, historians,

and philosophers, ever since David Hume shattered the notion of cause and effect in his A Treatise of Human Nature (1740). Supporting Hume in the scientific sphere, Bertrand Russell states:

So far as the physical sciences are concerned, Hume is wholly in the right: such propositions as "A causes B" are never to be accepted, and our inclination to accept them is to be explained by the laws of habit and association.

(A History of Western Philosophy,
Ch. XVII, p. 669).

Yet Russell admits that in the psychological sphere, opponents of Hume have justifiable reasons for insisting that causal relations have valid claims to recognition. "The whole conception of cause," he goes on to say on the same page, "is probably derived from volition, and it may be said that we can perceive a relation, between a volition and the consequent act, which is something more than invariable sequence."

In historical circles during the last few decades, belief in causality has been at low ebb. The post hoc, ergo propter hoc fallacy, in particular, haunts the historian, whose sense of security about relating events in the past has been undermined by the discarding of causality as an outmoded myth. The fact that events follow one another in time has never been a sufficient reason for their being a necessary nexus between them, yet the latent hope of discovering and establishing an intrinsic connection between an antecedent and a consequent happening, a connection which would draw its strength from the weight of empirical evidence assembled and understood in terms of cause and effect, agency and execution, origin and outcome, has been an integral part of the historian's credo. While the scientist has eliminated the notion of cause from the framework of his

thinking, he has, nevertheless, maintained an indestructible faith in the principle of induction and the uniformity of nature in order to support the generalizations he draws from empirical data. Though deprived of the consummate gratification based on sure and certain knowledge that one event can cause another, he is content, nonetheless, with the partial gratification of probable knowledge, that given a controlled set of experimental conditions, the expected results will most likely repeat themselves over and over again. Not so the historian. Unlike the scientist's world, the historian's very medium, the human past, deals with the non-uniformity of events and rests on unique occurrences which do not depend on the stability of nature but on the unpredictable and endlessly changing temporal panorama. Once past, elements in this panorama cannot be isolated, controlled, and duplicated. "In history the presumption is not that the same thing will happen again but that the same thing will not happen again," E. H. Carr states in The New Society (quoted from William Dray, Laws and Explanation in History, pp. 48-9). Thus a generalization concerning the evidence of history cannot be tested, verified, validated, corroborated, "proved," in the same manner as a generalization based on the evidence of science. The strength of inductive reasoning in consequence rests on a far more tenuous base in the study of history than in the study of science.

Historical generalizations on the whole permit an inordinately wide range of abstraction, which often suffers from the kind of inductive logic employed by the man who used to dance in wild costumes on the streets of Chicago in order, he said, to chase away

tigers. When told there were no tigers on the streets of Chicago, he jubilantly replied, "See, it works!" In what way can a historical generalization escape this kind of thinking and be considered tenable with the same measure of assurance as an inductive statement made in the pure sciences? How can a modern historian assert with confidence a connection between a series of past phenomena without the usual qualifying apologies that such an explanation in no way implies a necessary relationship between the two events, that such an explanation is a reconstruction seen from a purely personal perspective, that such an explanation has relevance only in the historian's own day, that historical viewpoints are, after all, pluralistic, and that the matter of causes being far too complex to fathom ought best be dropped entirely? With what assurance can an Elie Halévy declare, for example, in A History of the English People in the 19th Century, that evangelicalism was the prime cause in shaping the ethical and political conservatism of Victorian England, because ". . . the élite of the working class, the hardworking and capable bourgeois had been imbued by the evangelical movement with a spirit from which the established order had nothing to fear" (Vol. I, p. 464)? Or with what assurance, for example, can a Gibbon attribute the decline and fall of the Roman empire to the successful encroachment of both barbarism and Christianity on decadent Roman life?

Like the novelist, the historian must appeal, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, to the fundamental constancy in the psychological make-up of man. If the scientist rests his faith in the principle of induction on the uniformity of nature,

the historian and the novelist can buttress the validity of their observations on the basic uniformity of human nature, on the assumption that the old human ego has through countless generations proven itself to be a fairly stable entity. Historical events may be singular and unique, but they are objectively comprehensible because, although men have changed, they have not changed that much. Listen to Gibbon describe Diocletian, for instance:

. . . [his] abilities were useful rather than splendid: a vigorous mind improved by the experience and study of mankind; dexterity and application in business; a judicious mixture of liberality and economy, of mildness and rigour; profound dissimulation under the disguise of military frankness; steadiness to pursue his ends; flexibility to vary his means; and, above all, the great art of submitting his own passions, as well as those of others, to the interest of his ambition, and of colouring his ambition with the most specious pretences of justice and public utility.

(The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Ch. VI, p. 182)

We are struck by the universality of Diocletian's type and the familiarity of this recurring human pattern throughout the history of politics, ancient and modern. More important, however, we discover that the events in Diocletian's reign grow intelligible, in so far as we identify a recognizable paradigm of activity which is consistent with the mold of the emperor's personality. Our conviction of a justifiable connection between occurrences, between cause and effect, or between motivation and subsequent behavior, resembles the verisimilitude, the truth-to-life, the indefinable air of authenticity, which is one of the hallmarks of great fiction. The historian's "proof" does not arise from the singling out of Diocletian's uniqueness, that is, by attention to the infinitesimal differences which mark the emperor as an individual unparalleled throughout space and time,

but arises rather from the fact that Diocletian was a man and shared identifiable traits of human nature, which can be "tested," verified, validated, and corroborated by the experience of the historian and by the experience of the historian's audience. Such an interpretation of the historian's métier may be frowned upon as non-developmental, because this point of view emphasizes sameness rather than change of mental outlook in man's advance through time and thereby discounts the importance of the collective in favor of the individual will as the propeller of human affairs. Nevertheless, to regard human agency as a prime cause of historical activity, to respect the integrity of individual volition as a source of motive power is to preserve a measure of sanity in dealing with the modern dissolution of the human personality under the overwhelming pressures of impersonal social, economic, political, and evolutionary biological forces.

Such resistance to determinism is evident in the pages of Romola. Eliot's belief in free will and personal accountability for one's acts holds a tenacious grip over the presentation of character in the novel, a grip which she relaxes in her subsequent novels, Middlemarch and the Zionist section of Daniel Deronda. To find fault, as David Cecil does, with her characterization in Romola as being too Victorian for the Renaissance setting is to misunderstand Eliot's viewpoint on human nature in Romola, i. e., that people have acted, act, and will continue to act in strikingly familiar patterns throughout time. In Early Victorian Novelists, Cecil writes:

Savonarola may sweep his cowl round him, Romola garnish her conversation with appropriate topical allusions, but every sentiment they utter, every reaction they feel, betrays them unmistakably to be an evangelical preacher and a serious -

mindful young woman living somewhere near Warwick about 1840, the recognizable brother and sister of the Rev. Mr. Tryan and Miss Dorothea Brooke.

(p. 293)

Eliot's novel has many literary faults, but Cecil's charge about the anachronistic behavior of leading characters is specious in view of Eliot's underlying assumption in the novel that man's spiritual make-up is a fixed and abiding essence rather than a tabula rasa stamped with the imprints of a particular historical time. That Savonarola acts like an evangelical preacher in the year 1840 is true, but this fact ought not to be discredited, because from Eliot's standpoint, evangelical preachers in 1840 sounded very much as Savonarola did in 1494, and Savonarola's sermons of 1494 sounded very much like evangelical sermons in the Old and New Testaments, in particular, those of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Zephaniah, and The Revelation of St. John the Divine. In addition, dull, long-suffering, serious-minded women of Romola's temperament are hardly the privileged monopoly of Victorian England but have existed in abundance, one may safely assume, in all nations in all ages. That Romola's character may be uninteresting and imperfectly drawn is a legitimate criticism; that her puritanical leanings do not fit her historical environment is not. The outbreak of austere asceticism, evangelical zeal, and "earnestness," was as much a reality of Florentine history in the late fifteenth century, as it was in the English history of a later date.

In an introduction to the T. Fisher Unwin edition of Romola (1907), an Italian critic, Guido Biagi, comments that Romola has "none of that quick Italian blood," no "blazes of passion" of an offending woman, that she has "unfailing self-control" and "a sad and

resigned coldness which does not belong to the Italian nature, and was still less a characteristic of the women of the Renaissance" (Introduction, xl). Warm-blooded Italian stereotypes abound in the novel in the persons of Tessa, Monna Brigida, Monna Ghita, Monna Berta, and Camilla Rucellai, yet Eliot chose to cast Romola in the role of a Piagnone, a lay nun who pledges herself to a self-effacing life of dedication to the poor and plague-stricken. Women of Romola's description existed in the Florentine quattrocento and have been held up as models to be emulated by young girls, witness the short biography of Alessandra De'Bardi, the only woman whom Vespasiano deems worthy of inclusion in his memoirs of illustrious "men" of the fifteenth century, Vite d'Uomini Illustri del Secolo XV. Very possibly, Eliot drew directly upon Vespasiano's description of Alessandra for her portrait of Romola. Both women were of noble Florentine lineage, unusually tall, beautiful, learned, paragons of purity and self-sacrifice, and both women shared the same family name: De'Bardi. Vespasiano writes that Alessandra's house ". . . was kept like a well-ordered convent," and that she led a frugal life:

To avoid idleness, the cause of all evil, she spent her time in repeating the offices and the breviary. She drew great comfort from her Bible, besides homilies on all the Gospels, which she read day after day as appointed, and other expositions by holy writers of old. She spent all her time in good works and gave freely to the poor and to others who were ashamed to beg.

(Renaissance Princes, Popes, and Prelates, The Vespasiano Memoirs, Ch. VII, p. 461)

Alessandra represents a fifteenth-century Florentine ideal, after whom Romola is patterned. Though Romola may not fit the usual Italian stereotype which Guido Biagi describes, she, nevertheless,

mirrors a rare and highly esteemed Renaissance precedent in the person of Alessandra De'Bardi.

Eliot's notion that men pilot their own affairs need not lapse into an oversimplified single-man theory of historical causation such as Thomas Carlyle's. Her affirmation of individual will is welcome to the modern reader, after a century during which the stature of man has been whittled down to the position of a cat's-paw of countless impersonal forces in a Kafkaesque universe. Thomas Carlyle's much-debated "Great man" theory of history should be understood in the context of defensive strategy against the growing Hegelian and later Marxian enthusiasm for the collective spirit of the times to the neglect of the individual's contribution. In his On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History, Carlyle, for example, sardonically censures the belittling of Luther by historians:

He was the 'creature of the Time,' they say; the Time called him forth, the Time did everything, he nothing -- but what we the little critic could have done too! This seems to me but melancholy work. The Time call forth? Alas, we have known Times call loudly enough for their great man; but not find him when they called! He was not there; Providence had not sent him; the Time, calling its loudest, had to go down to confusion and wreck because he would not come when called.

(Lecture I, "The Hero as Divinity")

Though Carlyle's protest has the bombast of a crusader for a weakening theoretical position, he defends, as Eliot does, the individual's contribution in the narration of past events, an element which has been too often shunted aside or taken for granted by historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in favor of large-scale abstruse "factors." In our own day, J. H. Hexter's provocative and iconoclastic Reappraisals in History (1961) attacks intel-

lectuals who shy away from the word "cause" and substitute the pseudo-scientific euphemism "factor" instead. Hexter states:

. . . somehow "cause" got into trouble with the philosophers and the scientists and was dropped by all the best and some of the less good intellectual clubs. The work the word had been doing had to go on being done, however, since everyone found it necessary to go on talking about the species of relation which "cause" had formerly designated. So "factor" was slid into the slot which "cause" had once filled in the vocabulary of rational discourse, and this made everybody very happy. Thus the human mind progresses -- sideways.

(Part III, p. 200)

For Hexter, as for Eliot and Carlyle, causality is bound up with the reinstatement of human volition as the major contributor of historical flux. Hexter recommends that the historian's vocabulary include terms which ". . . are directed to men's voluntary actions, to the alternatives men confronted and the choices they made" (Part III, p. 213). Rather than vague words such as "tended," "grew out of," "developed," "evolved," "trend," "tendency," "evolution," he directs the historian to words which focus on human decision: "think," "weigh," "choose," "decide," "act," "do," because, as Hexter concludes in the final sentence of his book, ". . . very often indeed at the junction between the way things were going and the way they went were the thoughts, the decisions, and the deeds of men."

While Eliot in Romola affirms that man is a free agent who steers his moral fate by individual decisions responsible for weaving the moral fabric of his character as well as the net of correspondences between himself and society, she stops short of assigning, as Carlyle does, any lasting historical value to the actions of men. History is fundamentally a repetitive process, as she declared in Romola's Proem, not, as Carlyle believed, the essence of innumer-

able biographies of outstanding leaders, whose cumulative achievements direct the course of the future. Tito Melema, for example, had no enduring impact beyond laying waste his own petty life and vitiating the personal ties of love and loyalty of those who had the misfortune to trust him. Yet, it might be argued, few would insist that men of Tito's calibre are instrumental in moving history; mediocrity, for good or ill, is of little consequence in producing historical changes, and Tito was decidedly second-rate.

Does Eliot still maintain her customary philosophical viewpoint in Romola, that history does not progress, when she concentrates her attention on a "great man" who in his day convulsed the moral atmosphere of Florence, who caused drastic upheavals in the political administration in the city-state, and who stirred the conscience of humanity by dying a martyr for his ideals? To answer this question, one must examine how Eliot, in Romola's "star-studded" historical cast of kings, popes, artists, politicians, humanists, and speculative thinkers, treats her brightest star: Girolamo Savonarola. Historians in the nineteenth century expressed renewed sympathy for the achievements of this Dominican prior of St. Mark's Convent in Florence, a sympathy which had long lain submerged under impressive attestations that Savonarola was an "arrant cheat," a "false prophet," "an impostor," and "a murderous fanatic," to use some of the epithets of his harshest critics. In Romola, such loathing is voiced by Bardo de'Bardi, the humanist, who refers to Savonarola and his monks as "those insect-swarms of besotted fanatics or howling hypocrites" (Book One, Ch. VI). In the graphic arts, Leonardo

da Vinci sketched his distrust of the friar in a horrible caricature of Savonarola as the devil in a monk's robe. The growth of Savonarola's popularity in the nineteenth century may be jointly ascribed to the reanimated tolerance for the medieval outlook, to the evangelical revival, to the spread of democratic republicanism, to the expansion of Renaissance historical studies, and to the emerging spirit of Italian nationalism, all of which were to some degree associated with the figure of the monk.

Nineteenth-century biographers grapple with two central issues concerning the Dominican friar. The first is a moral one, which attempts to evaluate his "sincerity," the genuineness of his martyrdom, the probity of his claims as a prophet and visionary; the second is a historical question which seeks to evaluate the pivotal place he holds in the temporal framework of religious ideas. Was Savonarola, for example, the last of the medievals, a devout and reactionary son of the Church, who tried heroically to revert to the moral austerity of early Christianity in order to stem the swelling tide of simony and corruption embodied in the Borgia pope, Alexander VI? Or does Savonarola's relentless defiance of the Vatican single him out as a revolutionary schismatic, who believed in justification by faith alone, a herald of the Reformation, a predecessor to Luther?

The German biographies of the friar by A. G. Rudelbach (1835) and Karl Meier (1836) supported the view that Savonarola was an unconscious Protestant, while later interpretations by the Frenchman, M. Perrens, in 1853 and the Italian, Father Marchese, in 1855 placed the monk squarely within the Catholic tradition. The highly

popular and respected scholarly study by Pasquale Villari in 1860, Life and Times of Girolamo Savonarola, today still considered the "standard" biography, provided further solid scaffolding for the Catholic point of view. A good case can be made and has been made for both sides by novelists and historians, inasmuch as Savonarola's voluminous outpourings in sermons, treatises, books, devotional pamphlets, and letters, provide compelling testimony both of staunch loyalty to the authority of the Catholic church as well as striking evidence of his determination to defy papal decrees, either by direct disobedience or by planning independently of the Pope to convoke a General Council of secular European sovereigns to reform the Church. The following sampling of quotations taken from both novels and historical writings concerning the friar's opinions may serve to illumine the ambiguity of his doctrinal position:

Wherefore it is manifest that all the faithful should be united under the Pope, as the supreme head of the Roman Church, the mother of all other churches; and that whoever departs from the unity and doctrines of the Roman Church, unquestionably departs from Christ.

(Savonarola, "The Triumph of the Cross," Book IV, Ch. VI, quoted from Pasquale Villari's Life and Times of Girolamo Savonarola, Vol. II, p. 240)

I testify, in verbis Domini, that this Alexander is no Pope, nor can be considered such, since, leaving aside this most execrable sin of simony, by which he bought the Papal throne . . . and his other manifest vices, I affirm that he is no Christian and does not believe in God, which passes the limit of every infidelity.

(Savonarola's letter to the sovereigns of France, Spain, England, Hungary, and Germany. Quoted from Ralph Roeder's The Man of the Renaissance, p. 112)

A wicked, unbelieving Pope who has gained the pontifical chair by bribery is not Christ's Vicar. His curses are broken swords: he grasps a hilt without a blade. His commands are contrary to the

Christian life: it is lawful to disobey them, -- nay, it is not lawful to obey them.

(Savonarola's words quoted by George Eliot in Romola, Book Three, Ch. XLII)

This was the moment [Savonarola's excommunication] in which, had he been a Luther, his protestantism would have developed; but such was not the turn of his mind.

(Margaret Oliphant, The Makers of Florence, p. 315)

Savonarola was an Italian Luther, -- differing from the great Northern Reformer as the more ethereally strung and nervous Italian differs from the bluff and burly German;

(Harriet Beecher Stowe, Agnes of Sorrento, p. 98)

In reality he neither shared the revolutionary genius of Luther, which gave a new vitality to the faiths of Christendom, nor did he sympathize with that free movement of the modern mind which found its first expression in the arts and humanistic studies of Renaissance Italy.

(J. A. Symonds, A Short History of the Renaissance in Italy, Ch. on Savonarola, p. 250)

Canonisat eum (quod aiunt) Christus per nos, rumpantur etiam Papae et Papistae simul.

(Martin Luther, Meditatio pia Hieronymi Savonarolae, in which Luther canonizes the friar as a Protestant "saint." Werke (Weimar, 1891, Vol. 12, p. 248)

The purpose of these random quotations is to illustrate the varied tenor of the friar's pronouncements, which could be used to justify any of a number of diverging historical evaluations with respect to Savonarola's contribution to the Reformation. The quotations typify the continuing concern of biographers in weighing the significance of the friar's rebellious behavior either as a harbinger of religious change or as a reactionary throwback to earlier forms of Christianity. Pasquale Villari's consuming interest, for example, lies in measuring the stresses in the taut balance held by

Savonarola's position as a fulcrum between the medieval and the modern world. According to her diary, George Eliot leaned heavily on Villari's Life and Times of Girolamo Savonarola as a source book for Romola. A comparison of the novel and Villari's work, especially the descriptions of the warring political factions in Florence, the arrival of the French, Savonarola's trials and his execution, reveal Eliot's substantial debt to the Italian historian. It is no wonder that in Villari's "Preface to the New Edition" of his work, which appeared in 1888, he praised Eliot's Romola as "admirable," though the novel, he says, ". . . contributed no new facts to history, since, as was only natural, its illustrious author accepted established conclusions without dispute." Usually stinting in his compliments of other biographers, Villari, knowingly or not, applauds himself in congratulating the author of Romola, since Eliot's much-lauded historical accuracy rests squarely on the solid foundations of Villari's scholarship. Nevertheless, while Eliot may have borrowed heavily from Villari's established factual evidence, she does not endorse his historical estimate that Savonarola's pioneering exploits were a thrust forward in the progress of mankind. With characteristic mid-nineteenth-century historical optimism, Villari views Savonarola as a devout Catholic and a spiritual innovator, "a Columbus of the moral world." In a final panegyric, Villari concludes that the friar:

. . . merits the title of the prophet of a new civilization . . . [which is moving] . . . towards a vaster synthesis of the human race. . . . [Men such as Savonarola] . . . disperse the darkness and cleave a passage for the new road . . . , " [and when his reform shall be realized, Christianity will] . . . attain to its true and perfect development in the world, and Italy will not be in the rear of the new march of progress.

(Conclusion, pp. 418, 419, 421)

Though Eliot is not impervious to the appeals of conventional mid-nineteenth-century hyperbole on humanity's advance through time, such sentiments are conspicuously absent in her appraisal of Savonarola in Romola. Consistent with her ahistorical stand in the novel, Eliot is silent on the issue of the friar's place in the history of ideas, or his relationship to Luther, or his "immortal" legacy to the "march of civilization." In the novel's seventy-two chapters, there is one statement, however, which could be interpreted as an acknowledgement that man progresses through history, when Eliot declares: "Our lives make a moral tradition for our individual selves, as the life of mankind at large makes a moral tradition for the race; . . . (Book Two, Ch. XIX). In the context of its use in Romola, "a moral tradition" even when considered collectively does not necessarily imply the gradual improvement of society through time but acts instead as a further entrenchment of already established habits of good and evil. Savonarola's bequest to mankind, his martyrdom on behalf of an outraged conscience which refused to accede to the powers of corruption within the Church, serves no further end in Romola other than as an inspiring expression of man's yearning for goodness. This gesture may deepen and intensify man's moral idealism but lacks the needed impetus to steer the course of history. Unlike Villari's estimate of Savonarola as a pioneer, Eliot depicts the friar as a sacrificial victim, whose martyrdom was a magnificent gesture to man's aspirations, but a gesture which failed to ignite the sparks of historical change. In a revealing analogy, Eliot describes Savonarola as an ancient ox offered on "the altar of men's

highest hopes" (Book Two, Ch. VI), an offering which was a dramatic but passing illumination of no lasting efficacy rather than a strong beacon guiding mankind's footsteps into the future. During the monk's last days as a prisoner awaiting execution, he uttered sad words of resignation and defeat: "I count as nothing; darkness encompasses me: yet the light I saw was the true light." Eliot uses this quotation as the conclusion to her fifty-first chapter of Book Three, a quotation which acts as a subtle undercurrent to reinforce Eliot's prevailing view in the novel that even great men, far from being the grand driving forces of history, as Carlyle had maintained, that even great men "count as nothing" in the total scheme of things.

Villari's comment that Eliot accepts established facts "without dispute" is misleading in view of her incisive probing into the traces of egotism and political ambition, which lurked in the recesses of Savonarola's character, traces which Villari's account overlooks. In a dramatic encounter between Romola and Savonarola, for example, Eliot exposes the friar's narrow-minded equating of the ideals of Christianity with the ideals of his own political party, a habit which blinds him from seeing any merit in the convictions of opposing factions:

Romola: Take care, father, lest your enemies have some reason when they say that in your visions of what will further God's kingdom you see only what will strengthen your own party.

Savonarola: And that is true! . . . The cause of my party is the cause of God's kingdom.

Romola: I do not believe it! . . . God's kingdom is something wider, -- else, let me stand outside it with the beings that I love.

(Book Three, Ch. XXXIX)

Romola in this conversation has the last word, yet Eliot balances evidence of the friar's fanaticism with instances in other sections of the novel of his self-effacing fervent faith. Though Eliot refuses to whitewash Savonarola's weaknesses, as Villari and other biographers tend to do, she nonetheless compensates for her rigorous inquest into the friar's motives by her generous capacity to tolerate the ascetic excesses of his intense religious idealism. For example, she condemns the extremism of Savonarola's burning of the Pyramid of Vanities and comments:

Sorrow and joy have each their peculiar narrowness; and a religious enthusiasm like Savonarola's which ultimately blesses mankind by giving the soul a strong propulsion towards sympathy with pain, indignation against wrong, and the subjugation of sensual desire, must always incur the reproach of a great negation.

(Book Three, Ch. XXIX)

Eliot draws a full-blooded portrait of the martyr as a man, who despite personal limitations sets a shining example of human ideals of goodness, but she refrains from picturing his martyrdom, as Villari does, as a thrust forward in the perfectibility of mankind. Her decision to portray Savonarola as an individual outside the stream of history lies less in the fact that Eliot is a novelist rather than an historian, but lies instead in a view of human nature in Romola, in which man, however great he may be, is still a transitory phenomenon with little power to effect change, with little power to redirect the ". . . broad sameness of the human lot which never alters in the main headings of its history, --. . ." as the first paragraph of Romola's Proem affirms.

Thus far this essay has sought to ferret out various narrative techniques in the operational strategy used by the storyteller to convey a particular historical point of view. In order to mitigate the striking testimony of historical change, Eliot, as we have seen, employed specific literary tactics to launch, bolster, and secure the traditional world picture of recurrence and uniformity announced in Romola's Proem, to wit: 1) the juxtaposition of the transient historical event against a backdrop of the periodicity and "eternal" return of religious festivals, pageants, fairs, and anniversaries; 2) the use of rhetorical aids such as a highly selective vocabulary, syntax, alliteration, and prose rhythm, to convey the idea of repetition; 3) the extensive inweaving of metaphors connoting rootedness and stationary organisms, such as the "tree" of society and other plant imagery; 4) the seedbed conception of time and of causation as legitimate coordinators of narrative continuity and intelligibility; 5) the representation of character as a fixed quantity of innate potential; and 6) the diminution of the "great" man's influence in controlling the course of history.

One last significant device Eliot uses to underscore her prevailing ahistorical attitude in Romola is to draw extensive parallels in plot and theme in order to emphasize "the sameness of the human lot." She duplicates plot patterns in kindred relationships so as to stress the idea of eternal recurrence in the universal problems which face men. For example, Tito's betrayal of his stepfather, Baldassare, is echoed in several subplots in which the question of loyalty versus disobedience is weighed in the context of a father's relationship to

his son. Romola's brother, Dino, disobeys his father, Bardo de'Bardi, by joining the Dominicans, a religious order which is anathema to the old scholar, Bardo. Mortified by Dino's filial disloyalty, Bardo disowns Dino and disavows Dino's existence by declaring resolutely: "My son is dead" (Book One, Ch. XII). Savonarola's refusal to obey the Pope, the father of the Roman Catholic Church, may be interpreted as another instance of filial disobedience. The word "Pope" derives from Latin and Greek sources for the word "father," and the Italian equivalent of "Pope" is il Papa, i. e., the father. To Pope Alexander VI, Savonarola was a dangerous rebel who defied papal authority and fully deserved to be disowned as a son of the church, first through excommunication and finally through a series of legal trials which ended in the friar's execution. On a transcendent plane, the theme of filial loyalty is underlined in Savonarola's attacks on Alexander's notoriously corrupt career of simony and debauchery. As Christ's vicar, that is, as a substitute for the Son of God on earth, Alexander VI's commitment to the divine commandments of God the Father was an impious fraud.

Both the plot and the subplots mirror varying angles of a perennial ethical question with its endless ramifications: where do sanctions lie when loyalties clash? What is the nature of allegiance? To what extent is self-interest justifiable, if it conflicts with filial duties and responsibilities? To what extent is rebellion justifiable in opposition to written or unwritten laws, either civil, ecclesiastical, or divine? Is individual conscience a legitimate court of appeal for a course of conduct? Within the context of her marriage, Romola,

for example, defines warring commitments between her sense of duty as a wife to Tito and her conviction that the bond of wedlock in her life had become a travesty of a sacred tie. When she had first wanted to leave Tito, Savonarola told her not to break a sacramental vow but to make her sorrow an offering: "My daughter, if the cross comes to you as a wife, you must carry it as a wife" (Book Two, Ch. XX). Yet Romola later challenges the friar's words, when she observes that Savonarola's refusal to obey the Pope is also the breaking of a sacramental vow: -

The law was sacred. Yes, but rebellion might be sacred too. It flashed upon her mind that the problem before her was essentially the same as that which had lain before Savonarola, -- the problem where the sacredness of obedience ended, and the sacredness of rebellion began. To her, as to him, there had come one of those moments in life when the soul must dare to act on its own warrant, not only without external law to appeal to, but in the face of a law which is not unarmed with Divine lightnings, -- lightnings that may yet fall if the warrant has been false.
(Book Three, Ch. XXXVI)

Plots and subplots interweave to illustrate gradations of disobedience from high-minded conscientious objectors, such as Dino, Romola, and Savonarola, to base personifications of treacherous disloyalty, such as Tito and Pope Alexander VI. Also rendered in parallel plot construction is a second theme, taken from the text of one of Savonarola's sermons in the Duomo: "The day of vengeance is at hand! . . . And thou, O Italy, art the chosen land; has not God placed his sanctuary within thee, and thou has polluted it? Behold, the ministers of his wrath are upon thee, -- they are at thy very doors (Book Two, Ch. IV)!" While the friar compares Florence to a second Babylon soon to suffer the vengeance of God's wrath, Baldassare, listening to the sermon, is inspired to carry out his plan

of revenge against Tito, a plan of impassioned retribution conceived of by an insanely maddened and vindictive father to punish the behavior of his treacherous son. Savonarola's vision often reaches allegorical proportions with Florence resembling a battlefield for the struggle between the forces of good and evil, between spirituality and sensuality, between what St. Augustine called the City of God and the City of Man, Civitas Dei et Civitas Terrena. To accentuate this contrast, Eliot juxtaposes antithetical tastes in music and art to set off the opposition between the spirit of renunciation and the spirit of self-indulgence. For example, a blunt counterpart to the hymn-singing amidst cries of Viva Gesù during the burning of the Pyramid of Vanities is Tito's singing of Lorenzo de'Medici's famous quatrain, which celebrates youth and pleasure and urges everyone to enjoy the present moment, for tomorrow brings uncertainty:

Quant' è bella giovinezza,
Che si fugge tuttavia!
Chi vuol esser lieto sia,
Di doman non c'è certezza.
 (Book One, Ch. XIII)

Appropriately enough, Tito dislikes medieval art with its "hideous smoked Madonnas; fleshless saints in mosaic, staring down idiotic astonishment and rebuke from the apse . . . looking like an index to perpetual spasms and colic" (Book One, Ch. III), but instead he prefers more recent painters and sculptors who use ancient Greek and Roman models.

Despite Eliot's frequent identification of paganism and hedonism in Tito's expressions of aesthetic taste, her treatment of the differences between medieval and classical art was not naively alle-

gorical as was Savonarola's uncompromising distinction between the two, a distinction which classified as "vanity" much Florentine artistic expression which suggested pagan forebears. That rare editions of "worldly" books by Ovid, Boccaccio, and Petrarca should go up in smoke along with mirrors, perfumes, rouge-pots, and false hair, was to Eliot an exhibition of gross license on the part of Savonarola's lieutenants. One of Eliot's best-drawn minor characters in Romola, the painter Piero di Cosimo, treats the burning of the vanities with utter contempt: "Look at that Petrarca sticking up beside a rouge-pot: Do the idiots pretend that the heavenly Laura was a painted harridan" (Book Three, Ch. XXIX)? In Romola, Piero is the mouthpiece of sound common sense, which provides a good antidote to the excesses of Tito's epicureanism and Savonarola's "hair shirt" asceticism. Piero's incisive commentary throughout the novel acts as a via media between immoderate points of view. He appreciates the value of what Walter Pater called "the splendid freeing of the senses," yet balances this regard with an intense moral rigor capable of sensing the faintest traces of ethical irregularity unobserved by others. In Romola, Piero paints "Bacchus and Ariadne" as well as "Sinon Deceiving Priam," two works which symbolize Piero's generous ability to sanction the best insights of Tito's and Savonarola's world. Piero's art reveals that individual well-being is grounded both in sensual refreshment as well as fervid moral energy against wrong.

Eliot uses Piero's paintings and sketches throughout Romola in order to demonstrate further the parallels between ancient and

later forms of moral behavior. Piero, for example, paints Romola as Antigone, Tito as Bacchus, and old Bardo as Teiresias, the greatest of mythological prophets. Just as Teiresias was blinded when he saw Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, unveiled, old Bardo lost his eyesight through the intensity of his classical scholarship, by his gaining a kind of wisdom which also made him blind to the merits of the Christian life chosen by his son, Dino. Eliot's analogues to the past as well as her repetition of parallel plot structures within the temporal context of late fifteenth-century Florence form part of her total design to implement the non-developmental historical outlook in Romola, which is unequivocally asserted at the novel's outset.

This chapter has dealt with the practices a novelist may employ to embody historical consciousness in a work of fiction, practices which the historian may also wish to avail himself of in telling a story about a segment of time. An examination of Romola's narrative structure discloses a modus operandi, which brings into play the offensive strategy of a storyteller who is determined to present a non-developmental view of history, despite the paradoxical fact that she is writing a "historical" novel. In its attempt to cross the two disciplines of history and literature, historical fiction has too often produced sorry half-breeds, deservedly ostracized by the purer strains in each family group. Both novelists and historians have censured the glaring inaccuracies of fact, the anachronisms, the pompous and theatrical dialogue, which all too frequently permeate the contents of the historical novel. Mark Twain, for instance, wrote an abrasive satire, entitled "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses,"

which pokes savage fun at gross misrepresentations in The Leatherstocking Tales, and Henry Fielding condemns the grotesque exaggerations of hero-worshipping biographers in his parody, The Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great. Francis Palgrave once remarked that historical novelists were mortal enemies to history; Leslie Stephen added that they were also mortal enemies to fiction.

Adverse criticism of the historical novel, needless to say, has not been wanting, yet the genre has enjoyed wide vogue despite the critics. Men like to look backward in time either through fiction or written history for a number of compelling reasons. Curiosity about the past may stem from man's desire to know and define himself, for history is a vast storeroom of individual and collective human behavior for each man to draw upon as he sees fit. To the nineteenth-century world historian, Henry Thomas Buckle, this storeroom was the fertile matrix of Western Europe's unswerving intellectual advance according to the "laws" of social progress, and to Edward Gibbon, history was a polluted wellspring of "little more than the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind." For some, the appeal of history is not self-knowledge but lies in the fulfillment of an emotional need to revere, hallow, and reaffirm familiar traditions. The study of the past thus becomes a kind of ancestor worship, as the content of history is transformed into a reassuring psychological pillar to lean against while contemplating the uncertainties of the present and the future. For others, written history is a monument against the ravages of time, an antidote to flux, an effort to arrest, preserve, and eternalize the golden moments of an individual or a

group. History has always been a good ego builder for those who thirst after immortal fame; for this end, the pyramids were fine, but papyrus was, after all, cheaper. And then, history has been a tireless utilitarian, a useful moral teacher "for the advancement of Vertue [sic] and the defacing [sic] of Vice, " to borrow a phrase from Tudor historians (Herschel Baker, The Race of Time, p. 47).

Not to be discounted, however, is history's universal challenge to the intellect and imagination, a challenge which tempts the scholar and the creative artist to reconstruct the chaotic pieces of the giant puzzle of the past out of sheer curiosity to solve the mysteries of bygone eras and also to satisfy one of mankind's most steadfast and unadulterated loves: the love of a good story. This blend of curiosity about the secrets of history, along with the passion to listen to a promising tale is felicitously expressed in Keats's well-known "Ode on a Grecian Urn, " when Keats addresses the urn as a "sylvan historian" and asks:

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
(lines 5-7)

Doubtless Eliot combines some or all of these motives in Romola.

For its proportions, the novel is a noteworthy attempt to provide a stereoscopic view of quattrocento Florence through the dimensions of history and literature. If Romola suffers as a novel, its lapses lie on the side of literature rather than history, for its accuracy has been checked by zealous historians and literary editors down to the minutest particulars, such as checking the street numbers on the Florentine rent-rolls during the last

decade of the fifteenth century. As for its fictional authenticity, se non è vero, è ben trovato. Romola resembles a meticulous copy of a fine period piece, a trustworthy reproduction of a slice of time, a reasonable facsimile which quite naturally lacks the patina of the genuine antique. With all its faults, the novel, nevertheless, preserves and recalls a highly prized period in the history of mankind, a period of time well worth mulling over even in the guise of an imaginative reconstruction of the original.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY AS PROCESS: MIDDLEMARCH

To enter the temperate and unruffled atmosphere of Middlemarch society in the wake of the convulsive upheavals which engulf the Florence of Romola's day is to discover a curious reversal of historical perspectives in George Eliot's outlook. In Romola, Eliot is committed to a philosophical vision of permanence, which treats Florence as "an almost unviolated symbol amidst the flux of human things, to remind us that we still resemble the men of the past more than we differ from them" (Proem). This vision of permanence regards Florentine history as a monotonous echo of "the broad sameness of the human lot, which never alters in the main headings of its history" (Proem). As the previous chapter has shown, Eliot buttresses this view with strong structural scaffolding. In the teeth of the grand cataclysms of Florentine quattrocento life, she steadfastly deflates the significance of the unique temporal event in favor of notions of recurrence, repetition, and uniformity. Middlemarch, by contrast, is saturated with the consciousness of historial change, despite the prevailing impression that nothing much ever happens in the novel.

The story of this provincial English town of the 1830's seethes with the endless quotidian stirrings of rather ordinary doings: the familiar problems of growing up, the proverbial hazards of courtship and marriage, the usual pressures of earning a livelihood, and the typical frustrations and consolations of community life. In fact,

events in Middlemarch are so undramatic as to defy at first glance a searching inspection of historical change. Yet the role of the uneventful and commonplace happening is as magnified in this novel as the role of the tumultuous historical event is minimized in Romola. Our normal responses to the minutiae of movement are extremely coarse, Eliot writes in Middlemarch, as if to provide a fairly secure protective anchor against the instability of flux:

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.

(Ch. 20)

Eliot wants a close-up of that roar and uses her creative power as a stethoscope and microscope, to borrow two common props from the novel. These props amplify the muffled pulsations of the old order yielding place to new and augment the barely discernible "threadlike connections" (Ch. 11) in the sinews of social transformation.

In Middlemarch, Eliot dwells on the nexus between one state and another, that is, she concentrates her attention on processes, functions, and relations, in order to render change as a form of developmental energy in perpetual and steady slow motion rather than as a mechanistic shuffling of inert masses. In a chapter on Heraclitus, Bertrand Russell states that:

. . . energy, unlike matter, is not a refinement of the common-sense notion of a "thing"; it is merely a characteristic of physical processes. It might be fancifully identified with the Heraclitean Fire, but it is the burning not what burns. "What burns" has disappeared from modern physics.

(A History of Western Philosophy, p. 47)

In this novel on the Reform era, Eliot shifts her historical emphasis to the "burning," so to speak, rather than to "what burns." Her artistic intention is analogous to Dr. Lydgate's, one of the central characters, and the novel's "real hero" according to Henry James. Lydgate was inspired, Eliot writes:

. . . with the imagination that reveals subtle actions inaccessible by any sort of lens, but tracked in that outer darkness through long pathways of necessary sequence by the inward light which is the last refinement of Energy. . . . [He] was enamoured of that arduous invention which is the very eye of research, provisionally framing its object and correcting it to more and more exactness of relation; he wanted to pierce the obscurity of those minute processes . . . those invisible thoroughfares . . . that delicate poise and transition which determine the growth of happy or unhappy consciousness.
(Ch. 16)

Eliot explores the subtle and inaccessible actions, the "minute processes," "the last refinement of Energy," the "exactness of relation," and the "delicate poise and transition" -- in short, the functional dimensions of social evolution in a small community, just as Lydgate centers his medical research on the intangible processes of biological growth. In Middlemarch, she abandons the static world of Romola to create a developmental society in its protean state, pliant and plastic, a society in the act of shaping itself and being shaped by the assimilation of infinitesimal gossamers of human activity, which make up the marrow of change.

Written in 1871-2, Eliot's Middlemarch is a probe into the recesses of social movement, a fictional re-creation of the period of the Reform Bill of 1832, which was a critical dividing line in the expansion of British democracy. Greville's diary of March 7, 1831,

exclaims:

Nothing talked of, thought of, dreamt of, but Reform. Every creature one meets asks, What is said Now? How will it go? What is the last news? What do you think? and so it is from morning till night, in the streets, in the clubs, and in private houses.

(Louis Kronenberger, ed.
The Great World: Portraits
and Scenes from Greville's
Memoirs, 1814-1860, p. 60)

While Eliot acknowledges the influence of the Reform issue on Middlemarchers, the sphere of politics remains a secondary concern in the novel much like a distant obligato to the immediate needs of everyday life in this provincial town. She had already written a political novel on the turbulent emotions aroused by the Reform Bill in Felix Holt, the Radical (1866), published just prior to Middlemarch in the sequence of her creative fiction. Like Middlemarch, Felix Holt, the Radical was set in the same region of the English Midlands, yet Eliot in the earlier work dramatizes the intense political frenzy of which Greville speaks, and she dwells on the long list of political, ecclesiastical, and social abuses, the riots, the rick-burnings, and the violent struggles caused by popular discontent. Felix Holt, the Radical belongs to that popular genre of Victorian novel which is committed to "The Condition of England" question, a genre encompassing such works as Disraeli's Sybil (1845), Gaskell's Mary Barton (1848), Kingsley's Alton Locke (1850), and Dickens's Hard Times (1854). Yet in Middlemarch, Eliot seeks to relegate national politics to its just proportion in affecting the routine life of a community, as if to counter the dictum of Sir John Seeley, the nineteenth-century British historian, who

affirmed that "History is past politics and politics present history."

In The Red and the Black, which like Middlemarch is set in the early 1830's, Stendhal likens the introduction of politics into a novel to a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert (Ch. 52), yet he maintains that if his characters did not talk politics, they would no longer be the Frenchmen of that time, and his novel would no longer be a mirror of the period. In reconstructing a past era, the historian and the novelist must assess the extent to which a political idea, a new law or manifesto, or a great leader alters the course of events, or whether indeed, as Tolstoy argues in War and Peace, the vicissitudes of history can be influenced by humans at all. In English Political Thought of the 19th Century, Crane Brinton puts the problem as follows:

. . . the modern historian of ideas can hardly avoid a haunting fear that after all he is dealing in unrealities. For one thing, much modern social psychology. . . has insisted that ordinary men are immune to the contagion of philosophical ideas. If ideas really do influence the crowd, it is only after they have been transformed into symbols, rituals, stereotypes. . . . There thus arises. . . another way of writing the history of political ideas, . . . rather of opinion than of thought. . . . Its sources must be whatever reveals the intellectual baggage of the ordinary man -- periodical literature, novels, newspapers. . . .

(Introduction, pp.3-4)

The writing of such history recognizes that the broad base of historical transformation is nurtured by slowly evolving widespread common habits, attitudes, opinions, and prejudices, which control social behavior rather than by spectacular revolutionary decisions of important people in high places. Historical change in Middlemarch is viewed from below rather than from above, that is, by

observing the seemingly inconsequential shifts of grassroots convictions, whose cumulative weight turns the scales in affecting the values of national life.

Eliot's novel may be regarded as a fictional foray into historical sociology. Both the sociologist and the historian are concerned with the processes of change, but the former generally looks for prevailing patterns and fixed causes of social behavior independent of the flow of temporal events, while the latter for the most part is interested in relating unique, non-recurring happenings within the time-stream. In practice this distinction is easily blurred. The sociologist, Max Weber, for example, delved deeply into the history of the Reformation in order to correlate the Protestant ethic with the spirit of capitalism. And the historian, Elie Halévy, for example, leans heavily towards sociology in his first volume of A History of the English People in the 19th Century. In Middlemarch, Eliot uses the tools of both the historian and the sociologist in presenting a provincial society in a state of slow transition, a society equidistant from the cataclysmic turmoils of Greville's London in the vanguard of social change, yet equidistant from the immutable hamlets of Thomas Hardy's Wessex, so far from the madding crowd as to seem as immune to change as Stonehenge. Instead Middlemarch, as its title plainly suggests, literally follows the middle course. The town's pace moves quickly enough to dispel illusions of permanence yet slowly enough to permit inspection of "that delicate poise and transition which determine the growth" (Ch. 16) of one stage to another, that fine quantum which ". . . traces out

the suppressed transitions which unite all contrasts. . . " (Ch. 20).

The following pages seek to clarify those compositional elements in Middlemarch which reveal how the contours of its complicated structural design are governed by the equally complicated metaphor of the evolutionary process. The overriding unity of the novel rests on a comprehensive social analogue to the intricate mechanism of biological inheritance, growth, continuity, and development, to wit, the strategy of adaptation by virtue of variation, the struggle for existence, natural selection, and the survival of the fittest. This unity also rests on less heralded concomitants of biological cohesion and adjustment, such as cooperation, mutual assistance, and imitation, stemming from consanguinity and consciousness of kind. Any comparisons of organic evolution with the social process may yield loose and far-fetched correlations; nevertheless, such equations were acceptable intellectual shibboleths in Eliot's day. In a much quoted phrase, Henry James speaks of Middlemarch as "a treasurehouse of detail but. . . an indifferent whole," and he mentions in a book review of the novel that this work contains "echoes of Messrs. Darwin and Huxley." By alluding to these scientists, James drops a clue which this chapter intends to pursue, namely that the novel's coherence lies in its evolutionary outlook, an approach which provides a focus, a thematic center, for the novel's seemingly disparate parts.

The evolutionary analogy will also help pull together the valuable but disjointed studies of Middlemarch's imagery by, for example, Barbara Hardy, who regards the work as a multi-

colored spectrum of egoism; by Mark Schorer, who classifies its syntax of unification, antithesis, growth, and progressive movement; by William Harvey, who dwells on the web image; by Hilda Hulme, who delves into the novel's medical metaphors; or by Walter Houghton, who stresses its ethics of self-realization. Seeking out those Darwinian echoes may provide a congruity of meaning to the profusion of admirable particulars in this novel, a profusion which, as David Daiches states in his critical analysis of Middlemarch, ". . . defies formulation." For instance, the widespread use of verbs of entanglement, merging, mixing, connecting, associating, comprehending, and bending, listed by Mark Schorer in his study of the novel, helps integrate the unifying picture of a glutinously enmeshed society, as interdependent and interconnected as Darwin's ecological conception of the evolutionary process in the last paragraph of The Origin of Species:

It is interesting to contemplate a tangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing in the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent upon each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us.

Middlemarch is a fragment of humanity's "tangled bank," the social equivalent of Darwin's natural tableau. Far from being an "indifferent whole," the novel is a calculated rendering of a richly variegated medium, evolving step by step in an open-ended segment of historical time and proceeding for endless millenia from an unknowable origin towards an unknowable future.

To embody the imperceptible movement of change in the vast

temporal panorama of social development, Eliot chose a fraction of time which marked a turning point in nineteenth-century England. Middlemarch is set in the years just prior to the passage of the Reform Bill, from September 1829 through May 1831, a slice of history characterized by "mixed conditions" (Ch. 1), to borrow the words of the novel, and by "dim lights and tangled circumstance," which were ". . . helped by no coherent social faith and order. . . ." (Prelude). A keen sense of instability, uncertainty, and confusion permeated many phases of personal and public life at that time, so much so that John Stuart Mill dubs this period "an age of transition" in his essay, "The Spirit of the Times" (1831). Like Mill, Thomas Carlyle describes the "Dyspepsia of Society" in his "Characteristics," an essay also published in 1831, in which he blames the general malaise on the breakdown of traditional values, because, ". . . Change, or the inevitable approach of Change, is manifest everywhere." In 1830, Charles Lyell published his influential Principles of Geology, which argued persuasively in favor of the slow persistent transformation of the earth's surface through infinite reaches of time. But it was the encroachment of democracy, incarnate in the Reform Bill, which best symbolized the breakdown of established patterns of power. The literature of the day was a faithful barometer of the rising interest in politics. One of the characters in Edward Bulwer-Lytton's Pelham, or the Adventures of a Gentleman (1828) deplores the unsettling drift of new democratic ideas:

. . . it is really dreadful to see those upstarts rising around us, and throwing everything that is respectable and ancient into the background. Dangerous times these, Mr. Pelham, -- dangerous times; nothing but innovation upon the most sacred institutions . . . new fashioned doctrines, which lead to nothing but anarchy and confusion. . . .

(Ch. XXXV)

Greville, the Boswell of these years, reflects kindred sentiments on the Reform Bill of 1831:

I have always been convinced that the country was in no danger of revolution, and still believe that if one does come it will be from the passing of this Bill, which will introduce the principle of change and whet the appetites of those who never will be satisfied with any existing order of things. . . . God only knows how it will all end.

(The Great World: Portraits
and Scenes from Greville's
Memoirs, 1814-1860, pp. 68-69)

And young Disraeli in Contarini Fleming (1832) views change as the outcome of political processes:

When I examine the state of European society with the unimpassioned spirit which the philosopher can alone command, I perceive that it is in a state of transition, a state of transition from foedal [sic] to federal principles. This I conceive to be the sole and secret cause of all the convulsions that have occurred and are to occur.

(Part VII, Ch. 2, last page)

Thus Eliot in Middlemarch selected a setting in which the conspicuous signs of political transformation parallel less obvious vicissitudes throughout a broad range of spiritual and material values as well. To Mr. Vincy, mayor of Middlemarch, the unsettled times are a severe threat to his finances: "We may all be ruined for what I know -- the country's in that state! Some say it's the end of the world, and be hanged if I don't think it looks like it" (Ch. 36). To the tenant-farmer, Dagley, the Bill presents a hope: ". . . for them say it as knows it, as there's to be reformed, and

them landlords as never done the right thing by their tenants 'ull be treated i' that way as they'll hev to scuttle off" (Ch. 39). Yet to old Mrs. Farebrother, the "age of transition" marks a pronounced shift of moral certainties:

When I was young, Mr. Lydgate, there was never any question about right and wrong. We knew our catechism, and that was enough; we learned our creed and our duty. Every respectable Church person had the same opinions. But now if you speak out of the Prayer-Book itself, you are liable to be contradicted. (Ch. 17)

To Middlemarchers, the transition of the 1830's produced a bewildering muddle of old and new, a social metamorphosis tantalizing for Eliot to observe from the vantage point of the 1870's. It is no accident that she deliberately fixes upon these years in order to depict social movement in flagrante, so to speak. Unlike her former novels she examines this era not to complain, as Carlyle does, of a sick "gouty" society, or to indulge in nostalgia, a weakness for which she is in other novels all too often prone. Instead Eliot observes with the dispassionate eye of a naturalist the fascinating spectacle of Middlemarch society adapting to new conditions, an adaptation she delineates with a tolerant yet ironic gaze, which notes both the fortunate limitations as well as the fearful assets of this mysterious evolutionary process.

Since the principle of variation is one of the fundamental features of an evolutionary landscape, Eliot populates her Middlemarch canvas with a teeming diversity of social "organisms." Variety is expressed in sheer quantity in addition to the qualitative proliferation of higher and lower "breeds" of social life and action. No fewer than one hundred and sixteen individuals contribute to the

plot, and no fewer than thirty-two assorted occupations are woven into the texture of the story, she creates the landlord, the farmer, scholar, mayor, banker, manufacturer, lawyer, coroner, bailiff, auctioneer, real-estate broker, tax-collector, justice of the peace, ironmonger, tanner, carrier, waggoner, brewer, draper, glazier, shoemaker, barber, dyer, grocer, druggist, horse-dealer, actress, pawnbroker, newspaper editor, headmistress, as well as an array of servants, housewives, clergymen, and especially, doctors. Further diversification is provided by gradations of rank from gentry to rabble, gradations of wealth from plutocrat to pauper, gradations of age from infancy to senescence, gradations of temperament ranging from idealism to realism and from altruism to egoism, as well as gradations of "adaptive" talent exhibiting varying degrees of intelligence, cunning, naiveté, or stupidity. The social organism swarms with multiples, in themselves thick with interminable possibilities and probabilities, with points of view ". . . as various," Eliot writes, ". . . as the faces to be seen at will in fretwork or paperhangings: every form is there, from Jupiter to Judy. . . ." (Ch. 32). Even simple Caleb Garth conceives of business as many-pronged "myriad-headed, myriad-handed labour" (Ch. 24), and Mrs. Garth in her own small way contributes to the novel's preoccupation with proliferation by devoting one of her grammar lessons to the study of "nouns of multitude or signifying many" (Ch. 24).

Eliot organizes this human abundance into family clusters, such as the Brookes, the Chettams, the Vincys, the Farebrothers, the Featherstones, and the Garths. The family is the social

"species" of the social "genus": the Middlemarch world. In the novel, the family is portrayed in motley combinations of assorted social molecules, as each cluster shapes itself and is shaped by the restrictions and the free play of the surrounding medium. The luxuriance of family entanglements is pictured by seemingly endless contrasting and comparable patterns of behavior between parents and offspring, among siblings, cousins, nephews, uncles, aunts, but especially in the nucleus of the family unit: the link between husband and wife. With respect to the copiousness of its raw material, Middlemarch resembles many other tightly crowded novels, such as Tom Jones, Vanity Fair, War and Peace, or The Brothers Karamazov. Yet Eliot's purpose is to underscore the biological forces underlying the nodes of family life in the community by rendering the interplay of distinct forms of social flora and fauna, similar to the different breeds and variants of biological life. For example, individuals in Middlemarch are alluded to as insects, fish, reptiles, poisonous and benign plants, domesticated or savage animals, as if the community were a vast menagerie of living forms, competing, cooperating, and reproducing themselves in a civilized social jungle, which is in Eliot's mind a sophisticated, "higher," or "more advanced" extension of the natural behavior of lower life.

As the following pages will show, Eliot develops the plot, the syntax, and the imagery of Middlemarch to construct a unified picture of a social community as an extended continuation of biological nature moving slowly in a developmental process. Yet it must be stressed that Middlemarch is merely one of scores of

diverse interpretations, in which writers adapted the ideas of The Origin of Species for their own purposes. Some used Darwinian theory to exhibit the brutality of human nature and the hostility of the environment, as in the fiction of Thomas Hardy, George Meredith, Stephen Crane, or Émile Zola, while others sought to justify an economic law, a social programme, a philosophy of history, or a petty prejudice. John Galsworthy in The Forsyte Saga, for example, emphasizes the mechanism of natural selection in the evolutionary structure of the family, which he conceives as follows:

. . . that mysterious concrete tenacity which renders a family so formidable a unit of society, so clear a reproduction of society in miniature. [He who has observed an upper middle-class family in full plumage] . . . has been admitted to a vision of the dim roads of social progress, has understood something of patriarchal life, of the swarmings of savage hordes, of the rise and fall of nations. He is like one who, having watched a tree grown from its planting -- a paragon of tenacity, insulation, and success, amidst the deaths of a hundred other plants less fibrous, sappy, and persistent -- one day will see it flourishing with bland, full foliage, in an almost repugnant prosperity, at the summit of its efflorescence.

(The Man of Property [1906], Part I,
Ch. I, first paragraph)

While Galsworthy develops his "saga" longitudinally, that is, by choosing to observe one species across several generations, Eliot takes a horizontal cross-section of several families living contemporaneously. In this way she can more readily depict the "tangling" of intermingled species and lay bare the amalgamating forces of fellowship and trust, of venerated customs, habits, and traditions, which bind society together. The bloodier aspects of social nature, "red in tooth and claw," and the cynicism which became the trademark of the naturalistic literature of a later day are hinted at in Middlemarch but are counteracted by Eliot's well-

tempered Sophoclean irony, which sees life steadily and sees it whole.

One of the most obvious techniques Eliot uses to convey the impression that the Middlemarch community is a part of nature is to look upon its inhabitants either singly or collectively as various members of the plant and animal kingdoms. The sense of wonder with which Darwin regards the staggering multiplicity of shapes and forms in the biological world is akin to Mrs. Cadwallader's feeling in the novel, as she watches Middlemarchers pour out of church at Peter Featherstone's funeral: "Dear me, what a wonderfully mixed set!" and she refers to them as "collections of strange animals" (Ch. 34). Eliot as narrator also comments on the "Christian Carnivora," which formed Peter Featherstone's funeral procession, each family like an "allied species" with its mind bent on a limited store of fodder, which constituted old Featherstone's money (Ch. 35). Constant reminders of man's biological nature pervade the work. The Featherstone relatives are "assiduous beetles" (Ch. 32), and old Peter is alternately described as "an old fox" (Ch. 12), "an aged hyena" (Ch. 33), or a poisonous insect, who said ". . . biting things. . . . Too languid to sting, he had the more venom reflux in his blood" (Ch. 32). Casaubon is a white-blooded "ruminant animal" (Ch. 20), while Fred is "an idle dog" (Ch. 40), Sir James a "cochon de lait" (Ch. 2), Lydgate a "jellyfish" (Ch. 27) and an "emotional elephant" (Ch. 45); Will Ladislaw is a "loose fish from London" (Ch. 37) and "a spirited horse" (Ch. 37); Laure is a "divine cow" (Ch. 16), and Mr. Brooke a "stray tortoise"

(Ch. 35); Rigg is "frog-faced" and "batrachian" (Ch. 35), and Raffles is a "baboon" (Ch. 41) and also "a dangerous reptile" with slimy traces (Ch. 68). Politicians are referred to as "insects of the bloated kind" (Ch. 60), and farmers as "buffaloes or bisons" (Ch. 34). Animal names and nicknames supply appropriate hints of the temperaments of their bearers. Throughout the novel, Celia is called "Kitty" and Dorothea "Dodo," the latter name richly suggestive of an extinct species, that is, the Don Quixotes of the novel, who are dumb to the workaday realities which the Sancho Panzas see so clearly. Caleb Garth's name, which means "faithful dog in an orchard" points to Garth's trusting and trustworthy character in his role of manager of the large agricultural estates of Freshitt Hall and Tipton Grange. Beautiful specimens of nature also appear. Mr. Peacock is a wealthy retired doctor in town. Rosamond is "one of the rare conjunctions of nature" (Ch. 16), a "bird of paradise" (Finale), and "the flower of Mrs. Lemon's school" (Ch. 11), though Lydgate, her husband, calls her his "basil plant" (Finale).

The main characters are often spoken of as sports or variants who find it difficult to adjust to the "clogging medium" of Middlemarch. Dorothea, for example, is "one of Nature's inconsistencies" (Ch. 9), whose uncommon aims and aspirations are easily frustrated for want of suitable outlets. "Here and there," Eliot writes of Dorothea's type, "a cygnet is reared uneasily among the ducklings in the brown pond, and never finds the living stream in fellowship with its own oary-footed kind" (Prelude). Lydgate, whose disposition is similar to Dorothea's in a number of ways, also finds it hard

to steer free of inhibiting social entanglements. Resolved to go his independent way unhampered by community encumbrances, unsuspecting Lydgate is easy prey for the ensnaring social organism; "Middlemarch, in fact," Eliot writes, "counted on swallowing Lydgate and assimilating him very comfortably" (Ch. 15).

Other such comparisons of social activity to biological processes are frequent throughout the narrative. Mr. Bulstrode, for example, had "a sort of vampire's feast in the sense of mastery" (Ch. 16). Much to his credit, Sir James ". . . did not regard his future wife in the light of prey, valuable chiefly for the excitements of the chase" (Ch. 6). Lydgate, at one point, watched and spoke "with that narrow consciousness which reminds one of an animal with fierce eyes and retractile claws," and in the same chapter, Eliot states: "It seemed to Fred that if Mr. Farebrother had had a beak and talons instead of his very capable tongue, his mode of attack could hardly be more cruel" (Ch. 66). Even ethereal Dorothea couches her thoughts in terms of predator, parasite, and prey. Early in the novel, Sir James offers her a tiny Maltese puppy, "one of nature's naive toys" (Ch. 3), a gift which she peremptorily rejects with the words: "They are too helpless: their lives are too frail. A weasel or a mouse that gets its own living is more interesting. . . . Those creatures are parasitic" (Ch. 3). The image of the predatory and parasitic animal even appears in portraying religious forms of expression such as evangelicalism, described by Mr. Farebrother as ". . . a sort of worldly-spiritual cliqueism: they really look on the rest of mankind as a doomed

carcass which is to nourish them in heaven" (Ch. 17). Also parasitic are the art studios in Rome, which are likened to "a form of life that grew like a small fresh vegetation with its population of insects on huge fossils" (Ch. 22), the "huge fossils" being the remnants of extinct successive cultures incarnate in the monuments of the "eternal" city.

It is part of Eliot's design to include Rome in the novel in order to provide a visible symbol of social evolution. "We know what a masquerade all development is and what effective shapes may be disguised in helpless embryos" (Ch. 10), Eliot comments. Yet Rome's very miscellaneousness, its "visible history, where the past of a whole hemisphere seems moving in funeral procession with strange ancestral images" (Ch. 20), a miscellaneousness ". . . which made the mind flexible with constant comparison. . . saved you from seeing the world's ages as a set of box-like partitions without vital connection" (Ch. 22). Rome's funeral procession of the ages with its conspicuous assortment of cultural species is a developmental image writ large, a monumental historical panorama which lingers in the imagination to form a comprehensive evolutionary backdrop to another funeral procession appearing in a later chapter, that of Peter Featherstone, at which Mrs. Cadwallader exclaims: "What a wonderfully mixed set!"

The heterogeneity of living forms in Middlemarch society is further augmented by Eliot's references to odd biological specimens collected by scientific amateurs and her remote allusions to the more sophisticated research on microscopic life in the find-

ings of Bichat, Vesalius, Louis, and Jenner, not to speak of the paltry efforts of Lydgate himself. The Middlemarch clergyman and naturalist, Mr. Farebrother, for example, stuffs his den with pickled sea-mice, pond animalcule, and insects in fine gradations; and he also fills his conversation with the latest news in natural history. He talks with Lydgate about a recent publication, Microscopic Observations on the Pollen of Plants, about the habits of spiders, the "delicate orthoptera" (Ch. 17), and on another occasion speculates with Dorothea about "the possible histories of creatures that converse compendiously with their antennae, and for ought we know may hold reformed parliaments" (Ch. 80). Farebrother's hobby is akin to that of his contemporary, Dickens's Mr. Pickwick, who also engaged in the nineteenth-century popular craze for the scientific study of the earth and its creatures. While Farebrother lectured on insects, Pickwick in 1827 gave a talk on the "Source of the Hampstead Ponds, with some Observations on the Theory of Tittlebats," if we can trust the accuracy of The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club (Ch. 1). Eliot and her husband, George Lewes, spent much of their leisure time as amateur naturalists, collecting shells, barnacles, and other forms of marine life. Lewes published Seaside Studies, Physiology of Common Life, and Studies in Animal Life, books which embodied his lifelong fascination with biology and geology.

While Eliot's commitment to the theory of evolution was strengthened by scientific findings, her understanding of social development stemmed from nineteenth-century historical criticism

rather than the discoveries of science. The evolutionary theories of social thinkers such as Saint-Simon, Comte, Hegel, Riehl, Feuerbach, Mackay, Spencer, and Buckle were thoroughly familiar ideas to her, as her letters and essays reveal. Darwin's work served to cap her convictions, yet the secular spirit which underlay the scientific evidence did little to nullify her quasi-religious sense of wonder at the driving power behind the life force itself. Commenting on The Origin of Species in a letter to Madame Bodichon (Dec. 5, 1859), Eliot declared that she had long ago accepted the developmental theory, yet Darwin's book was a pivotal point in the popularization of the idea:

. . . it makes an epoch, as the expression of his thorough adhesion after long years of study, to the Doctrine of Development -- and not the adhesion of an anonym like the author of the "Vestiges," but of a long-celebrated naturalist. . . . It will have a great effect in the scientific world, causing a thorough and open discussion of a question about which people have hitherto felt timid. So the world gets on step by step towards brave clearness and honesty! But to me the Development Theory and all other explanations of processes by which things come to be, produce a feeble impression compared with the mystery that lies under all these processes.
(Haight, ed. The George Eliot Letters, Vol. III, p. 227)

Other letters written in her younger years foreshadow the Middlemarch emphasis on social evolution as an outgrowth of lower stages of life. In her Ilfracombe Journal covering the period from May 8th to June 26th, 1856, Eliot compares men to shell-secreting animals, who live like barnacles on a rock. During this vacation at Ilfracombe, she went on zoophyte hunts for sea anemones, algae, and molluscs, and she describes her ventures as follows:

In hilly districts, where houses and clusters of houses look so tiny against the huge limbs of Mother Earth one cannot help thinking of man as a parasitic animal, an epizoon making his abode on the skin of the planetary organism.

(Haight, ed. The George Eliot Letters, Vol. II, pp. 241-2)

Molluscs and shells also play their part in adding to the marine imagery of Middlemarch. Mr. Brooke recommends the study of conchology to Casaubon as a light diversion from the scholar's painstaking work on the Key to All Mythologies. Ironically, Casaubon's researches at the time of Brooke's suggestion concerned mythological fish-deities, and the scholar had just been smarting over an academic quarrel with hated adversaries who bore the names of Carp and Tench.

The strong lens of the microscope, the naturalist's tool which permits a close inspection of nature, is used metaphorically by Eliot to peer into the social actions ordinarily invisible. To be at all detected, Mrs. Cadwallader's match-making operations, for example, require scientific instruments to bring her activities to light:

Even with a microscope directed on a water-drop we find ourselves making interpretations which turn out to be rather coarse; for whereas under a weak lens you may seem to see a creature exhibiting an active voracity into which other smaller creatures actively play as if they were so many animated tax-pennies, a stronger lens reveals to you certain tiniest hairlets which make vortices for these victims while the swallower waits passively at his receipt of custom. In this way, metaphorically speaking, a strong lens applied to Mrs. Cadwallader's match-making will show a play of minute causes producing what may be called thought and speech vortices to bring her the sort of food she needed.

(Ch. 6).

The microscope pops up at other intervals in the novel, when

Lydgate's attempts to explore varieties of living tissue, and when Farebrother investigates his microorganisms. This scientific tool even informs a witty remark made on the nature of Casaubon's blood, which under a magnifying glass is "all semicolons and parentheses" (Ch. 8). This captivating double image points not only to the desiccated life of this scholar "buried in books" (Ch. 4) but also to the fanciful punctuational shapes of microorganisms, as they appear under the lens of a microscope.

In addition to scientific apparatus, Eliot borrows freely from the language of natural science to express various modes of human thought, feeling, and interaction. For example, Celia regards the influence of "Mr. Casaubon's learning as a kind of damp which might in due time saturate a neighbouring body" (Ch. 28), and Rosamond has the mild persistence which ". . . enables a white soft living substance to make its way in spite of opposing rock" (Ch. 36). Prejudices are "like odorous bodies" (Ch. 43), the misdeeds of Bulstrode, the banker, are "subtle muscular movements" (Ch. 68), and the scandal of his former life becomes "the full-grown fang of a discovered lie" (Ch. 71). Casaubon's languid soul ". . . went on fluttering in the swampy ground where it was hatched, thinking of its wings and never flying" (Ch. 29), and a ". . . remark lay in his mind as lightly as the broken wing of an insect among all the other fragments there. . ." (Ch. 2). He courts Dorothea with frigid words "as sincere as the bark of a dog, or the cawing of an amorous rook" (Ch. 5). Celia's hands were clasped by Sir James "as a bud is enfolded by a liberal calyx" (Ch. 29).

Needless to say, Farebrother's spiders are busy at work metaphorically spinning and weaving fine webs of human dealings throughout the novel. Eliot speaks of the "pilulous smallness" of "the cobweb of pre-marital acquaintance" (Ch. 2), "the gossamer web" of young lovemaking (Ch. 36), the rationalizations which pad the moral sensibility like "masses of spider web" (Ch. 61), and of hints which ". . . get woven like slight clinging hairs into the more substantial web" (Ch. 31) of one's troubles.

The hobby of the naturalist, which contributes to the penetrating biological atmosphere of Middlemarch, is a small compositional element as compared with the major contribution made by another profession concerned with the science of living organisms, that of the Middlemarch doctors. Besides Lydgate, these include Toller, Peacock, Sprague, Minchin, Gambit, and Wrench. In keeping with the Darwinian substructure of the novel, Eliot labels these country practitioners "an irritable species" (Ch. 26). The theory and practice of medicine is an endless source of conversation at all social levels in Middlemarch, at public gatherings such as board meetings, neighborhood taverns, dinner parties, town-hall assemblies or in intimate family scenes close to a sickbed. Talk in this provincial city almost invariably includes a mixture of stale as well as fresh medical gossip; for example, the running of the New Fever Hospital, Toller's "lowering system," Wrench's "strengthening system," Peacock's administering of boluses, Sprague's treatise on meningitis, Gambit's abilities as accoucheur, Lydgate's refusal to dispense drugs, or the merits of an esteemed old remedy, Widgeon's

Purifying Pills (Chs. 45, 15, and 16). The physical condition of the individual is a constant source of preoccupation not only with the inhabitants of Middlemarch but also with the reader, since the human being is continually depicted in natural or physiological terms as a highly developed organism, prey to the afflictions of his corporeal frame.

The advanced biological research of the human body forms part of the medical backdrop of the novel, a backdrop infinitely enriched by the fund of medical folklore and old wives' tales, which Middlemarchers love to repeat. Eliot, for example, alludes to the glorious pioneering work in anatomy by Bichat:

That great Frenchman first carried out the conception that living bodies, fundamentally considered, are not associations of organs, which can be understood by studying them first apart, and then as it were federally; but must be regarded as consisting of certain primary webs or tissues, out of which the various organs -- brain, heart, lungs, and so on -- are compacted. . . .

(Ch. 15)

Despite the latest advances in medical science and the best professional advice, Middlemarchers have their own unassailable notions about the way illness should be treated. Take the case of Nancy Nash's tumor, for instance:

Most hearers agreed that it would have to be cut out, but one had known of oil and another of "squitchineal" as adequate to soften and reduce any lump in the body when taken enough of into the inside -- the oil by gradually "soopling," the squitchineal by eating away.

(Ch. 45)

The ubiquitous medical talk in the novel shifts the reader's focus from the "human" to the "natural" being by centering interest on what Lydgate calls "the viscera of his own patients" (Ch. 15). The organs of the human body are a habitual topic of discussion among

the townspeople. Images of hearts, lungs, lost limbs, "of macerated muscle or of eyes presented in a dish" (Ch. 36) appear, used either in a literal or figurative sense. Casaubon, for example, is unkindly described by one of his detractors as "a great bladder for dried peas to rattle in" (Ch. 6).

The "viscera" of the characters in Middlemarch not only intensify the rich biological overtones present in this work but also serve to unify the five seemingly disjointed plots which make up the novel, to wit: the Dorothea-Casaubon story, the Fred-Mary story, the Lydgate-Rosamond story, the Featherstone story, and the Bulstrode story. Lydgate's medical practice is the hub around which the separate plot strands cross. His diagnosis and treatment of Casaubon's heart ailment draws the doctor into Dorothea's upper-class social circle of the Brookes and the Chettams. Peter Featherstone's dropsy brings Lydgate into contact with Mary Garth and Fred Vincy. At old Peter's bedside, Lydgate first meets his future wife, Rosamond, who is Fred's sister. During his professional visits to the Vincy household when Fred is sick with typhoid fever, Lydgate's relationship with Rosamond is secured. His medical practice also links him with Bulstrode's New Fever Hospital and the ill-starred episode with Bulstrode's enemy, the dying alcoholic, Raffles. Heart disease, dropsy, typhoid fever, delirium tremens, not to mention the pneumonia of Trumbull, the auctioneer, the "cramp" of Nancy Nash, the charwoman, or the sanitary precautions taken against the encroaching cholera epidemic -- these events are forcible reminders that the body social of Middlemarch is made

up of human beings who are biological organisms as well.

To sum up, Darwin's principle of variation of the species is exhibited without stint in this provincial community of the early 1830's. Eliot packs the novel with multitudes of natural forms engaging in diverse biological activities, because her conscious artistic intent is to create a voluminous, well-stocked store of evolutionary progeny from which to supply her moving diorama of Middlemarch social development.

A second fundamental tenet in The Origin of Species is a phrase which is one of the capstones of nineteenth-century philosophy: "the struggle for existence." The idea of life as a battlefield is as old as man, but what makes the struggle peculiarly modern is the emphasis on the grandeur of the fight, not the gaining of the goal. Darwin borrowed the phrase from a provocative socio-economic treatise by Thomas Malthus, Essay on the Principle of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society, with Remarks on the speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers (1798), and he applied the idea to the entire animal and vegetable kingdoms. Prior to its application to biology, the notion of life as a struggle runs through the gamut of human expression in the nineteenth century, from poetry to politics, from individual strivings of self-realization to the struggle of egos in the "battle" between the sexes. Struggle is the keynote in the "dialectical" clash of social classes, in the competition for economic markets, in jingoistic nationalism, or in grappling with the acute anomie of living in an alien cosmos. Conceived of as a philosophy of becoming, the accent

is forever on action. "The all of things," Carlyle said, "is the verb TO DO." This is an echo of the grand epic celebrating human striving, Goethe's Faust: "Whoever aspires unweariedly/ Is not beyond re-deeming." Some, like Matthew Arnold, found man's struggle a diseased spiritual symptom:

. . . the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, rest.
("The Buried Life," 91-3)

Others like Tennyson's Ulysses and Browning's Rabbi Ben Ezra found the challenge of the contest exhilarating, a sentiment which Dorothea in Middlemarch mirrored with the statement: "Failure after long perseverance is much grander than never to have a striving good enough to be called a failure" (Ch. 22). The struggle for existence crops up in many spheres in the novel along with added biological reinforcement from Darwin and Huxley. Interestingly enough, Eliot, like many others, regarded society in terms of a biological contest long before the publication of The Origin of Species in 1859, which "officially" sanctioned the theory of biological evolution. In a letter to her teacher and friend, Maria Lewis, Eliot wrote in 1840:

La vie est un combat, pas un hymne. . . . Society is a wide nursery of plants where the hundred decompose to nourish the future ten, after giving collateral benefits to their contemporaries destined for a fairer garden. An awful thought!
(Haight, ed. The George Eliot Letters, Vol. I, pp. 71-2)

Despite the biological cast of the multiple planes of struggle in Middlemarch, life in the novel does not appear solely as a Hobbesian war or a continuous free fight, to paraphrase the gladia-

torial survival ethics of T. H. Huxley, but also emerges as a Mutual Aid Society. While individuals flounder and fail, others repeatedly come to the rescue. The cementing power of generosity, love, fellow feeling, clan support, and community pride are as often as not contending forces in the fight for existence as are the ruthless, self-seeking qualities destructive to group cohesion. One of the most widespread kinds of struggle in the novel is the wrestling for self-realization in a fettering and oppressive environment, in which the individual is pervaded "by the sense of moving heavily in a dim and clogging medium" (Ch. 50). Other kinds of struggle which appear are the clash of wills in marriage, the competition among family groups, the professional rivalry among clergymen and among doctors, community contention over the New Fever Hospital, and the national political battle over the proposed Reform Bill. That Eliot deliberately parallels her planes of struggle from microcosm to macrocosm is apparent in her comment introducing Ch. 46:

While Lydgate, safely married and with the Hospital under his command, felt himself struggling for Medical Reform against Middlemarch, Middlemarch was becoming more and more conscious of the national struggle for another kind of Reform.

The dim, clogging and "embroiled medium" (Ch. 30) which hampers individual ambition and striving in Middlemarch is projected by Eliot's interplay of two common nouns, which along with a few other select substantives occur with uncommon frequency throughout the work. The two nouns are "world" and "opinion." This "world" may appear as the tiny personal sphere bound by the crust of one's conceptions and illusions. For example, Casaubon

was "the centre of his own world" (Ch. 10), and "Dorothea was not only his wife: she was a personification of that shallow world which surrounds the ill-appreciated or desponding author" (Ch. 20). Will Ladislaw's habitual rounds are referred to as "his familiar little world" (Ch. 82); the collapse of Rosamond's amorous fancies about Will left "her little world in ruins" (Ch. 78); or "Poor Lydgate! or shall I say, Poor Rosamond! Each lived in a world of which the other knew nothing" (Ch. 16). In a moment of personal crisis, the "little world" of the individual's making becomes transfigured. Eliot draws upon a biological analogy to mark a decisive stage in Dorothea's self-development:

She might have compared her experience at that moment to the vague alarmed consciousness that her life was taking on a new form, that she was undergoing a metamorphosis in which memory would not adjust itself to the stirring of new organs Her world was in a state of convulsive change. . . .
(Ch. 50)

On other occasions, Eliot uses the word "world" in a more general sense to mean the material universe, the all-inclusiveness of things, the kind of world apparent in such commonplace expressions as the following which abound in the novel: "Not for the world, not for the world" (Ch. 1); "He can't be long for this world. . ." (Ch. 11); "I would not tell mamma for the world" (Ch. 12); "the best girl in the world" (Ch. 16); "I wouldn't have hurt you so for the world. . ." (Ch. 25); "Some say it's the end of the world" (Ch. 36); "Is there so little business in the world. . ." (Ch. 56); "not the least in the world" (Ch. 57); "the quietest most familiar horse in the world" (Ch. 58); "the happiest fellow in the world" (Ch. 57); "a world of reasons" (Ch. 62); or "the growing good of the world" (last page).

Unobtrusive turns of speech such as these are tucked into the everyday conversation of Middlemarchers. When repeated with inordinate frequency, these phrases emphasize the entirely secular spirit of the Middlemarch milieu, in which the unworldliness of Mr. Bulstrode's evangelical pursuits, for example, is greeted with strong community antagonism.

The most prevalent connotation of "world," however, lies in its application as a loose term to cover whatever inhibits individual striving. The "world" is a form of social control, a system of protective and opprobrious fetters, which thwart, defeat, and blunt personal initiative depending on one's ability to circumvent the confining situation. The "world" serves as a catch-all for the unseen but profoundly felt mesh of repressions stifling and redirecting human impulses and energies, a term which comes close to what the youth of today like to call "the establishment." Eliot describes the Middlemarch medium as an elaborate network of restrictions by saturating the narrative with images of yokes, harnesses, pincers, labyrinths, prisons, tombs, fetters, and ties. Her use of "yoke" and "harness" fits in well with the creation of human beings in Middlemarch as a motley assortment of sophisticated animals and plants. Living under Dorothea's domineering presence, Celia, for example, ". . . had always worn a yoke. . ." (Ch. 1); Mayor Vincy ". . . felt his neck under Bulstrode's yoke. . ." (Ch. 13); Mrs. Garth said she had ". . . borne the yoke in her youth, and learned self-control" (Ch. 24); Fred is under Caleb's "bit and bridle" (Ch. 68); Dorothea feared Casaubon ". . . might make a

new yoke for her" (Ch. 48); certain natures improve "when the yoke of life ceases to gall them" (Ch. 52); Lydgate was "galled with his harness" (Ch. 58) and ". . . was bowing his neck under the yoke like a creature who had talons. . ."(Ch. 58); later Lydgate continues to writhe under the burden of an indifferent wife and the "vile yoke" of debt. He fails to follow Farebrother's advice about staying independent by steering clear of financial obligations. "Very few men can do that," says Farebrother. "Either you slip out of service altogether, and become good for nothing, or you wear a harness and draw a good deal where your yoke-fellows pull you" (Ch. 17).

Worldly obstacles in the struggle for self-fulfillment occur in the shapes of family obligations, "the real yoke of marriage" (Ch. 48), the lack of money, the lack of a "coherent social faith and order" (Prelude), provincial backwardness, or to borrow Walter Bagehot's phrase, "the cake of custom." Perhaps the most pervasive form of worldly control in Middlemarch is the power of community opinion. A substantial portion of the Middlemarch medium is made up of what others think. Dorothea's guardian and uncle, Mr. Brooke, for example, was ". . . brave enough to defy the world -- that is to say, Mrs. Cadwallader, the Rector's wife, and the small group of gentry with whom he visited. . ." (Ch. 1). "Rural opinion," (Ch. 1), "the world's opinion" (Ch. 22), "the town opinion" (Ch. 46), "people's opinion" (Ch. 76) play a significant role in checking the spread of human voracity. Thus the world of Middlemarch emerges as an invisible pseudo-environment of public opinion, as Walter Lippmann would say, a habitat made up of those

intangible fictions which exert extraordinary pressures on the actions of men. The unseen pseudo-environment is a coercive collective power, whose felt presence serves as a binding force of the social organism. When *Middlemarch* rejects Bulstrode, Eliot comments: "Who can know how much of his most inward life is made up of the thoughts he believes other men to have about him, until that fabric of opinion is threatened with ruin" (Ch. 68)? A large share of Dorothea's inner struggle to overcome the barriers which separate her from Will Ladislaw lies in her swelling resolve to suffer the social ostracism accompanying such a marriage:

And yet, so heavily did the world weigh on her in spite of her independent energy, that with this idea of Will as in need of such help and at a disadvantage with the world, there came always the vision of that unfitness of any closer relation between them which lay in the opinion of everyone connected with her.

(Ch. 62)

Environment in *Middlemarch* assumes a far more consequential role than the significance of individual will. In her previous novels, Eliot accentuates the efficacy of human endowments to subdue circumstances, the efficacy of morality and strength of character to resist the encroaching demands of society. One of her favorite ideas had always been the dictum of Novalis that "Character is destiny," that a person reaps what he sows, that the balance of payments awaits each of us sooner or later. The avenging furies lie in ambush to even out the moral score for better or worse. Eliot's novel, *Silas Marner*, and her short story, "Brother Jacob," are parables on the subject of retribution. The theme of nemesis runs vigorously through *Adam Bede* and *Romola*, but begins to

slacken considerably in the cluster of novels centering on the Reform era: The Mill on the Floss, Felix Holt, the Radical, and Middlemarch. In The Mill on the Floss, the community of St. Oggs looms into prominence as a stultifying sphere dominated by the oppressive narrowness of the Dodson clan, whose creed was custom, whose lives ". . . were irradiated by no sublime principles, no romantic visions, no active, self-renouncing faith. . ." (Book Fourth, Ch. 1). In Felix Holt, the Radical, the pseudo-environment of public opinion becomes a formidable influence on the lives of men because of the expansion of democracy. In the Reform novels, Eliot begins to shift her perspective on the capacity of individual strength of character alone to affect a course of conduct. "Character is destiny. . .," she concedes in The Mill on the Floss, "but not the whole of our destiny" (Book Sixth, Ch. 6). In Middlemarch, this thought is expressed in the epigraph to Ch. 4:

1st Gent. Our deeds are fetters that we forge ourselves.

2nd Gent. Ay, truly: but I think it is the world
That brings the iron.

The exposé of Bulstrode's unsavory past comes closest to Eliot's employment of nemesis in the novel, yet the sense of righteousness which usually attends the sinner's undoing is mitigated by the ironic fact that Bulstrode's "dirty money" is the mainstay of the New Fever Hospital benefiting the entire town. Apart from Bulstrode, the residents of Middlemarch possess the usual run of petty vices stemming from self-interest, but on the whole they lack the glaring moral deficiencies which call for severe redress. Rather than a moral flaw, the "medium" becomes the victimizer, yet this

medium, it must be added, is a blend of the "little" world of the victim with the larger world outside. Even the strongest characters often find themselves unable to cope with the pressures of environmental circumstances, because their very appetites have to a large extent been molded by those very pressures. With repeated insistence, Eliot punctuates her commentary with compassion for the victims, as we read of "Poor Dorothea, " "Poor Casaubon, " "Poor Lydgate, " "poor boy [of Fred], " "Poor Rosamond, " "Poor Harriet, " "Poor Walter, " "pray pity him [of Brooke], " "poor devil [of Will], " "Poor Bunch, " "Poor Romilly, " "Poor Mary, " "Poor Mrs. Vincy, " "Poor Peter, " "Poor Dagley, " and so on. Poor Fred, for example, naturally sets his sights high and ". . . wants to cut a figure in the world" (Ch. 14), because he believes that he possesses the unquestionable superiority of a university education. Poor Rosamond naturally dreams of climbing the social ladder towards "that middle-class heaven, rank" (Ch. 12), because she is surrounded by opinion which considers her to be "the best girl in the world" (Ch. 16), "the flower of Mrs. Lemon's School" (Ch. 11), where Mrs. Lemon herself had said that no pupil ". . . exceeded that young lady for mental acquisition and propriety of speech, while her musical execution was quite exceptional" (Ch. 11). Mayor Vincy, who says that he is ". . . contented to be no worse than my neighbours" (Ch. 13), finds Bulstrode's otherworldly ambition to be "first chop in heaven" (Ch. 13) repugnant. Yet each wants success in his own way, one through the glory of the evangelical elect, the other through the glory of the Middlemarch trade.

Loftier forms of the struggle of self-realization appear in the striving of three central characters, Casaubon, Dorothea, and Lydgate. Casaubon literally works himself to death in attempting to pull together the infinitesimal strands of his scholarly research, Key to All Mythologies, a project in which he tries desperately to reconstruct the past, "as it used to be, in spite of ruin and confusing changes" (Ch. 2). Lydgate's plan for the future ". . . was to do good small work for Middlemarch and great work for the world" (Ch. 15). Dorothea is a gifted gentlewoman with the spiritual ardor of a St. Theresa, a Santa Barbara, or a Santa Clara, to use Eliot's saintly comparisons for her. Being a woman in a man's world, her talents find no stirring constructive outlets; being a religious enthusiast in a secular and materialistic environment, she is a misfit. Her intense ". . . passion was transfused through a mind struggling towards an ideal life . . ." (Ch. 5), a life which she broadly defines as "widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower" (Ch. 39). Her soul-hunger finds no vent except as a helpmeet to a Pascal, a Milton, the "Judicious"[sic] Hooker, or a Locke, all of whom she sees incarnated in the person of her prospective husband, Casaubon. By marrying him, she could help in his grand endeavors, for ". . . here was a living Bossuet, whose work would reconcile complete knowledge with devoted piety; here was a modern Augustine who united the glories of doctor and saint" (Ch. 3).

Despite the noble aspirations of Casaubon, Lydgate, and Dorothea, Eliot deftly traces out the naiveté of their exalted enthusi-

asms, which camouflage baser tinctures of egoism. Casaubon's mind, for instance, seals itself from threats of adverse scholarly criticism endangering the theory of his Key. Dorothea combines the quixotic qualities which both her name and nickname denote. Her ardent yearning for good is her "Dorothea" side, a name meaning "gift of God," while her mulish insistence in having her own way and her childlike ideas about commonplace realities make her sobriquet of a dumb "Dodo" appropriate. Lydgate's professional zeal is curbed by his unreflecting self-indulgence, which Eliot designates as "spots of commonness" (Ch. 15). These "spots" make him blind to the cost of expensive luxuries and the prepossessing lures of beautiful women such as Laure and Rosamond:

. . . he was an emotional creature with a flesh-and-blood sense of fellowship which withstood all the abstractions of special study. He cared not only "for cases," but for John and Elizabeth, especially Elizabeth.
(Ch. 15)

For each person, the struggle for existence is unique; the world weighs in different ways. The scholar fights for recognition; the doctor battles against the backwardness of provincial medicine; the social climber plots her strategy to enter the haut monde; the gifted woman forges a makeshift course, when the secular spirit of the era finds her capacities irrelevant to the nature of the times and irrelevant to the nature of her sex. For most of the characters, however, the struggle for existence involves the scramble for the limited store of available money and goods. In his essay, "Manners, Morals, and the Novel," Lionel Trilling states that the novel is born with the appearance of money as a social element and that every

situation in Dostoyevsky, no matter how spiritual, starts with a point of social pride and a certain number of rubles. This observation is no less true of Middlemarch. In keeping within the evolutionary framework, money becomes "food" for survival in the novel. Describing the rivalry of the family clans for old Featherstone's wealth, Eliot conforms to her biological design by wryly picturing them as animals competing for provender:

When the animals entered the Ark in pairs, one may imagine that allied species made much private remark on each other, and were tempted to think that so many forms feeding on the same store of fodder were eminently superfluous, as tending to diminish the rations.

(Ch. 35)

Rather than stress the moral limitations of men, Middlemarch seems bent on showing the constant adjustment of inner and outer, private and public worlds, of what one wants with what is to be had, of honorable and mean aspirations slowly coming to grips with changing earthly realities, in the spirit of the Spanish proverb introducing Ch. 46: "Since we cannot get what we like, let us like what we can get."

Another widespread kind of struggle which appears in the novel is the battle between the sexes in marriage. To enter the state of wedlock for some is to enter a state of war, in which the contest of egos resembles the "critical tumult," Eliot writes, "of a shrimp pool" (Ch. 20). Marriage as a battlefield was a popular theme in mid- and late Victorian literature, especially in the novels of George Meredith and in his dramatic poem, "Modérn Love," which speaks of a:

. . . marriage tomb, the sword between;
Each wishing for the sword that severs all.

(I)

Middlemarch portrays many accommodations in the "marriage tomb, "the varying adjustments of dominance and submission made between husband and wife. Accommodations sometimes appear in the form of an easy, sometimes an uneasy truce, sometimes "a creeping paralysis" (Ch. 58), and at other times they appear as a creative dialectic of wills, the free and frank exchange which kneads mutual respect and honest communion into a profound consonance of shared purpose. In this novel, marriages fail chiefly because of the lamentable ignorance of each sex about the other and the inordinate expectations demanded of the nuptial tie. Dorothea, for example, saw in Casaubon "a Protestant Pope" (Ch. 5), a spiritual director who could guide her hesitant steps by the lamp of knowledge. Casaubon, on the other hand, regarded his future wife as a source of self-sacrificing affection which would view his erudition with the wonderful awe of "an elegant-minded canary bird" (Ch. 20). Each naturally is disappointed. In time, Dorothea finds Casaubon's project a vacuous undertaking crippling her soul. And Casaubon finds that "instead of getting a soft fence against the cold, shadowy, unapplaudive audience of life . . ." (Ch. 20), he gets a critical spy " . . . watching everything with a malign power of inference" (Ch.20). Each suffers a deep sense of subjection exemplifying the truth of Ambrose Bierce's cynical witticism that marriage is a community of master, mistress, and two slaves, making in all, two.

Eliot directs some of her most satirical barbs at time-hon-

ored misconceptions about marriage, which she sees rooted in conventional stupidity about the nature of women. Regarded as a frailer "feebler species" (Ch. 65), the middle- and upper-class English girl of the nineteenth century was given a paltry practical preparation for her future role as wife and mother. Her education consisted of a "toy-box history of the world" (Ch. 10), with extras such as singing, piano-tinkling, and "getting in and out of a carriage" (Ch. 11), as "the suitable garnish for girls" (Ch. 12). Mr. Brooke, Dorothea's uncle, is the major spokesman of the customary notions about the limits of the female mind. He believes that ladies are too flighty and incapable of understanding political economy. "Your sex are not thinkers, you know -- varium et mutabile semper -- that kind of thing" (Ch. 6), he patronizingly informs Mrs. Cadwallader, who, ironically enough, is infinitely more acute than he is. Mr. Brooke's comments are a delightful satire on masculine complacency, since he himself has "a too rambling habit of mind" (Ch. 1). In some quarters, he is called "a leaky-minded fool" (Ch. 63) and " . . . pulpy; he will run into any mould, but he won't keep shape" (Ch. 8). Nevertheless, Mr. Brooke faithfully parrots the prejudices of his time, when "women were expected to have weak opinions . . ." (Ch. 1). Each bachelor in the novel has his peculiar idiosyncrasies as to what constitutes excellence in a wife. Being a sportsman, Sir James believes every lady ought to be a perfect horsewoman in order to accompany her husband; Trumbull feels a wife should be a nurse; Casaubon wants a hero-worshiper; and Lydgate sees his ideal mate as an exquisite adornment, a fount

of endless enchantment and surcease from care. In a society dominated by such ideas, the gifted woman is thought to be an anomaly, "nature," as Eliot comments dryly, "having intended greatness for men" (Ch. 39). Yet the times are also at fault for recognizing or allowing no callings for women beyond those in the domestic sphere. Eliot sums up Dorothea's problem in the Finale as follows:

Many who knew her, thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another, and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother. But no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done --

The best adjustments in marriage are to be found in the Garth household, between Susan and Caleb, and later between Mary and Fred. These unions are cemented by a strong practical intelligence about human nature, about the values of hard work, thrift, a sense of responsibility, and a spirit of generosity, values which convert the "yoke of marriage" into the blessed tie that binds. To Caleb, "marriage is a taming thing" (Ch. 68), a condition which matures a man, that is, if that man is matched to the right woman. In Lydgate's case, the taming is the slow death of his best self. Following the evolutionary paradigm of the novel, Eliot tells the story of the courtship and the conjugal struggle between Rosamond and Lydgate through the use of biological rhetoric strongly reminiscent of the Darwinian themes of variation, the struggle for existence, natural selection, and survival of the fittest. The following charts the sequence of this development:

VARIATION

Higher forms of the "feebler species" (Ch. 65) are represented in two outstanding Middlemarch women, Dorothea Brooke and Rosamond Vincy. Dorothea is uncommonly intelligent for her sex, "one of nature's inconsistencies" (Ch. 9), while Rosamond is uncommonly beautiful and sophisticated, one of "the rare conjunctions of nature" (Ch. 16). Observing both, Lydgate finds Dorothea "a good creature," but far too earnest and intellectual. "It is troublesome to talk to such women," he reflects. "They are always wanting reasons . . ." (Ch. 10). Lydgate concludes that Dorothea is "altogether a mistake" (Ch. 10). By contrast, Rosamond possesses the undemanding charm of music and flowers, and her company, he felt, was like "reclining in a paradise with sweet laughs for bird-notes, and blue eyes for a heaven" (Ch. 11). Flirting with Rosamond, Lydgate tells her, "I am sure you could teach me a thousand things -- as an exquisite bird could teach a bear if there were any common language between them. Happily, there is a common language between women and men, and so the bears get caught" (Ch. 16). Rosamond registers his every look and word, especially the fact of his good birth, since she sees marriage as a prospect for rising in rank.

THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

Lydgate stoutly rejects the possibility of an early marriage because of his ambitious professional plans. Rosamond's mind, however, " . . . had a shaping activity and looked through watchful blue eyes, whereas Lydgate's lay blind and unconcerned as a jelly-

fish which gets melted without knowing it" (Ch. 27). When Lydgate withdraws his attentions out of fear of deeper involvement, Rosamond's tears flow "like water on a blue flower" (Ch. 31) and shake flirtation into love. Lydgate is ". . . completely mastered by the onrush of tenderness at the sudden belief that this sweet young creature depended on him for her joy . . ." (Ch. 31), and in half an hour he leaves the "house an engaged man, whose soul was not his own, but the woman's to whom he had bound himself" (Ch. 31). Lydgate convinces himself that marriage is the best thing for a man who wants to work steadily. Another delightful thought which occurs to him is that by marrying his blue flower, he would give her "a much-needed transplantation" (Ch. 36) from the vulgar annoyances of the middle-class Vincy household.

The bear gets caught and the contest of wills begins. The proverbial "submissiveness of the goose as beautifully corresponding to the strength of the gander" (Ch. 36) undergoes a reversal of roles. Lydgate had earlier called himself "her captive, meaning all the while, not to be her captive" (Ch. 27). After living with Rosamond a short time, he begins to see signs of her unshakable obstinacy, and he ". . . secretly wondered over the terrible tenacity of this mild creature. There was gathering within him an amazed sense of his powerlessness over Rosamond" (Ch. 58). Their mutual extravagance over material luxuries leads them deeper and deeper in debt. Rosamond, however, is unconcerned with her own prodigality and prefers to berate Lydgate as being a poor breadwinner. "It seemed that she had no more identified herself with him," Eliot

comments, "than if they had been creatures of different species and opposing interests" (Ch. 58). Facing bankruptcy and an indifferent wife, Lydgate's efforts at medical research wither noticeably. He bows "his neck under a yoke like a creature who had talons" (Ch. 58). Thinking of his former passion for Laure, a French actress who murdered her husband, Lydgate wonders about Rosamond: "Would she kill me because I wearied her? and then, "It is the way with all women" (Ch. 58).

NATURAL SELECTION

In this marriage, Rosamond emerges as the "natural" superior over Lydgate by the cunning stratagem of making him believe that he is treating his fragile flower brutally. Unlike other women, she takes full advantage of so-called female limitations and thrives in Ibsen's "doll house." On three occasions, Lydgate calls himself a brute for burdening this frail being with his financial cares. She insists that he give up his research and move to a wealthier town, where income is easier. Reluctantly, Lydgate accedes. "He wished to excuse everything in her if he could -- but it was inevitable that in that excusing mood he should think of her as if she were an animal of another and feebler species. Nevertheless, she had mastered him" (Ch. 65).

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Lydgate's earlier presentiment "of slackening resolution" (Ch. 58) and "the creeping paralysis" (same phrase used by him in Ch. 58 and Ch. 76) which envelops his ardor for medical research becomes a fully acknowledged admission of failure in the final

chapter of the novel. His successful medical practice ". . . provided all flowers and gilding" for Rosamond ". . . fit for the bird of paradise that she resembled" (Finale), yet Lydgate remained unfulfilled, because he never did what he had set out to do. He died prematurely of diphtheria, leaving Rosamond to marry a rich physician, whose wealth allows her all "the happiness" that she regards as "her reward" (Finale). No longer his blue flower, Rosamond becomes Lydgate's "basil plant," a botanical variety which, as he tells her, ". . . flourished wonderfully on a murdered man's brains" (Finale).

Middlemarch was published in 1871-2, during the very time when The Descent of Man (1871), Darwin's second major work, appeared. Two-thirds of Darwin's book is a long digression on sexual selection, a topic which encouraged the facile application of the naturalist's ideas to the relation between the sexes in Victorian marriage. The Descent of Man cautiously applies the broad concepts of The Origin of Species to include the human being. However, the less scientifically attuned mind of the novelist had already jumped to this conclusion, finding in the drama of Darwin's vision of nature in 1859 a new reservoir of metaphor with which to command a comprehensive view of the human spectacle.

In addition to the independent struggles of individual persons attempting to find satisfaction in sublime or petty private pursuits, a second plan of combat exists in Middlemarch: the cooperative

fight of the community against the invasion of disease. Threats to the social organism are grounded not only in the physical menace of an impending cholera epidemic, alluded to briefly in Chapters 45, 63, 67, and 71, but also are grounded in a wider context of the idea of disease. Ill-boding solvents of community solidarity such as new, foreign, or unorthodox ways of thinking are warily, even hostilely scrutinized by Middlemarchers in their zeal to conserve traditional patterns which have withstood the tests of time. Lydgate, for example, ". . . has lots of ideas, quite new, about ventilation and diet, that sort of thing," Mr. Brooke tells his dinner-party companion, the lawyer Standish. Not in the least impressed, Mr. Standish responds, "Hang it, do you think that is quite sound? -- upsetting the old treatment, which has made Englishmen what they are" (Ch. 10)? In providing for its physical health, the community keeps a watchful eye on possible impairments to its mental constitution, that is, risks which imperil its social stability. On the whole, Middlemarchers believe that group solidarity rests on a firm adherence to past usages, and that group self-preservation rests in conformity with habitual practices. "Sane people did what their neighbours did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them" (Ch. 1).

The townspeople are nonetheless aware of the necessity for change in order, for instance, to root out an old abuse, though they are often perplexed as to precisely what constitutes the proper measure of that change. How does one recognize the ever-shifting golden mean between obsolescence and improvement? Pondering

over the Reform Bill, Mr. Brooke is puzzled by Parliament's proposed extension of the vote to the ten-pound householder. "These ten-pound householders, now: why ten?" Brooke inquires. "That's a difficult question, now, if you go into it" (Ch. 51). The just proportion of political reform which would insure social progress is expressed in medical terminology in a conversation between the political conservative, Lydgate, and the political liberal, Will Ladislaw, on the proposed Parliamentary bill: "That is the way with you political writers, Ladislaw -- crying up a measure as if it were a universal cure, and crying up men who are a part of the very disease that wants curing." Ladislaw replies that ". . . your cure must begin somewhere . . . ," and one can't wait until "immaculate men" with unimpeachable motives turn up to represent an "injured" class, but rather one must support the man who fights for their claims. "When I say, I go for the dose that cures," Lydgate retorts, "it doesn't follow that I go in for opium in a given case of gout" (Ch. 46).

In comparing physical disease with the malaise of the body social or the body political, Eliot employs a structural device with a long literary tradition. Paralleling the ills of society with the presence of a physically diseased environment forms part of the design of Hamlet, where "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark," and also the design of Thomas Mann's tubercular society in The Magic Mountain, and Albert Camus's plague-ridden city in La Peste. Eliot's use of the analogy, however, amplifies the physical rather than the moral implications of the comparison.

Society is prone to illness not only because it is made up of "political" animals, but especially because it is made up of political "animals." The removal of the banker Bulstrode from the Middlemarch social organism occurs at a Town-Hall meeting on a pressing sanitary question occasioned by the presence of a cholera case in town. Yet the ostracism of Bulstrode is less a moral act of outraged justice than a hasty, bungled, and highly prejudiced affair, based on hearsay about the nature of Raffles's death. Not only is Bulstrode "quarantined" in the misguided zeal of the community to keep its health, but Lydgate, an innocent member, is also cut off, and becomes like Bulstrode a social outcast.

Alien ideas, like immoral acts, are also treated as forms of disease. Since hereditary custom fashions the accepted social code, it is no wonder that the greatest boosts toward community progress are initiated by the outsiders: Bulstrode, Lydgate, and Ladislaw. Will Ladislaw's editorship of the "Pioneer," the liberal Middlemarch newspaper, popularizes national efforts at reform. To Mr. Brooke, Will is ". . . a kind of Shelley, you know I don't mean as to anything objectionable -- laxities or atheism, or anything of that kind, you know But he has the same sort of enthusiasm for liberty, freedom, emancipation -- a fine thing under guidance -- under guidance, you know" (Ch. 37). Lydgate introduces advanced French theories for the treatment of disease in a "dark period" (Ch. 7) filled with medical quackery, and Bulstrode's philanthropy is responsible for the building of the New Fever Hospital. Each man meets with the mixed envy and hostility which often greet the

vigorous innovator. In Bulstrode's case, however, town antipathy is directed against his pronounced Evangelicalism, inimical to the moderate Anglicanism practiced by Middlemarchers. "It's this sort of thing -- this tyrannical spirit, wanting to play bishop and banker everywhere --," Mayor Vincy declares of his brother-in-law, Bulstrode, "it's this sort of thing makes a man's name stink" (Ch. 13).

Throughout Eliot's fiction, the spread of Evangelicalism is resisted as a blight, "a murrain," by those characters who feel threatened by it. Eliot as author-commentator is usually fairminded, even sympathetic towards the merits of evangelical enthusiasm, as witness her affectionate portrayals of Dinah Morris in Adam Bede, Rev. Tryan in "Janet's Repentance," and Rufus Lyon in Felix Holt, the Radical. The penetrating analysis of Savonarola in Romola is another instance of Eliot's tilting of the scales in favor of the evangelical cast of mind. In Adam Bede, she speaks of the spiritual strength imparted by early Methodism:

. . . where a crowd of rough men and weary-hearted women drank in a faith which was a rudimentary culture, which linked their thoughts with the past, lifted their imagination above the sordid details of their own narrow lives, and suffused their souls with the sense of a pitying, loving, infinite Presence

(Ch. III)

In "Janet's Repentance," Evangelicalism is portrayed as a fine antidote to moral complacency, and in Felix Holt, the Radical, old Rufus is an admirable standard-bearer of unshakable moral truths, which resist the growing ethical relativism of the times. Eliot's earlier novels are a searching and dispassionate assessment of the evangelical temper. Yet in Middlemarch, her appreciation towards

that form of religious enthusiasm decidedly cools. This coolness manifests itself not only by making the evangelical Bulstrode the principal transgressor, but emerges also in Eliot's own intrusive author commentary, for example:

The Vincys had the readiness to enjoy, the rejection of all anxiety, and the belief in life as a merry lot, which made a house exceptional in most county towns at that time, when Evangelicalism had cast a certain suspicion as of plague-infection over the few amusements which survived in the provinces.

(Ch. 16)

Eliot's implicit criticism of evangelical enthusiasm lies in one of the major plot strands of Middlemarch: Dorothea's self-development from a fervidly puritanical young lady to a compassionate and tolerant young matron. From the very first chapter, an air of satire surrounds Dorothea's religious ardor, an air which is later dispelled as Dorothea grows to emotional maturity. Tart-tongued Mrs. Cadwallader wishes Dorothea the "joy of her hair shirt," since ". . . those Methodistical whims, that air of being more religious than the rector and curate together, came from a deeper and more constitutional disease than she had been willing to believe" (Ch. 6). Will Ladislaw educates Dorothea away from what he calls her "faticism of sympathy." Summed up in the following words, Will's philosophy of life serves as an antidote to Dorothea's "disease":

The best piety is to enjoy -- when you can. You are doing the most then to save the earth's character as an agreeable planet. Such enjoyment radiates. It is of no use to try and take care of all the world; that is being taken care of when you feel delight -- in art or anything else. Would you turn all the youth of the world into a tragic chorus, wailing and moralising [sic] over misery? I suspect that you have some false belief in the virtues of misery, and want to make your life a martyrdom.

(Ch. 22)

The everyday parlance of Middlemarchers, as was mentioned previously, is filled with medical vocabulary displaying their interest in the physical aspects of illness. The townspeople also employ medical phraseology to describe social and domestic "ailments." For example, Casaubon ". . . is as bad as the wrong physic -- nasty to take and sure to disagree" (Ch. 10). One way for a good family ". . . to get rid of troublesome sprigs" is to ". . . empty a pot of leeches . . ." on them (Ch. 38). In a conversation with Dorothea, Farebrother tells her that character ". . . is something living and changing, and may become diseased as our bodies do." Answering in the same vein, Dorothea replies, "Then it may be rescued and healed" (Ch. 72). Lydgate's debts worked on him "like a recognized chronic disease" (Ch. 58); criticism of others is "good lowering medicine" (Ch. 54); and talk about the need for "a disinfecting apparatus within" applies to the necessity for reforms within the medical profession.

Disease of the human body and disease of the social organism are unifying common denominators of both plot and metaphor in the novel. The mortal struggle of man against heart disorders, dropsy, alcoholism, typhoid fever, and pneumonia is accentuated in the effort of the group to combat the deadly cholera. As the individual fights for life, so does the collective body of the community. The physiological imagery on each plane, personal or social, transmits a picture which dwells on elemental components of the human make-up: flesh and blood. In so doing, the novel follows the impress of its Darwinian stamp.

The intense debate over Lord Grey's proposed Reform Bill, which pervades the political climate of Middlemarch, widens the scope of community attempts to cope with national as well as local ills. The awakening of political awareness over the nation's needs begins to pull together disparate social groups in a cooperative search for "the proper dose" of the suggested prescription: increased manhood suffrage. At a time when ". . . there was a clearer distinction of ranks and a dimmer distinction of [political] parties" (Ch. 10), members of the gentry and the middle classes in Middlemarch are seen mixing socially under the pressures of common local and national interests. For example, Mr. Brooke, whose social connections ". . . though not exactly aristocratic were unquestionably 'good'" (Ch. 1), mingles freely with all social classes in Middlemarch in his attempt to stand for Parliament as an independent candidate. Much to the exasperation of Mrs. Cadwallader, "a lady of immeasurably high birth" (Ch. 6), Brooke fraternizes with men who have neither blood nor position, "monsters" who, in her opinion, ". . . could not be taken account of in a well-bred scheme of the universe" (Ch. 6). Despite Mrs. Cadwallader's firm sway over the Middlemarch gentry, democracy begins its sweep as the great social leveler under her very nose, and "monsters" such as the manufacturer, Mayor Vincy, and the Methodist banker, Bulstrode, appear as dinner guests at Mr. Brooke's estate, Tipton Grange. Democracy weaves endless "threads of connection" (Ch. 11) among the social classes and promotes a greater consciousness of interdependence in the "embroidered medium" (Ch. 30) of the com-

munity.

The interconnectedness of all realms of activity, of part and whole, of large and small, of then and now, forms one of the pre-dominating themes in the novel, a theme which is dramatized overtly and subtly in an iridescent prism of reflecting images. That no man is an island, or any group for that matter, is repeatedly emphasized both in the thoughts and deeds of the characters and also within the grammatical structure of the novel. Discussing the language of Middlemarch in an essay, "Fiction and the Analogical Matrix," Mark Schorer points, as was previously mentioned, to the widespread use of metaphors of unification in verbs of mingling, associating, merging, mixing, embracing, comprehending, binding, and connecting. Another Eliot critic, W. J. Harvey, singles out the web imagery in the theme of unification along with such phrases as Caleb Garth's "things hang together," Trumbull's "trifles make the sum of human things, . . ." and Will Ladislaw's ". . . the little waves make the large ones . . ." (The Art of George Eliot, p. 175). These phrases may be found in Chapters 40, 60, and 46, respectively, in Middlemarch. Mr. Brooke echoes the theme in political terms when he discusses the democratic implications of the Reform Bill with Mr. Mawmsey, the grocer. Mr. Mawmsey wants to consider Reform ". . . in a family light Will it support Mrs. Mawmsey, and enable her to bring up six children when I am no more (Ch. 51)?" Brooke replies: "I quite agree with you that you've got to look at the thing in a family light: but public spirit, now. We're all one family, you know -- it's all one cupboard" (Ch. 51).

The sense of community identification with the commonwealth of England and the still larger commonwealth of mankind has strong biological as well as humanistic connotations. All too often, interpreters of Eliot's outlook of life have conveyed the impression that her convictions about the need for fellow feeling and her altruistic concern result from a magnanimous but thoroughly sentimental nature, whose benevolent and high-minded remarks would make fit slogans for Brotherhood Week yet are hardly suitable for the year-round "rat race." To read Middlemarch as such is to invert Eliot's point of view. The consanguinity of men is a palpable fact to her; mutual dependence and support are urgent realities in the battle for survival; the helping hand helps itself. Her notions bear a kinship with the best religious thinking, but her attitude, it must be stressed, is not otherworldly nor even ethical in the Judeo-Christian sense. It has been said that Darwin does not deny God; he simply forgets Him. This observation is also true of George Eliot. Both, like Montaigne, possess a large-hearted tolerance, yet their spiritual energies are balked by skepticism and secularism.

Morality in Middlemarch is utilitarian and is grounded in a strong pragmatic base. That "it's all one cupboard," as Mr. Brooke says, underlines in a literal way the elemental communal ties which link creature and creature in the mutual quest for subsistence. In his discussion of the struggle for existence in the third chapter of The Origin of Species, Darwin stresses a fundamental preconception upon which his theory depends, to wit, "the mutual relations of all organic beings," and he sums up his section on "the struggle" with

the following trenchant reminder:

A corollary of the highest importance may be deduced from the foregoing remarks [on the struggle for existence], namely, that the structure of every organic being is related in the most essential yet often hidden manner to that of all the other organic beings, with which it comes into competition for food or residence, or from which it has to escape, or on which it preys.

In The Descent of Man (Ch. IV), Darwin roots the moral sense in the refinement of instincts which have proved themselves to be socially useful down through the ages. Thus the philanthropic virtues of altruism, love, sympathy, fellow feeling, and attachment to mankind become an extension of man's animal nature rather than man's divine affinities with the angels.

The Darwinian orientation of the vital interrelatedness of all organic life is expressed in Middlemarch by dwelling on social connections which rest on fossilized metaphors of birth, breeding, and blood. In so doing, Eliot delicately employs vestigial traces in language to link man's social environment to his biological heritage. The frequent coupling of rank and social position with images of genesis, reproduction, and heredity, and the frequent identification of family clusters as blood-relations accentuate the underlying correspondences between social ties and the very maw of life. Mrs. Cadwallader represents the gentry's defensive rear guard against foreign invasions by middle-class strains ". . . because she believed as unquestionably in birth and no-birth as she did in game and vermin" (Ch. 6). Her interest in the social composition of a person's blood merges with her biting comments about the physical contents of this vital fluid. "White-blooded" (Ch. 22) Casaubon, for

example, is well-born, she concedes: "As to his blood, I suppose the family quarterings are three cuttle-fish sable. . . ." (Ch. 6), but she makes fun of his sterile personality by describing his blood, as was mentioned earlier, as "all semicolons and parentheses" (Ch. 8). Continuing in the same socio-biological frame of mind in a later chapter, Mrs. Cadwallader says of Will Ladislaw: "It must be admitted that his blood is a frightful mixture. . . . The Casaubon cuttle-fish fluid to begin with and then a rebellious Polish fiddler. . . ." (Ch. 84).

Rank and social connections are repeatedly rendered with lingering overtones of man's status in the animal kingdom, for instance, ". . . perhaps even in the highest aristocracy there are Brobdingnag specimens" (Ch. 32), the word "specimens" imparting a peculiarly physiological air to a fleeting thought about social station. The mongrel middle classes in Middlemarch are naturally unconcerned about the purity of blood, yet they are careful watchdogs about guarding the hereditary rights of blood-relations. The upper classes think as a solid group, while the middle classes think as separate clans. When Mrs. Cadwallader declares that ". . . we should all have pulled together" (Ch. 38), her "we" includes the entire Middlemarch gentry. Yet when Mr. Vincy uses similar words in telling his brother-in-law, Bulstrode, that families should ". . . hang by the same nail" (Ch. 13), the mayor is alluding to an alliance between the Vincys and the Bulstrodes as opposed to the interests of other middle-class families such as the Featherstones or the Garths. Compared to the gentry, families like the Featherstones are united by little sense of solidarity beyond that of blood-

relationship. Eliot links the Featherstone consciousness of the family tie with a concrete, even humorous picture of the dropsical Peter who, with too much water in his body, despises the lawful claims to his wealth made by hated blood-relations. Nevertheless, the Featherstone clan believed that:

. . . an own brother "lying there" with dropsy in his legs must come to feel that blood was thicker than water, and if he didn't alter his will, he might have money by him. At any rate some blood-relations should be on the premises and on the watch against those who were hardly relations at all . . . those who were no blood-relations might be caught making away with things -- and poor Peter "lying there" helpless.
(Ch. 32)

Despite their vigilance, old Peter's money goes to a complete stranger, the frog-faced Joshua Rigg, who ". . . must be of another blood . . ." (Ch. 34). Nevertheless, Peter honors the Featherstone esteem for blood over social ties by discharging his obligations to the very letter, since Rigg, the heir to the Featherstone fortune, is Peter's bastard son.

Images of blood, breeding, and birth are used in figurative contexts as well. Casaubon's research is "food for a theory which was already withered in the birth like an elfin child" and failed to keep "the embryos of truth a-breathing" (Ch. 48). Lydgate believes that with a medical practice in the provinces, ". . . one makes less bad blood . . ." (Ch. 17). Caleb, whose pet maxim is "Business breeds" (Ch. 56), exhibits his independence by telling Fred: "I don't want your young blood. I can take care of myself" (Ch. 56). One of the most striking comparisons is the equation of money with blood and breeding. Throughout Middlemarch, wealth is regarded as a form of natural sustenance, "a store of fodder" (Ch. 35), "a

sort of seed-corn" (Ch. 23), and "honey to . . . catch lady-birds" (Ch. 60). Money, however, is also looked upon as an essential ingredient in the circulation of the body social just as blood is indispensable in the circulation of an animal organism. Money in Middlemarch can ooze away like blood in a phlebotomy, and six-pences can be sucked from misers by a pot of leeches (Ch. 38). Not only productive, money is reproductive. Joshua Rigg, for example, leaves town to become a pawnbroker in order to handle "the breeding coins of all nations" (Ch. 53). Like his natural son, old Peter had a fondness for treating money as a form of hatching life: "Ay, ay; money's a good egg; and if you've got money to leave behind you, lay it in a warm nest" (Ch. 12). The association of money with blood and reproduction widens the aura of significance attending several of the major plot strands which deal with questions of inheritance, namely, the Ladislav-Casaubon relationship, the Ladislav-Bulstrode affiliation, and the wills of Edward Casaubon and Peter Featherstone. The idea of a financial inheritance in Middlemarch ultimately becomes bound up with the idea of biological heredity. The struggle for existence, natural selection, and the survival of the fittest in the novel depend on the enormous wielding power of inheritance, based to some degree on legacies of beauty, talent, and intelligence, but in greater measure based on legacies of money.

The interconnectedness of things is an evolutionary fact to Eliot, a fact based on a scientific rather than a religious appraisal of the world. The binding unity of all matter derives from the secu-

lar spirit of the laboratory, not the mystical élan of a William Blake, who sees a world in a grain of sand and eternity in an hour. Eliot makes her orientation clear in a comment on the theory of development in The Mill on the Floss:

. . . for does not science tell us that its highest striving is after the ascertainment of a unity which shall bind the smallest things with the greatest? In natural science, I have understood, there is nothing petty to the mind that has a large vision of relations, and to which every object suggests a vast sum of conditions. It is surely the same with the observation of human life.

(Book IV, Ch. 1)

In Middlemarch, Eliot portrays society as one single related world composed of an intricate mesh of close or remote connections, so as to give the impression that nearly everyone is related by blood or marriage to someone else. The Featherstones are distantly related to the Garths through Peter's first wife and are distantly related to the Vincys by virtue of his second one. To the Featherstones this sort of kinship belonged to "that generally objectionable class called wife's kin" (Ch. 34). The Bulstrodes and the Vincys are linked by Vincy's sister, Harriet, who is Bulstrode's wife. Will Ladislaw, the outsider, who claims that he belongs to nobody (Ch. 37), turns up with the most involved genealogy of all. Will is Bulstrode's step-grandson and Casaubon's second-cousin, a descent which straddles both the upper and middle classes. An efflorescence of uncles, nephews, and cousins populates and complicates the plot. Much to their mutual disgust Casaubon and Ladislaw are mistakenly taken for uncle and nephew on four different occasions (Chapters 9, 19, 34 and 46). A German artist, Naumann, teases Ladislaw for subconsciously playing a role in Goethe's

Der Neffe als Onkel, that is, wanting to be in Casaubon's shoes in order to be married to Dorothea. Considering the closeness of the tie, uncles are often a great disappointment in helping a niece or nephew with the struggle for existence. Uncle Brooke offers his niece, Dorothea, little guidance. Uncle Peter deludes his nephew, Fred, with false expectations, and Uncle Godwin fails Lydgate at a critical moment. The interminable claims and counterclaims of endless ramifications of kith and kin are demanding enough to make one cheer Mr. Vincy's exasperated outburst: "Damn relations" (Ch. 36). Nevertheless, complicated social bonds are indispensable to the intricate pattern of entanglement necessary to the novel's theme of interconnectedness.

In short, Eliot delineates the struggle for existence with multilayered density in Middlemarch. The battle for life is presented in personal striving, in the competition between the sexes, in the community fight against disease, and the national debate over Reform. Struggle in Eliot's lexicon includes "the various entanglements, weights, blows, clashings, motions, by which things severally go on" (Ch. 31). Some, like Lydgate, give up the fight. Others flounder then are rescued, like Fred; some are content with compromise, like Dorothea, while others flourish by dint of their meager demands, like Caleb and Celia, or by dint of their driving energies, like Rosamond and Will. In addition, Eliot implements that Darwinian corollary on the struggle for existence by using the tools of metaphor and plot construction to convey the knotted interrelatedness of a giant web: the social organism.

In society as in biology, the phenomenon of inheritance stands in the foreground in the adaptation of living creatures to their milieu. Inheritance is the cardinal asset or stumblingblock which determines "natural selection," or to use Herbert Spencer's phrase, "the survival of the fittest." The bequest of a patrimony in Middlemarch involves such tangibles as the landed property of Tipton Grange, Lowick Manor, Freshitt Hall, or Stone Court, and "fodder" in the form of hard cash. Endowments, however, are also portrayed in less material terms. The steering of the younger generation through the resourceful or lax pilotage of the old order is a leitmotif which runs through the novel. The stabilizing anchor of a thoughtful loving father, for instance, recurs with noticeable frequency. Most conspicuous in the success or failure of adaptation is a hereditary disposition in tune with the times. "Souls have complexions too . . ." (Ch. 1), and that complexion or temperament may find itself content, like Celia, to accept the given niche without a murmur while another, like Dorothea, may wander uneasily throughout life like the forementioned cygnet unable to find its place with its own oary-footed kind among the ducklings in the brown pond (Prelude).

Survival is easiest for those with the connections and affluence provided by a "good family." A person with rank and money is twice-blessed having "that sort of high-breeding which consists in being free from the petty solitudes of middle-class gentility" (Ch. 58). Lydgate's cousin, a baronet's son, may be "the greatest bore," "a vapid fop" and "a conceited ass" (Ch. 58) to others, but

he thrives in the security of an exalted social status sustained by a handsome income. By virtue of their provisions, the provincial gentry such as the Chettams and the Brookes are the aristocrats of Middlemarch society, being "of gentle birth" and aristos, the Greek word for "best." It is akin to the Greek word arariskein, meaning "fit." On the other hand, middle-class Fred, the son of a Middlemarch manufacturer, laments that he ". . . was not born to very splendid chances . . ." (Ch. 14) and is an "inevitable heir to nothing in particular" (Ch. 12). Nevertheless, descent from "a good family" is no guarantee of easy adjustment to one's environment. Lydgate has high-born connections through his uncle and guardian, Sir Godwin, but lacks the means to match the ingrained aristocratic habits of a gentleman's upbringing and the necessary luxuries to satisfy Rosamond's mandates for material display. Mrs. Cadwallader; on the other hand, successfully copes with her genteel yet penurious heritage by treasuring the augustness of her "immeasurably high birth" (Ch. 6), though she is obliged, she says, "to get my coals by stratagem, and pray to heaven for my salad oil" (Ch. 6). And the leisure afforded by wealth is a source of stifling oppression to Dorothea, for it robs her of a need to be of service and also impairs her rapprochement with penniless Will Ladislaw.

In general, however, money in Middlemarch emerges as a great power of plasticity, which allows men more freedom to move about in a close medium. Debt has a crippling effect on the finest talents. Farebrother tells Lydgate ". . . you have got a good start; you are in the right profession; the work you feel yourself most fit

for . . ." (Ch. 17), but warns that the loss of independence is a by-product of financial liability. And Raffles literally refers to the sum of money he wants from Bulstrode as "an independence" (Ch. 53). The problem of money, inheritance, and wills shapes not only Lydgate's story but each of the major plot strands in the novel. The function of the Featherstone plot and the complications afforded by many minor figures such as Raffles and Rigg are not mechanical adjuncts to the novel, as some critics have said, but contribute to the materialistic scale of values in Middlemarch society. To Eliot, the changeover from the appraisal of men in moral terms to their appraisal in the light of their pocketbooks is a fact of modern life. In the Impressions of Theophrastus Such, she comments sardonically that what a man is worth has come to mean how much money he possesses (Ch. XVI).

To watch the Featherstone relations hovering over Peter's gold is to witness the role of money as an extension of man's predatory instinct. And to observe Rosamond's willful insistence on parading the trappings of wealth is to behold a concrete illustration of Thorstein Veblen's theory of the leisure class, in which conspicuous consumption is deemed an evolutionary expression of successful predatory prowess. In Middlemarch, Rosamond's fastidious attention to details of dress, details which necessitate elaborate lace-edging, petticoat-tucking, and double-hemming on all her cambric frilling forms a sharp contrast to Dorothea's utter unconcern about feminine fashion. The first page, indeed the first sentence, of the novel describes the "well-bred economy" of upper-class

provincial society with regard to dress: "Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress" (Ch. 1). Nevertheless, Eliot points out that upper-class girls were prone to less conspicuous material exhibitions of a pecuniary culture:

Young women of such birth, living in a quiet country-house, and attending a village church hardly larger than a parlour, naturally regarded frippery as the ambition of a huckster's daughter. Then there was well-bred economy, which in those days made show in dress the first item to be deducted from, when any margin was required for expenses more distinctive of rank.

(Ch. 1)

One of the most important functions of Borthrup Trumbull's auction in the novel is to portray on a community scale the zestful group pursuit after material goods. Eliot remarks: "At Middlemarch in those times a large sale was regarded as a kind of festival" (Ch. 60). This sale was occasioned by Mr. Larcher's success in the carrying trade, a fact which necessitated the purchase of a fully furnished mansion in high style replete with "such large frame-fuls of expensive flesh-painting in the dining-room, that Mrs. Larcher was nervous until reassured by finding the subjects to be Scriptural" (Ch. 60). The adulation and exhibitionism of wealth are two concomitants of a society intoxicated with money. This intoxication is symbolized in the fulfillment of Joshua Rigg's dream, after he inherits Featherstone's estate of Stone Court, the dream of opening up a pawnshop and becoming a money-changer. Money is an agent of flexibility and interchange, a sustaining fluid which circulates throughout Middlemarch society like the cyclic flow of blood in a living organism. For example, the substantial profits made by Bulstrode's early career as a pawnbroker end up in Joshua Rigg's

hands through Bulstrode's purchase of Stone Court. Rigg in turn uses the money to open his own money-changer's shop. Thus the "breeding coins" (Ch. 53) come full cycle in reproducing their own kind.

Just as a solid financial inheritance from a "good family" is an asset in natural selection, so also is the inheritance which can boast of a strong father and mother. It is no accident that both Lydgate and Dorothea, flounders in the struggle for existence, have been raised by uncles as guardians, uncles who provide virtually no help during periods of critical adjustment. Mr. Brooke insists ambiguously that he must be a father to Dorothea "up to a certain point" (Ch. 84), but his "miscellaneous opinions" (Ch. 1) and "too rambling habit of mind" (Ch. 1) provide little succor for Dorothea's spiritual vacuum. She marries Casaubon, because she needs a counselor:

. . . and since the time was gone by for guiding visions and spiritual directors, since prayer heightened yearning but not instruction, what lamp was there but knowledge? Surely learned men kept the only oil; and who more learned than Mr. Casaubon?

(Ch. 10)

Dorothea's need for a father-figure is revealed in her notion that ". . . the really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it" (Ch. 1). She repeats this thought to Casaubon during courtship by telling him that she will read aloud to him, "as Milton's daughter did to their father" (Ch. 7). Like Mr. Brooke, Mayor and Mrs. Vincy make unsatisfactory parents because of their incapacity to supply their children, Rosamond and Fred, with the protective

mooring of firm discipline and respect for their middle-class lot. They spoil their children by furnishing them with educations unsuitable to their social station. University training does Fred little good except to increase his material expectations, and Rosamond's success at Mrs. Lemon's School only serves to deepen her penchant towards social snobbery. Though Mr. Vincy appears resolute, his offspring know that "Papa was not a rock: he had no other fixity than that fixity of alternating impulses sometimes called habit . . ."

(Ch. 36).

By contrast, the Garths give their daughter, Mary, the solid backing of deep family affection and the mainstays of an attitude toward life which makes the most of things. Mrs. Garth ". . . had that rare sense which discerns what is unalterable, and submits to it without murmuring" (Ch. 24). Both Caleb Garth and his wife, Susan, make no unrealistic demands on others and find their chief rewards in hard work, careful economy, and the judicious direction of their children. Caleb's personality is similar to one of Eliot's best known characters, that of Adam Bede. Both Caleb and Adam are dedicated workmen, rough-hewn and simple, thoroughly honest and dependable, and disposed to plain talk. Mary Garth acknowledges the profound contribution made by her parents on her upbringing, when she tells Peter Featherstone: "I consider my mother and father the best part of myself, sir . . ." (Ch. 25). Caleb also uses his sound advice with others, for example, in redirecting Fred's misguided intention to enter the Church by steering the young man into a vocation more suitable to Fred's practical bent of mind. When

Fred protests that he has no claim on Caleb for help, the latter responds: "Yes, my boy, you have a claim The young ones have always a claim on the old to help them forward" (Ch. 56). The Garths are the only Middlemarch family whom Eliot spares from her nipping irony. According to several biographers, Caleb and Adam resemble her own father. Perhaps these two figures are protected by a sacrosanct emotional core of affection deep within Eliot. Each human being, even the ironical author, possesses an inner sanctum which defies the intrusion of any irreverent thought or feeling.

Besides the role of paternal inheritance, the survival of the fittest depends on one's personal capacity to meet the needs of the times. Dorothea's spiritual drive is far too intense to suit her secular environment and far too "masculine" to meet nineteenth-century standards of womanhood. Like Miniver Cheevy, Dorothea was born too late to live the epic life demanded by her religious ardor, a life which Saint Theresa of Avila, with whom she is compared, lived successfully three hundred years before. Casaubon does not thrive, because he is not beyond but behind the times. His historical inquiries fail to consider important advances in his field made by German scholarship, and he gropes "about in woods with a pocket-compass while they [the Germans] have made good roads" (Ch. 21). The idea of temperamental fitness as an important means to a flourishing adjustment is re-echoed on numerous occasions. Mr. Brooke ". . . is not fitted to be a public man" (Ch. 46); Fred ". . . is not fit to be a clergyman" (Ch. 12); Mary tries to be a teacher but says: "I am not fit for that" (Ch. 14); and Mr. Fare-

brother, the vicar, is stalemated in his choice of profession by his want of "spiritual tobacco" (Ch. 17). Farebrother loses the chaplaincy of the New Fever Hospital, because the medical board decides that he is not "the fittest man" (Ch. 16) for that particular post. Fitness also depends on the ability to coerce circumstances into meeting one's material expectations. Fred is not "fit to be a poor man" (Ch. 14) nor Rosamond "fit to marry a poor man" (Ch. 31), for "what can the fitness of things mean," Eliot asks, poking fun at Fred, "if not their fitness to a man's expectations" (Ch. 14)? Yet Rosamond succeeds in her resolve to become rich by virtue of her "victorious obstinacy" (Ch. 58) as a parasite, who batters on the productive income of her husband, Lydgate, and secures the required "gilding, fit for the bird of paradise that she resembled." Fred, on the other hand, simply tailors his presumptions to meet the limitations of his skill and his restrictive surroundings.

If Middlemarch is a novel of partial successes and partial failures which stem from being out of step with the times either intellectually like Casaubon, or spiritually like Dorothea, or professionally like Farebrother, or materially like Fred, what individual traits make for unqualified success? Who survives the battle unscathed? Who is the most temperamentally fit? Such a choice involves the elimination of those who are superior by no abilities of their own, for example Sir James and Celia, who prosper because of their enormous material inheritances. In the older generation, Caleb Garth is a possible choice, because he represents the principle of continuity in his dedication to improve-

ment of the land and his dedication for work. Yet Caleb's intelligence is of a limited kind, one which understands the practical benefits of a practical scheme such as the invasiveness of the railroads, but one which would be hard put to divine the political, economic, and social conditions of a country which heralded the railroad's advance. The person most in tune with his age is an individual who, of all the characters in Middlemarch, has found the least sympathy among literary critics, namely, Will Ladislaw. The general complaint about Eliot's portrait of Will is that he is not fully developed and from an artistic standpoint remains obscure. Will is also assailed for the indefiniteness of his outlook and is regarded as a rather strange match for Dorothea's impassioned need for direction. Notwithstanding these criticisms, it is important to place a high priority on the character of Will Ladislaw in order to understand Eliot's "message" in Middlemarch. As Mr. Brooke informs us in his droll way, "Everything is symbolical, you know. . . ." (Ch. 34), so the function of Ladislaw's presence throughout the novel ought to be construed in a symbolic light. Will represents the new spirit of Demos, the man of the future, the incarnation of the ideals of the buoyancy of youth. These attributes are suggested in the first syllable of his last name, that is, "lad," and his name also suggests a link with the burgeoning of democracy inherent in the latest law, "ladis-law."

The use of proper names to convey personal characteristics is a familiar device in Eliot's work. The symbolism in Dorothea's name and nickname has already been discussed. Mr. Brooke's

voluble mind flows like a running brook. The obstructions to Lydgate's career are foreshadowed in the double barriers of his two-syllable last name. Farebrother is a benevolent soul. Doctors Sprague, Minchin, Toller, and Wrench hint at associations with disease and pain, for instance, Sprague with plague, Minchin with "pinchin'," Toller with holler, and Wrench with wrench. Raffles taunts Nicholas Bulstrode about his early corrupt career: "Some said you had a handsome family likeness to old Nick, but that was your mother's fault, calling you Nicholas" (Ch. 53). Rosamond Vincy, who has a "Providence of her own" (Ch. 27), is a beautiful victorious flower, and Caleb Garth, as was mentioned earlier, means "faithful dog in an orchard," an appellation which his personal qualities suggest. Not to be ignored are the grosser puns in the names of the characters, for example that of Mr. Hackbutt, the tanner, whose wife is named Fanny. Brooke's estate like his shifting ideas is called Tipton Grange; Sir James's Freshitt Hall recalls his interest in farming and horses; and Casaubon's Lowick Manor is a rather direct allusion to Casaubon's low-keyed sexual ardor, a "man" whose flame of passion is like a candle at low wick. As in the novels of Fielding, whose literary technique is briefly mentioned in Middlemarch (Ch. 15), Eliot is careful in controlling the connotations of proper names in her fiction. For this reason, it is not far-fetched to conclude that Will Ladislaw's name incorporates specific references to his role as an enterprising politician who bends to the needs of the new period of transition: the Reform era.

Middlemarch opinions about Will Ladislaw, whether complimentary or not, bear out this idea. In addition, the narrator-author commentary of Eliot herself supports a description of Will as a protean personality who is able to flex himself easily with the changing times. Eliot's portrayal of Will is enveloped with images of youth, movement, and force. His speech at a Reform meeting has "the violence of an energumen," which, much to the disgust of conservative Middlemarch politicians was "a miserable effort to shroud in the brilliancy of fireworks the daring of irresponsible statements" (Ch. 46). To more liberal elements, he is "a sort of Burke with a leaven of Shelley" (Ch. 51), "our mercurial Ladislaw" (Ch. 71), and Lydgate regards him as "a sort of gypsy, rather enjoying the sense of belonging to no class" (Ch. 46). Will's keen mind is alive with the critical issues of the day, but he is a pragmatist who is impatient with quibbling perfectionists of political theory. He argues with both Lydgate and Brooke on the urgency of voting for the current Reform Bill despite its loopholes and odd compromises: ". . . if you are to wait till we get a logical Bill, you must put yourself forward as a revolutionist. . . ." (Ch. 51). Flexibility keynotes his temperament, which has quick shifts of mood like "a gay little chime after the great bell" (Ch. 22), yet ". . . he was a creature who entered into every one's feelings, and could take the pressure of their thought instead of urging his own with iron resistance" (Ch. 50).

Will embodies the principle of activity and dynamism in Middlemarch and represents the vitalism inherent in the evolution-

ary force. In Rome he teaches Dorothea how to envision the world's ages as organically connected, not "a set of box-like partitions" (Ch. 22), and he interprets Marlowe's Tamburlaine as a symbol of evolutionary power in which Tamburlaine represents "the tremendous course of the world's physical history lashing on the harnessed dynasties" (Ch. 22). Even Will's physical appearance incarnates the spirit of metamorphosis. He has curly hair and a "nose with a little ripple in it" (Ch. 9). Though he is an outsider to Middlemarch, he is, nonetheless, very much at home in the world, a classless man fit for the classless society to come. His legacy is a temperament which masters the present and points to the future, a temperament which is an embodiment of Goethe's exuberant words:

My inheritance how wide and far
Time is my fair seed-field; of time I'm heir!
(Flyleaf of Carlyle's Sartor Resartus)

Will Ladislaw is an opportunist in the best sense of the word, one who seizes the moment for the betterment of the human condition. He fittingly uses his talent by finding his place as a member of Parliament at the end of the novel. There is a dash of Disraeli in Will, and one cannot help but wonder if Eliot may have had the Prime Minister in mind when she drew her portrait. Both Will and Disraeli are artists turned politicians; both started their early careers as radical thinkers, and both share a Jewish background.

The close scrutinization of Will Ladislaw's character is essential in tracing a persistent statement made in Middlemarch on the twofold nature of life and death. This dichotomy is clothed in imagery of pliancy and rigidity, especially in the contrast be-

tween the personalities of Ladislaw and his cousin, Casaubon. Casaubon lives "too much with the dead" (Ch. 2), and according to his neighbors ". . . has one foot in the grave" (Ch. 6). His scholarship is stiffly set upon reducing the contents of all myths to one basic Key. Casaubon's world is made up of documents neatly pigeonholed and footnoted yet bereft of the irregular and irreducible animating springs of intellectual truth. Even his proposal of marriage to Dorothea is regarded by him as one of the "stages towards the completion of a life's plan" (Ch. 5). Casaubon dehydrates his capacity for love by hoarding the sterile fruits of his shortsighted analytical intellect into the somber protective cell of his egoism. Another gnarled miser, Peter Featherstone, hoards his banknotes and uses their power to promote his misanthropy. Just as Casaubon dies, leaving his Key and his voluminous notes, Peter dies ". . . with his right hand clasping the keys, and his left hand lying on the heap of notes and gold" (Ch. 33). Eliot parallels these deaths to illumine the bankruptcy of both lives smothered by their lethal notes and keys.

A strong thematic undercurrent in Middlemarch is a Wordsworthian defiance of pat intellectual formulae, which murder to dissect. Eliot's romantic dislike of rationalistic systems which force facts into preconceived cast-iron patterns is implicit in the failure of Casaubon's Key. Herbert Spencer, her friend, had this objectionable genius for abstract deductive logic. She writes of him:

I went to Kew yesterday. . . on a scientific expedition with Herbert Spencer, who has all sorts of theories about plants

-- I should have said a proof-hunting expedition. Of course if the flowers didn't correspond to the theories, we said, tant pis pour les fleurs.

(Gordon S. Haight. George Eliot: A Biography, Ch. IV)

Of another popular rationalistic programme, that of Henry Thomas Buckle, she states in a letter of 19 May 1861, to John Blackwood: "I am very far behind Mr. Buckle's millennial prospect. . . whereby superstition will vanish and statistics will reign for ever and ever" (Haight, ed. The George Eliot Letters, Vol III, p. 417). The search for truth lies less in armchair philosophy than a headlong splash into the turbulent chaos of observable phenomena in order to experience nature and humanity first hand. An empirical rather than a rationalistic approach to life lessens the dangers, she believes, of using our compelling curiosity about life for the purpose of aggrandizing our natural egoism. "We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves" (Ch. 21), Eliot declares. Casaubon attempts to be "a scrupulous explorer" (Ch. 20) of the distant reaches of history, but his scholarship fails, because it is never "liberated from a small hungry shivering self" (Ch. 29). The true explorers in Middlemarch are those who are willing to sacrifice the defensive armor of their egoism in a quest for knowledge of the world and of themselves. Lydgate in his bachelor days dreamed of discovering "the primitive tissue" (Ch. 15). He is, as Farebrother puts it, ". . . a sort of circumnavigator come to settle among us, and will keep up my belief in the antipodes" (Ch. 17). And Dorothea's search for self-identity is likened to the exploits of Sinbad, the sailor: ". . .

starting a long way off the true point, and proceeding by loops and zigzags, we now and then arrive just where we ought to be" (Ch. 3).

Yet Will, in contrast to Dorothea, Lydgate, and Casaubon, is not temperamentally a seeker after the Grail. He tells Dorothea that he prefers not to know the sources of the Nile, and finds that a life-long dedication to a specific goal is a harness which blunts the appreciation of the present hour. He is an artist with "no bent towards exploration," as Casaubon says disapprovingly of Will (Ch. 9). At one point Ladislav asks himself for what end he had "harnessed" himself with the publication of Brooke's newspaper, and his answer is: "Well, for no definite end" (Ch. 47). Ladislav's refusal to be circumscribed by a charted course is characteristic of his pliant vision, which conceives of an open-ended future rich with new possibilities which call for malleable talents. He reflects how much happier he is in working as Mr. Brooke's campaign manager than ". . . in the sort of life Mr. Casaubon would have me trained for, where the doing would all be laid down by a precedent too rigid for me to react upon" (Ch. 46). Will possesses a good measure of flexibility needed in the new man, a measure midway between the extremes of his two patrons, Mr. Brooke and Mr. Casaubon. Brooke is all formlessness and believes like Ladislav that "life can't be cast into a mould-- not cut out by rule and line, and that sort of thing" (Ch. 4). Brooke claims that he and Will ". . . are alike, you know. . . ." (Ch. 39), nevertheless Brooke's putty-like mind is so shapeless that he cannot be pinned down to a stable commitment. Either temperamental pole, be it Casaubon's or

Brooke's, results in stagnation, one mind by shutting too much out and the other by permitting anything to come in, one by being too taut and the other by being too lax.

That Will symbolizes "the fittest" specimen in the struggle for existence and a natural heir of the selective evolutionary process is also manifested in the development of the plot line. As a mature young woman, Dorothea chooses between two alternate courses at the end of the novel, namely that option offered by Casaubon's will, which specifically inhibits her marriage to Ladislav, and that option offered by an alliance with Will. In marrying Ladislav, Dorothea gives up one will for another Will. With her growing comprehension of human values, she has learned to love the expansive life-affirming qualities of Ladislav as against the stifling funereal companionship of Casaubon. Will is also a fit symbol of the era of transition from aristocratic to democratic control in that his background, like the Reform Bill, intermixes both the upper and middle classes, and also because he invades the hitherto inviolable precincts of established patterns of power. To Mrs. Cadwallader, as was pointed out previously, Ladislav's ". . . blood is a frightful mixture. . ." (Ch. 84)! Will is of genteel descent through his Casaubon connections, yet linked to the middle classes on his father's side. In portraying him as the personification of the incoming democratic leadership, Eliot expresses a mixed hope. Though the future will be controlled by men of Will's mettle, that is, not by the extravagant dreams of the explorer but by the practical manipulative genius of the politician, this genius

will be provident enough to create a world with a place for the faltering idealism of a Dorothea, a Lydgate, and even a Casaubon.

If Middlemarch is a nineteenth-century epic of evolutionary movement, how does Eliot's art communicate the impression of development? In what ways does the novel's rhetorical style designate this particular historical period as an era of transition? Up to this point, this essay has padded the skeleton of Darwinian theory with the rich fictional pulp of Middlemarch. Henceforward, the scope of this inquiry will converge on the specific narrative strategy used by Eliot to make this skeleton move.

One of the most familiar literary techniques to convey the fluidity of motion is the widespread use of the progressive tense as well as the employment of gerunds and active participles ending in a restless suffix, the grammatical "live wire," -ING. Robert Southey, for instance, uses over one hundred and fifty ". . . rushing and flushing and brushing and gushing/ And flapping and rapping and clapping and slapping" present participles to describe the flow of water in his poem, "The Cataract of Lodore." Several critics of Middlemarch, notably Hilda Hulme and Mark Schorer, have discussed Eliot's reliance on verbs of progressive movement in the novel in order to render the flow of time. Even a casual glance at the text of the novel easily brings to light scores of samples of Eliot's preference for this form of syntax, as the following selections show:

She was no longer struggling against the perception of facts, but adjusting herself to their clearest perception; and now when she looked steadily at her husband's failure, . . . she seemed

to be looking along the one track where duty became tenderness.
(Ch. 37)

Ben, bouncing across the grass. . . , and seeing the kitten dragging the knitting by a lengthening line of wool,
(Ch. 57)

"Do you not see that it is no use now to be crawling a little way after men of the last century. . . and correcting their mistakes? -- living in a lumber-room and furbishing up broken-legged theories about Chus and Mizraim?"
(Ch. 22)

Mr. Brooke, persisting as quietly as if he were only discussing the nature of last year's weather, and nodding at the end with his usual amenity, was an exasperating form of obstinacy.
(Ch. 49)

Lydgate was almost forgetting that he must carry on the conversation, in thinking how lovely this creature was, her garment seeming to be made out of the faintest blue sky, . . . with this infantine blondness showing so much ready self-possessed grace.
(Ch. 16)

Eliot's persistent employment of the -ING suffix supplies the narrative with a steady stream of continuing action congruous with the state of metamorphosis in an era of transition. Equally significant, however, is her emphatic insistence that the pace of activity in Middlemarch is "slow" and "gradual," two qualifiers which almost invariably crop up when Eliot talks about movement. Theories of change in the nineteenth century favored a non-catastrophic view of emerging development not only in biology and geology but also in theories of social progress. The year 1830, which forms part of the temporal backdrop of Middlemarch saw the publication of a scientific classic, which espoused a developmental view of time, namely, Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology. Lyell's book argued that changes in the earth's surface were chiefly the result of ponderously slow processes rather than convulsive

upheavals which drastically revolutionized nature's status quo, as had hitherto been the tenor of opinion. Belief in geological catastrophism in contrast to Lyell's gradualism was like watching the cuckoo bird instead of the hands of the clock, to borrow a metaphor from Loren Eiseley's The Firmament of Time (p. 24). Lyell's point of view was the mainstay of Darwin's conception of time, a conception incorporated in The Origin of Species (Ch. VI): ". . . for natural selection acts only by taking advantage of slight successive variations; she can never take a great and sudden leap, but must advance by short and sure, though slow steps. "

Darwin revitalized the old canon, Natura non facit saltum, with the evidence of biology, yet his panorama of organic evolution is based on Lyell's geological picture of ancient planetary history engulfed in a seemingly limitless field of time. In emphasizing the adagio movement of the developmental process, Darwin points to the imperceptible quality of most evolutionary transitions: "We see nothing of these slow changes in progress, until the hand of time has marked the lapse of ages. . . ." (Ch. IV). In acknowledging Lyell's influence, Darwin states that he always felt as if his books came half out of Lyell's brain. Lyell stretched the horizons of time towards limitless reaches into the past and into the future and thereby slackened the speed in the march of natural events from a brisk trot to a snail's pace. Capsulating Lyell's contribution, Gertrude Himmelfarb puts it thus:

The strategy of the Principles had been to create a new conception of time that would reinforce the new conception of nature. The catastrophists, for whom violence was a "mysterious and extraordinary agency," had envisaged nature as being "pars-

monious of time and prodigal of violence" -- prodigal of violence because it was parsimonious of time. Lyell had to reverse the formula: Nature was parsimonious of violence and prodigal of time -- parsimonious of violence because it was prodigal of time.

(Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution, p. 91)

However radical his notions were with regard to traditionally literal interpretations of Biblical time, Lyell, nevertheless, helped inject a heavily conservative note into speculations by "enlightened" French Philosophes about the the rate of social progress. In other words, the nineteenth-century idea of development decelerated the eighteenth-century idea of progress with cartloads of empirical data. To Eliot, historical change is real but barely noticeable. Progress is a tired old traveler plodding his patient, weary way through the centuries. Dazzling utopian schemes and airy metaphysics fail to quicken his spirit or spark his straggling steps. If he has come far and has achieved much, he is acutely aware of the costs of the effort. If man is moving towards a millennium, this prospect is millions of years away, a prospect hardly worth calling "progress" in the life of a man who lives three-score-and -ten. Yet to Eliot, the lot of that short life is to preserve and transmit the best that change has wrought. Her philosophy of historical change embodies a keen consciousness of man as a drop of time uniting past and future, of man as both testator and legatee. In a poem, "Oh, May I Join the Choir Invisible," she eulogizes the cumulative endowment of countless unsung lives, whose bit-by-bit improvements have forced the wheels of progress to inch along:

. . . the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence. . .

In Middlemarch, Eliot expresses this thought in the last sentence of the novel in a concluding remark about Dorothea's diffusive influence on the well-being of others, ". . . for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts. . . [and is] half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs" (Finale).

Eliot labels her attitude toward the slow pace of the developmental process as "meliorism," a diluted faith in progress watered down by infinite oceans of time. In her book review (1856) of a pioneering cultural history by Riehl, The Natural History of German Life, Eliot approves of Riehl's conservative assessment of the theory of progress:

He is as far as possible from the folly of supposing that the sun will go backward on the dial, because we put the hands of our clock backward; he only contends against the opposite folly of decreeing that it shall be mid-day, while in fact the sun is only touching the mountain-tops, and all along the valley men are stumbling in the twilight.

(Thomas Pinney, ed. Essays of George Eliot, p. 299)

Of all her novels, her melioristic outlook is best reflected stylistically in Middlemarch, where the reader meets with few sudden changes, no startling events, and no impending disasters. She handles change like Mr. Tulliver in The Mill on the Floss: "He was not a man to make an abrupt transition. This was a puzzling world, as he often said, and if you drive your waggon in a hurry, you may light on an awkward corner" (Book I, Ch. III). Activity in Middlemarch is inevitably slow-gaited, as the following examples show:

A human being in this aged nation of ours is a very wonderful whole, the slow creation of long interchanging influences. . . .
(Ch. 40)

But any one watching keenly the stealthy covergence [sic] of human lots, sees a slow preparation of effects from one life on another. . . .
(Ch. 11)

Municipal town and rural parish gradually made fresh threads of connection -- gradually, as the old stocking gave way to the savings-bank. . . .
(Ch. 11)

The result had oozed forth gradually. . . .
(Ch. 37)

But she was gradually ceasing to expect. . . .
(Ch. 20)

And in the meanwhile the hours were each leaving their little deposit and gradually forming the final reason for inaction. . . .
(Ch. 36)

. . . her view of Mr. Casaubon. . . was gradually changing with the secret motion of a watch-hand. . . .
(Ch. 20)

But results which depend on human conscience and intelligence work slowly, and now at the end of 1829, most medical practice was still strutting or shambling along the old paths. . . .
(Ch. 15)

Nothing in the world more subtle than the process of their gradual change!
(Ch. 15)

The pace of transition in Middlemarch is deliberately slow and undramatic, because from Eliot's point of view even a large-scale historical event such as the passing of the Reform Bill looms into prominence only with the verdict of history after the passage of a considerable amount of time. That 1832 opened the floodgates of democracy was especially appreciated in 1867 on the eve of the second great extension of manhood suffrage, when men began to fear that the torrents of mass voting power would erode the bedrock of

national life. Eliot wrote "Address to Workingmen, by Felix Holt" in 1867 in response to the second Reform Bill. This bill also stirred the pens of two other Victorians: Thomas Carlyle's in "Shooting Niagara, and After?" (1867) and Matthew Arnold's in "Culture and Anarchy" (1869). All three essays are critiques of democracy, critiques ranging in degree from scathing denunciation to resigned and reluctant acceptance. All three express a deep concern with the problems of coping with the unleashed power of newly enfranchised lower classes. Carlyle savagely attacks what he calls the democratic "swarmery," because the Reform Bill of 1867 represents to him a frenzied leap into a Niagara, a wild plunge into chaos. Arnold regards universal manhood suffrage as a challenge which threatens to drag down the intellectual and moral calibre of England's best self. Eliot's "Address" neither despairs nor offers any practical solution such as Arnold's proposals for mass education. She advises her countrymen not to rock the boat or ". . . we should be much like sailors cutting away the timbers of our own ship to warm our grog with" (Thomas Pinney, ed. Essays of George Eliot, p. 419). This feeling is echoed in Middlemarch by Caleb Garth, who uses a similar homily in cautioning men against impeding the progress of the railroad: "The cattle may have a heavy load, but it won't help 'em to throw it over into the roadside pit, when it's partly their own fodder" (Ch. 56). Eliot's interest in the era of the first Reform Bill stemmed from her wish to examine the slow germination of a crucial historical development, the sprouting of democracy, yet she is careful to depict the growth of political consciousness in that transitional period as a

gradual and inconspicuous process shrouded by the prosaic solitudes of daily life. The mechanism of historical change fascinated Eliot's mind until the end of her days. As late as 1879, the year before her death, she writes in the Impressions of Theophrastus Such:

Is there any country which shows at once as much stability and as much susceptibility to change as ours? Our national life is like that scenery which I early learned to love, not subject to great convulsions, but showing more or less delicate . . . effects from minor changes.

(Part II)

In Middlemarch, Eliot's awareness of change is also imparted by peppering the narrative with "then and now" contrasts. For example, she alludes to the backward practice of medicine "at that time," in "that dark period," or during that "unsanitary" epoch, as compared with later days. Often her references to the 1870's as an advancement over the 1830's is ironic, for instance: "At that time young ladies in the country. . . read little French literature later than Racine, and public prints had not cast their present magnificent illumination over the scandals of life" (Ch. 43).

The perpetual instability which accompanies the developmental philosophy of becoming in Middlemarch is realized in the presentation of character both in content and method. The central figures suffer from a temperamental disability, a restless soul-hunger which eludes the poisoning forces of composure and self-command. Dorothea, Lydgate, Casaubon, and Fred, for example, feel straitjacketed by unrelenting environmental forces. They are victims of what R.P. Blackmur calls "Bovarysme," that is, they reach so hard for ungraspable goals that the very act of reaching becomes itself a passion. Theirs is ". . . the history of that kind of damna-

tion which comes when we are unable to accept the conditions of life . . . " (Eleven Essays in the European Novel, p. 49). In the end each accepts the limits imposed by reality and finds repose either in the solace of love or in the release of death. Character in Middlemarch is a plastic entity, subject to the inexhaustible vicissitudes of an inconstant ambience. An individual's nature is not set in a pre-existing cast of innate attributes but is an evolving phenomenon altered by the ease or crush of circumstances. Self-realization is the order of things and self-identity the quest. Descartes's "I think, therefore I am" becomes transmuted into "I experience, therefore I become." In such a situation a person rarely enjoys the rewards and pains of self-knowledge, since he is by definition only a fraction of his developing total self. Eliot in Middlemarch on two occasions expresses the view that human nature is flexible and not a fixed formula of good and evil. "Character is not cut in marble -- it is not something solid and unalterable," Farebrother tells Dorothea (Ch. 72). His words repeat Eliot's idea as author-commentator in an earlier chapter that ". . . character too is a process and an unfolding" (Ch. 15).

The concept of character as a transitional process recognizes the continuum of past, present, and future. To know oneself is to know thy past. One's history is part of one's self-definition, be it on a personal, or national, or an ethnic plane. Eliot states that ". . . a man's past is not simply a dead history, an outworn preparation of the present: . . . it is a still quivering part of himself. . . (Ch. 61). While it is considered avant-garde today to talk about the

death of the past, to think in Now time, to acknowledge the relevance only of the immediate moment, and to look upon history as a chaotic jumble of meaningless happenstance, it is interesting to come upon lively expressions of old-fashioned nineteenth-century developmentalism in current radical writers. In The Strawberry Statement: Notes of a College Revolutionary, James Kunen exclaims: "We're the bridge generation. . . . We're the product of all the past and we'll determine all the future. . . . It's exciting. It's a challenge" (Section dated Tuesday, July 23, 1968). And the following paragraph by Eldridge Cleaver is as dedicated a belief in historicism as any to issue from the last century:

Be convinced, Sable Sister, that the past is no forbidden vista upon which we dare not look, out of a phantom fear of being, as the wife of Lot, turned into pillars of salt. Rather the past is an omniscient mirror: we gaze and see reflected there ourselves and each other -- what we used to be, what we are today, how we got this way, and what we are becoming. To decline to look into the Mirror of Then, my heart, is to refuse to view the face of Now.

(Soul on Ice, p. 207)

Developmentalism is as alive in Cleaver's attitude as it is in George Eliot's. Both conceive of history as an unfailing oracle in deciphering the mysteries of character, both in the individual and in the collective.

In contrast to the photographic delineation of the individual in her earlier novels, Eliot in Middlemarch presents a prism of perspectives through which a character is assessed. Her early novels introduce a central figure through the conventional verbal picture of physical attributes, while in Middlemarch she creates "a vessel of consciousness," as Henry James would say, a vessel whose external

pictorial qualities are secondary to its state of mind. Consider, for example, Eliot's traditional approach in handling two of the leading characters in Adam Bede, namely, Dinah Morris and Adam. The outward features of each are meticulously described by the narrator. We see Adam "in his tall stalwartness" with "jet-black hair" and "dark eyes that shone from under strongly marked, prominent and mobile eyebrows" (Ch. 1). Dinah's outward appearance is fastidiously limned:

It was a small oval face, of a uniform transparent whiteness with an egg-like line of cheek and chin, a full but firm mouth, a delicate nostril, and a low perpendicular brow, surmounted by a rising arch of parting between smooth locks of pale reddish hair. The hair was drawn straight back behind the ears, and covered, except for an inch or two, above the brow, by a net Quaker cap. The eyebrows, of the same colour as the hair, were perfectly horizontal and firmly pencilled; the eyelashes, though no darker, were long and abundant; nothing was left blurred or unfinished.

(Ch. 2)

By comparison, the conventional capsule portraits which usher in the leading figures in Eliot's early fiction give way in Middlemarch to a series of varying perspectives from which to view a character. Mr. Casaubon, for instance, is beheld through the eyes of his fellow Middlemarchers as much as by the omniscient gaze of the narrator. Through Dorothea, we first see a distinguished scholar who resembles Locke; and later a shallow pedant in the form of an unresponsive husband; through Celia, we see an ugly man with two white hairy moles on his face; from James's perspective, we see a dried bookworm, "no better than a mummy" (Ch. 6). To this spectrum of observations are added those of Will, the Cadwalladers, and Mr. Brooke. After having shaped Casaubon through a kaleidoscope of increasingly damaging impressions, especially Dorothea's,

Eliot comes to his rescue with an apologia on his behalf:

One morning, some weeks after her arrival at Lowick, Dorothea-- but why always Dorothea? Was her point of view the only possible one with regard to this marriage? I protest against all our interest, all our effort at understanding being given to the young skins that look blooming in spite of trouble; for these too will get faded, and will know the older and more eating griefs which we are helping to neglect. In spite of the blinking eyes and white moles objectionable to Celia, and the want of muscular curve which was morally painful to Sir James, Mr. Casaubon had an intense consciousness within him, and was spiritually a-hungred like the rest of us.

(Ch. 29)

A personality in Middlemarch emerges as a series of malleable impressions produced by people within the story rather than a chiseled appraisal by the objective authority of the author's voice. This mobile method of handling character accords well with the changeable metabolism of an era of transition. In her presentation of the irresolute Mr. Brooke, Eliot draws a conventional portrait of static traits which, paradoxically enough, are unalterable in their alterability. Mr. Brooke is a caricature embodying the vacillation, the irresolution, the unsteadiness of an unstable age, much as Fielding's Mr. Allworthy in Tom Jones incarnates the steadfastness, the constancy, and the unswerving loyalty to absolute principles congenial to a Newtonian world view, that is, a stable and well-regulated universal machine subject to the "laws of Nature and of Nature's God." Both Brooke and Allworthy are uncles and guardians of their respective wards, Dorothea and Tom, yet unlike Allworthy, the nineteenth-century Brooke fails to provide the equipoise of his eighteenth-century counterpart. The pillar of moral certainty symbolized by Allworthy gives way to the vagrant habits of Mr. Brooke's vacillating mind.

Besides incorporating the idea of development in syntax, in the gradual pace of the novel's unspectacular plot, and in the pliant presentation of character, Eliot infuses the dialogue with a habit of speech whose omnipresence in Middlemarch merits close attention. This habit is the ubiquitous modification of expressions of thought on the part of the characters in the novel by the phrase: "in my opinion." The preponderant use of personal "opinion" seems innocuous enough in view of its frequency in ordinary conversation. Nevertheless, Eliot's exaggerated dependence on this word in Middlemarch is in marked contrast to her use of it in earlier novels. How does Eliot couch verbal exchanges in other works as compared to those in Middlemarch? Why does she alter her former literary manner in delivering the discourse of her characters in Middlemarch? Of what significance is the nature of opinion in conveying the notion of development in an unsettled era of transition?

In novels such as Adam Bede, Silas Marner, and Romola, peopled by personalities who are on the whole free from the anxieties of religious doubt and the bewilderment of dissolving institutions, the phrase "in my opinion" rarely occurs. Expressions of feeling and belief are stated in definite unequivocal terms, unmollified by subjective restrictions limiting the assumed universality of a point of view. A mood of moral certainty, for example, permeates Adam Bede. The spirit of independent judgment is reinforced by appeals to conscience, to absolute standards of right and wrong, to an unquestioned general affirmation that the path of duty is clear. Adam's song in the opening chapter sets the tone:

Let all thy converse be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noonday clear;

Conscience is viewed as an unimpeachable seat of authority, whose guidance one can trust. "Let 'em follow their consciences, that's all"(Ch. 1), ". . . I'll never be the man t'urge you against your conscience" (Ch. 52), or ". . . I shall leave you to your own conscience. . . ." (Ch. 5) represent the typical ethical outlook in Adam Bede, an outlook secure in the knowledge that men universally agree on what constitutes the moral law within. If moral ambiguity should arise, it is quickly dispelled by reassurance founded on a portion of the Biblical text. "And when I've opened the Bible for direction," Dinah states with confidence, "I've always lighted on some clear word to tell me where my work lay" (Ch. 3). The bulwark of ethical truth in Adam Bede feels no more threatened by dissident private opinions and idle talk "than the old church-steeple minds the rooks cawing about it" (Ch. 5).

The "church-steeple" retains its firm underpinning in Silas Marner and Romola. Opinions in these novels carry little weight and concern themselves with matters of taste, not matters of conscience. Dolly Winthrop tells Silas Marner with conviction: "For if us as knows so little can see a bit o' good and rights, we may be sure as there's a good and a rights bigger nor what we can know -- I feel it i' my own inside as it must be so" (Part Two, Ch. 16). In Romola, the air of certainty which pervades the atmosphere grows out of a strong sense of definiteness about the dividing line between true and false. The dialogue is freely strewn with unhesitating and categorical exclamations, such as "it is true that . . .," "assured-

ly, " "to tell you the truth," "No, in truth," "it is a pack of lies," "Surely, I have. . . , " "You speak truth. . . , " "I cast no doubt on . . . , " "it is false," "I am certain" and ". . . the light I saw was the true light." The world of Romola is filled with positive affirmations and negations with little room for the vagaries of doubt.

In Eliot's Reform novels, Felix Holt, the Radical, The Mill on the Floss, and Middlemarch, the picture changes, as notes of incertitude and perplexity creep into the conversation of the characters. In The Mill on the Floss, this state of confusion is singled out by Mr. Tulliver, who felt ". . . hardly at home in this insane world," where "everything winds about so -- the more straightforward you are, the more you're puzzled" (Book One, Ch. 3). Yet Mr. Tulliver is alone in voicing his disorientation at the unsettling shift of perspectives, which eluded traditional prescriptions and permitted a confusing liberality of thought and action. In Felix Holt, the Radical, the fluctuating barometer of public opinion begins to assert its collective power as the supreme arbiter of human conduct with the coming of democracy. Despite the raging controversy in the nineteenth century about the destructive capacities of mass voting power, a fragmentary hope exists in Felix Holt, the Radical that public opinion may be elevated by men's adherence to an absolute ethical standard:

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

(Ch. XXX)

Public opinion in Felix Holt, the Radical is a by-product, the consequence of individual moral inclinations rather than their determinant. In Middlemarch, however, the function of opinion assumes considerable proportions in its ambivalent double role, cast both as the despotic promulgator of "groupthink" and also the literal champion of independent judgment, no matter how free that judgment may be. As a public power, opinion exercises the oppressive restraints felt in Middlemarch in the guise of the inhibiting "pseudo-environment." This aspect of the nature of opinion was discussed earlier in this essay in relation to the system of curbs on individual initiative found in the English provincial world one hundred and forty years ago. Opinion of this sort put a clamp on men's minds by stringently imposing the dominant ethos over free-lance modes of thought. Mrs. Grundy, or what Eliot in The Mill on the Floss calls "the world's wife," prospered in the interests of protective social solidarity. The collective voice became the standard-bearer of public and private virtue: Vox populi, vox Dei. The tyranny of mass opinion organized daily through the medium of the press was a familiar nineteenth-century ogre, whose ascendancy was given a strong boost by extensions of the franchise. John Stuart Mill's On Liberty (1859) and Alexis de Tocqueville's Democracy in America (1835-39) warn against the dangers to individual liberty imposed by the overweening arrogance of unlicensed majority rule. The power of public opinion and the Reform Bill were inextricably linked, as the following excerpt from the October 1833 issue of the scholarly periodical, British Critic, demonstrates:

. . . one colossal figure rises up before us. Everything exhibits to us the omnipotence of the People and the Press. A thousand indications declare to us that we are on the eve, nay, that we trace already the first throes in the birth of a great social Revolution, of which the Reform Bill has been the womb.

(Quoted from Olive J. Brose,
Church and Parliament, p. 36)

Despite the continuing acknowledgment of the formidable weight of public opinion in controlling the shape of historical events, another side of opinion has received relatively little attention. This lies in the emergence of opinion as a vehicle for the metamorphosis of thought. Just as money became a solvent of the social fabric, opinion became a solvent of pre-existing ways of thinking. In short, opinion is the flexible mechanism which makes possible the psychological transitions requisite in a state of continuing social change. In an age of dissolving standards, the process of opinion allows for the facile interaction and compromise intolerable to people with habits of unassailable belief. When the old certainties began to crumble, the definiteness of speech evidenced in Adam Bede, Silas Marner, and Romola was replaced by the entry of hedging, conciliatory, and undogmatic expressions of language, congenial to a mood of skepticism, puzzlement, and doubt. Opinion is an adjustive form of communication, which admits and often encourages the presence of new and alternative points of view in order to reach a common ground, a secular consensus. "Beliefs are not opinions," writes the social psychologist, Curtis Macdougall. "Beliefs are what we 'know' to be true; opinions are what we 'think' is true" (Understanding Public Opinion, p. 16). The difference between the two lies in the measure of certainty with which we utter a conviction.

Kurt and Gladys Lang in Collective Dynamics enlarge upon Macdougall's attempt to define the nature of opinion:

In setting standards that are accepted and enforced, public opinion takes its place alongside custom and law. The authority inhering in custom is legitimized by the past. . . . Custom as such provokes no discussion. . . . Law [which is a conscious and deliberative modification of certain practices] entails a much more rational orientation. . . . Public opinion differs from law and custom in that it operates primarily in those situations where acquiescence to standards cannot be taken for granted and where consent must therefore first be ascertained.

(p. 370)

Another social psychologist, Floyd H. Allport, adds that public opinion is "a process with a time dimension, in which the older content represents the present ever-shifting alignment" (Daniel Katz, ed. Public Opinion and Propaganda, p. 57). The study of the nature of opinion is a new interdisciplinary field involving history, psychology, language, and political science. While few inroads have been made in understanding the phenomenon, many analysts correlate its rise with the breakdown of fixed ethical norms and the disintegration of traditional patterns of political authority.

In Middlemarch, Eliot trusts the nimble-footed agency of opinion to convey what Allport calls "the ever-shifting alignment" of continuous social transformation. Opinion is the mobile rhetorical equivalent in the novel for expressing the solubility of fixed and abiding forms of belief, since the plasticity of opinion expedites the reluctant adaptation of society to new conditions. In a discussion with Lydgate, old Mrs. Farebrother makes a clear distinction between the seemingly ineradicable set of values which stabilized the thinking of her youth and the irresolution which characterizes the fluctuating standards of the 1830's. If you are permitted to change

your ideas once, she states, ". . . why not twenty times" (Ch. 17)? While permissiveness promoted the tolerance important to greater social cohesion, the wide diversity of opinions encouraged the relativism and subjectivism destructive to individual emotional security. Like Mrs. Farebrother, Mr. Tulliver saw the "puzzling world," which introduced the Reform era in The Mill on the Floss, as the result of free wayward choice. Ironically, the positive expression of assurance contained in the words "you know," which invariably fill the pauses of Mr. Brooke's prattling conversation, is a garnish which ill fits the miscellaneous bric-a-brac of his meandering mind. Also, Sir James's habit of saying "Exactly!" when he is most confused adds a wry twist to the plethora of rhetorical forms in the novel, forms which lubricate the motors of uninterrupted social development. As Reform made men politically conscious of Great Britain as an integral national whole, the expansion of democracy also caused a sense of rootlessness evident in the lost bearings of the major characters in Middlemarch. While the group ego prospered in the growing importance of public opinion, the steadiness of the personal ego was shaken, as inviolate beliefs weakened in the widespread exercise of offering moral options and accepting alternative modes of thought.

The following chart of expressions is a small sampling of Eliot's persistent substitution of "in my opinion" for more affirmative turns of speech, such as "I know," "I believe," "It is true that . . .," and others already mentioned, which contribute to the clear and certain moral tone of Adam Bede, Silas Marner and Romola:

". . . Mr. Ladislaw has been here; and he has mentioned a proposal of my uncle's which I should like to know your opinion of."

* * * * *

"What is your opinion?" she added, rather timidly, after a slight pause.

"Did Mr. Ladislaw come on purpose to ask my opinion?" said Mr. Casaubon.

"No," she answered, immediately, "he did not say that he came to ask your opinion."

(Ch. 37)

Mr. Brooke repeated his subdued, "Ah? -- I thought you had more of your own opinion than most girls. I thought you liked your own opinion -- liked it, you know."

"I cannot imagine myself living without some opinions, but I should wish to have good reasons for them, and a wise man could help me to see which opinions had the best foundation, and would help me to live according to them."

(Ch. 4)

"In my opinion," said Lydgate, "legal training only makes a man more incompetent in questions that require knowledge of another kind."

* * * * *

"And in my opinion, your're safest with a lawyer."

(Ch. 16)

His acquaintances thought him enviable to have so charming a wife, and nothing happened to shake their opinion. . . . As the years went on he opposed her less and less, whence Rosamond concluded that he had learned the value of her opinion. . . .

(Finale)

"But that does not alter my opinion that you ought to try every other means. . . ."

"And suppose I disregard your opinion as you disregard mine?"

(Ch. 64)

"In my opinion, men in his condition are oftener killed by treatment than by the disease."

(Ch. 69)

". . . I was not going to tell him my opinion. Hear everything and judge for yourself is my motto."

(Ch. 45)

"In my opinion it is better than the hams at Freshitt Hall --. . . .

"You will not get any writer to beat him in a hurry -- he will not, in my opinion, be surpassed."

"A sensible girl though, in my opinion. . . ."

(Ch. 32)

If that was not reason, Mrs. Dollop wished to know what was; but there was a prevalent feeling in her audience that her opinion was a bulwark. . . .

And let it not be supposed that opinion at the Tankard in Slaughter Lane was unimportant to the medical profession. . . . In the course of the year, however, there had been a change in the public sentiment, of which the unanimity at Dollop's was an index.

(Ch. 45)

And so on through endless examples of "opinion" employed in its Janus-faced public and private contexts. While the collective voice of public opinion assumed increasing sovereignty over the thought processes of men, the voice of private opinion displayed, paradoxically enough, vacillation, hesitancy, and doubt.

Despite fears of mass rule through conformity to mass inclinations and despite fears of individual instability, the role of opinion was welcomed in many quarters as being necessary to break through the thick crust of custom impeding the progress of new ideas. In the same year that Middlemarch was published, Walter Bagehot's Physics and Politics appeared. Bagehot, whose book applies Darwinian notions of natural selection and inheritance to political society, saw the emergence of opinion as an antidote to the rigid dictatorship of men by the petrification of staid ideas. By promoting discussion,

Bagehot believed, opinion advanced the principle of variability and freedom:

. . . a government by discussion, if it can be borne, at once breaks down the yoke of fixed custom. . . . the mere putting up of a subject to discussion, with the object of being guided by that discussion, is a clear admission that the subject is in no degree settled by established rule, and that men are free to choose in it. It is an admission too that there is no sacred authority -- no one transcendent and divinely appointed man whom. . . the community is bound to obey.
(p. 166)

Unlike Eliot's guarded optimism about the machinations of opinion, Bagehot cheers the dissolution of the old sanctions without questioning whether the new guidelines emerging from the free play of discussion may in their own way prove as oppressive as the discarded ones. Eliot wondered whether the sanguine expectations of Bagehot's age of discussion were potent enough to offset the psychological afflictions of an age of disorientation. Notwithstanding these qualms, Eliot, like Bagehot, heartily endorses opinion in Middlemarch as the verbal counterpart of flexibility and variation in the evolutionary process. Opinion itself connotes movement, a fact recognized by Milton in his Areopagitica: "Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making" [italics mine]. Yet Milton's qualification, "opinions in good men," saw through the limitations of intellectual discussion if unaccompanied by a sound moral bent. Pandemonium in Paradise Lost is a matchless exhibition of independent thought, and Lucifer is a brilliant debater in the exemplary forensics displayed by this emancipated parliament.

In addition to the support of rhetorical devices to transmit the social equivalent of Darwin's tangled bank, Eliot concludes her novel with a deliberate evasion of suggestions that the Finale of Middlemarch is final. The future of the characters, much like the prospects of evolution, is undefined and incomplete. Mankind, as the last page of the novel declares, is still beset by conditions of an imperfect social state, and doubtless many new Dorotheas will appear to add to the dimly perceptible "growing good of the world." The Finale is no conclusion but merely a lull in the continuing activity of the developmental process. "Every limit," Eliot says in the first line of the Finale, "is a beginning as well as an ending."

Though popularized by the sciences of biology and geology, developmentalism is, nevertheless, a brand of nineteenth-century historicism. The theory of evolution, in other words, views history as having an inner logic, a rationale, a pattern of its own. History is not determined by a transcendent providence but provides its own mysterious direction. As Darwin applied evolutionary historicism to biology, Eliot applied a similar outlook to the transitional picture of Middlemarch society. In the novel, Eliot refers to the novelist of manners as an historian and likens the introduction of Dorothea into her history to the method of the older Herodotus, "who also, in telling what had been, thought it well to take a woman's lot for his starting point; though Io, as a maiden apparently beguiled by attractive merchandise, was the reverse of Miss Brooke. . . ." (Ch. 11). While the historical viewpoint of Romola rests on the ordered hierarchical tree of life whose permanent roots sink deep into the

past, that of Middlemarch is guided by the indefinite contingencies of evolutionary design. The very diffusiveness of Middlemarch illustrates the sweeping ramifications and the resistance to definition characteristic of the developmental process, since ". . . the great Tangled Bank of Life," as Stanley Edgar Hyman writes of Darwin's controlling metaphor, "is disordered, democratic and . . . essentially a modern vision" (The Tangled Bank, p. 33).

Many modern critics of developmentalism deplore the gross inaccuracies which arise in applying organic metaphors to observations about history and society. For example, Robert A. Nisbet in his recent book, Social Change and History (1970), argues that an evolutionary approach assumes that change is a natural, necessary, immanent, and directional function of time, a process which grows in structural complexity like the increasing heterogeneity of evolutionary forms of biological life. In the observation of empirical data, Nisbet goes on to say, change is not natural or constant, but rather that fixity is. Change is not intrinsic to social behavior as growth is to a living organism. Supporting Nisbet's point of view, the historian, J.H. Hexter, proposes that students of change ban such words as "tended," "grew out of," "developed," "evolved," and the like from their writing. Yet all language arises out of a matrix of metaphor, and the substitution of one set of verbal images by another is just as likely to be objectionable on grounds of animism, which is inimical to the objectivity sought by the scientific fraternity.

Nineteenth-century theorists of developmentalism were keenly aware of their reliance on a picture of history as a developing organ-

ism. Yet that century's very preference for the paradigm of evolution is itself a key to the assumptions of the epoch, assumptions which are still part of the mental wardrobe of our own times. In The Origin of Species, Darwin defends the use of figures of speech in scientific texts:

In the literal sense of the word, no doubt, natural selection is a false term; but who ever objected to chemists speaking of the elective affinities of the various elements? --and yet an acid cannot strictly be said to elect the base with which it in preference combines. It has been said that I speak of natural selection as an active power or Deity: but who objects to an author speaking of the attraction of gravity as ruling the movements of the planets? Every one knows what is meant and is implied by such metaphorical expressions; and they are almost necessary for brevity. . . . With a little familiarity such superficial objections will be forgotten.

(Ch. IV)

Though figurative speech not only embellishes but also molds an idea, the choice of one image over another shapes the contours of our thought. As Eliot puts it in The Mill on the Floss, you can say that the study of the classics and geometry plows and harrows the mind for the reception of a subsequent crop. Yet if the brain is an intellectual stomach with a gastric weakness for such subjects, plows and harrows seem to settle nothing (Book Two, Ch. 1). Eliot's choice of evolutionary imagery in Middlemarch is the conscious selection of a literary artist who wishes to depict a panorama of movement and flux, just as her careful adoption of metaphors of permanence and stability in Romola was expressly intended to picture society as a tree of life, a tree whose fixed structure did not alter through the vicissitudes of the seasons. Why Eliot chose to portray two great and differing visions of history is a subject reserved for the next chapter of this essay.

Middlemarch perhaps appeals to moderns more than any of Eliot's other works. During the last decade, this novel has staged a surprising comeback. While Leslie Stephen voiced the general feeling among Victorian critics that the book was a sad and melancholy piece of fiction, one early twentieth-century critic, Virginia Woolf, found Middlemarch to be one of the few worthwhile novels for grown-up people. Many Victorians were depressed by the novel's confirmation of chameleonic values in a protean world. The Quarterly Review of 1873 (CXXXIV) wistfully singles out the regretted element of change in Middlemarch, a quality which earmarks the novel's content:

Possibly the life of England is changing, perhaps has already changed, far more than we realize. The growth of enormous cities, the ease of travelling. . . , the largeness and organization of commercial and industrial energy, the disappearance of those local attachments and local peculiarities, which used to hold us so strongly because they had bound our fathers and grandfathers before us -- these imply, it may be, a more rapid transition from one state of national development to another than can be made clear to those in whose unconscious presence the process has accomplished itself. . . .

(Quoted from Barbara Hardy, ed. Middlemarch: Critical Approaches to the Novel, pp. 146-7)

The current appeal of Middlemarch seems to lie in its unhysterical tone, as it quietly and unsentimentally presents man in a Darwinian universe as a "poor, bare, forked animal," to use King Lear's words, an animal shorn of comforting illusions yet desperately attempting to stand his ground in the struggle for existence. While the doctrine of evolution has been regarded by some as a fatalistic kind of pantheism, it, nonetheless, offers the despairing cynic a wisp of hope that the process may have a benign providence of its

own. Despite the failures and the ludicrous aspirations of the human "animal" in this novel, man still emerges as a dignified even a tragic figure. After many decades of de-escalating human endowments through the debasing agencies of a commandeering nihilism, Middlemarch's muted enthusiasm for the human race is balm for the sore modern spirit without alienating the integrity of the skeptical modern mind.

To view Middlemarch from the vantage point of The Origin of Species is to grasp the work as a whole. In a jocose comment made in the novel about drawing analogies and parallels, Eliot drops a clue about comparing two orders of beings, the biological and the social, "since there never was a true story," she says, "which could not be told in parables where you might put a monkey for a margrave, and vice versa" (Ch. 35). Darwin's Origin provides the monkey for the margrave in Middlemarch. If not a parable, the novel, nevertheless, is one of the finest exhibitions of the lumbering human comedy on the move.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORY AS PROPHECY: DANIEL DERONDA

Placed side by side, the fictional blueprints of Romola and Middlemarch lay bare a marked dualism in George Eliot's historical posture. On the one hand, Eliot posits a Classical Greek picture of a stationary cosmos governed by predetermined immutable laws, a fixed and closed system which allows for trifling vicissitudes but for no essential changes in the eternal order of things. Such is the world view in Romola. On the other hand, Eliot in Middlemarch presents history as an evolutionary panorama, which bans stasis from the universe and which admits of but one permanent principle: that of incessant change. This bifurcation of historical outlook is most conspicuous in her last novel, Daniel Deronda, written in 1876. Significantly this work contains not one but two self-contained artistic wholes, two stories which are linked by a tenuous and easily disposable plot filament, two narrative structures which if divorced could function independently without any appreciable loss in intelligibility. The first is the story of the rise and fall of Gwendolen Harleth; the second concerns the dawning Zionism in the life of Daniel Deronda. F.R. Leavis in The Great Tradition (II, iii) recommends a total excision of the Zionist portion and suggests renaming the novel: Gwendolen Harleth. Many critics share his view. Yet Eliot's remarkably prescient Zionist story, which antedated by a score of years the epoch-making manifesto of Jewish nationalism, Theodor Herzl's Der Judenstaat (1895), remains the bedrock of the novel for

sentinels of the special élan which created the modern state of Israel. For them, needless to say, the Gwendolen story remains a secondary and dispensable segment as compared with the apocalyptic reality of the Zionist chapters. For them, needless to say, Henry James's declaration in Partial Portraits that all the Jewish part of Daniel Deronda ". . . is at bottom cold" sounds like parochial prattle. What remains most curious in the commonly acknowledged structural fissure at the core of the novel is that George Eliot was blind to the schism so obvious to others. She could not understand how the unity of the work could so effortlessly be reft in two. "I meant everything in the book to be related to everything else there," she wrote in a letter to a friend (Haight, ed. The George Eliot Letters, Vol. VI, p. 290). In Eliot's mind both the Gwendolen Harleth and the Daniel Deronda plots did not represent a dichotomy of incompatible elements but instead constituted a confluence of congenial perspectives, a Castor and Pollux ruled by the same Gemini sign, two variants of a single vision of history.

This chapter will reveal how the artistic disunity of Daniel Deronda rests on Eliot's unsuccessful attempt to bridge two contrasting appraisals of historical change, two ideational axes, each one in turn inhibiting with its own strong centripetal pull the structural fusion of the work. These two antithetical approaches to the human scene come into focus by juxtaposing the static world of Romola with the moving panorama of Middlemarch, both of which have been discussed in previous sections of this study. The Classical Greek framework evident in Romola finds its complement

in the Gwendolen Harleth story, while the progressive developmentalism or historicism peculiar to Middlemarch finds its counterpart in the emerging Zionism of the Daniel Deronda part. The ensuing pages will deal with several questions which arise from the bifold character of Eliot's last novel. In what ways does the literary scaffolding of the novel contribute to this duality? Are these two historical standpoints mutually exclusive? If not, to what extent is Eliot's straddling of the two justifiable? Why does she encourage this synthesis of divergent historical systems, this twinning of apparent opposites; why does she find it necessary to press, to borrow Thomas Hardy's phrase, "the convergence of the twain"?

Weighing these issues, however, calls for the firm fastening of what may at first appear to be an arbitrary assumption, namely, that the Gwendolen branch of the novel is indeed based like Romola upon a traditional Greek formula, and that the Zionist branch is indeed like Middlemarch a product of nineteenth-century historicism. Such an appraisal clamors for proof. Eliot's ambivalent cast of thought, which was brought into bold relief by comparing two of her former novels, must now be disinterred in Daniel Deronda. Despite a radical change of scenery from the Florence of Savonarola's day and from the English Midlands of the pre-Victorian era, Eliot's last novel, which depicts contemporary English manners, clearly mirrors the disjointed contours of her abidingly equivocal theoretical stance. Tracing those contours remains the present task.

Eliot's fascination for what she calls "the unexpected forms in which the great Nemesis hides herself" flares up again in the

Gwendolen Harleth plot of Daniel Deronda. After an exhaustive portrayal of the circumscribed system of moral checks and balances in Romola, Eliot's interest in the theme of retribution lay in abeyance in favor of the overriding developmental survival ethics of Middlemarch. Though nemesis stalks the Middlemarch banker, Bulstrode, the poetic justice of his fate hardly dents the prevailingly neutral moral tone in the Darwinian groundwork of that novel. Yet in the Gwendolen Harleth story, the Furies again come to the fore and mercilessly avenge themselves on overweening mortals who overstep the mark. The idea of retributive justice rests on the notion of a limited and changeless universe in which the physical order and the moral order are interlocked, a world in which nature and human nature are indissolubly bound. Even a minute breach of personal propriety jeopardizes the delicate adjustment of the cosmic balance and must in the interest of collective stability be severely redressed. Individual claims of extenuating circumstances, however justifiable from a microcosmic point of view, become contemptible trifles in the total picture and are pitilessly ignored. Because of the acute vulnerability of the universal equipoise to aberrations within the moral fabric of society, the transgressor must not only pay but must pay with interest. Because of the magnitude of the risks incurred, the debtor must overcompensate to even out the score. Punishment in kind, of like for like, of an eye for an eye, of measure for measure -- these are but a sorry compromise in the canons of nemesis. True retribution exacts more than mere retaliation. Not only must the individual suffer, but he must suffer beyond reasonable due without hope of grace, forgiveness,

absolution, amnesty, or reprieve. Redemption plays but little or no role in this stern scheme of things, unless it takes the bitter form of a humiliating lesson learned well. The individual has recourse to no exit but to accept his fate and endure. Such is the stuff of tragedy; such is the world of Gwendolen Harleth.

In Romola, Eliot projected an immutable and timeless world by using a store of literary devices which accentuated the concept of eternal recurrence. The underlying stability and permanence of changeless forms were suggested by the yearly return of fairs and religious festivals, the weekly rhythms of market day, the rhetoric of repetition and "sameness," and the visualization of Florence as an unviolated symbol of stasis amidst the flux. Eliot also dotted the narrative with a proliferation of plant images including the tree of society in order to implement the picture of rootedness and fixity, a picture in which even a momentous historical change was considered to be of no greater significance in the life of that tree than the seasonal fall of a leaf. The vocabulary of the marketplace, of exchange and barter, of buying and selling, of redeeming and defaulting, also served to transmit the idea of give-and-take intrinsic to the operation of retributive justice, since the balance of payments constituted the prime objective both within the economic and the moral spheres. These compositional elements in Romola have been discussed in Chapter One. What literary strategy does Eliot employ to convey the similarly limited, measured, and fixed universe of Romola in the story of Gwendolen Harleth?

In Gwendolen Harleth's world, the ideal of equilibrium inherent in a fixed and measured cosmos meshed together morally and physically is embodied in an arresting figure which governs the logic of the plot from the very outset: the figure of the roulette wheel. The opening chapter recreates a continental gambling casino presided over not by the smiling countenance but by the dour face of the Goddess of Luck. The roulette wheel symbolizes the great wheel of fortune, the rudder of that divinity controlling the destinies of men. Steeped in ancient Greek and Roman lore, the figure of Fortune or Tyche continued to be as prepossessing a subject for the Medieval and Renaissance imaginations as it was for the pagan mind. The seemingly capricious whims of "giddy Fortune's furious fickle wheel " (Shakespeare, Henry V III. vi. 28), were often visualized as part of the necessary pre-established pattern of iron laws which direct the mysterious way of things. In the Antigone, for example, the ups and downs of Tyche are within the framework of predetermined workings of the world order:

Fortune raises and Fortune humbles the lucky or unlucky from day to day, and no one can prophesy to men concerning those things which are established.
(Sophocles, Antigone, 1158-60)

The conception of the wheel is grounded in an outlook which sees the universe as a sensitive system of equalization, a system ceaselessly guarding against excesses and infractions which threaten to overcome the just proportions of cosmic stability. Such an outlook favors the mutual adjustments of ups and downs, the compromises between gains and losses, the art of the golden mean. If the fates help an individual reach the apex of success, it is only

fair that he suffer a severe reversal so as to strike an even balance. This suggests the bigger they are, the harder they fall; the more they gain, the more they stand to lose; the greater their joy today, the greater their sorrow tomorrow:

Time goes by turns, and chances change by course
From foul to fair, from better hap to worse.

(Robert Southwell, "Time Goes by
Turns")

For Gwendolen Harleth, the day at the gambling casino marks the denouement of her tragic drama, the beginning of her downfall. Throughout her past life, as subsequent flashbacks show, she had believed herself to be the undisputed mistress of her fate, a point of view shared by her abundant admirers who sought only divine comparisons to describe her charmed potency. To them she was a gifted and beautiful Diana, a captivating Nereid, and an enchanting Calypso. Over-esteemed by others, it is no wonder Gwendolen was possessed with herself:

. . . the first thought of those about her had been, what will Gwendolen think?--if the footman trod heavily in creaking boots or if the laundress's work was unsatisfactory, the maid said, "This will never do for Miss Harleth;" if the wood smoked in the bedroom fireplace, Mrs. Davilow [Gwendolen's mother], whose own weak eyes suffered much from this inconvenience, spoke apologetically of it to Gwendolen. . . . Always she was the princess in exile, who in time of famine was to have her breakfast-roll made of the finest-bolted flour . . . and was to have her silver fork kept out of the baggage.

(Book I, Ch. IV)

Up until the fatal turning point, all her activity had been centered in herself, in self-glorification, self-satisfaction, self-assertion. Her hubris stemmed from not only an unmitigated vanity but also a promethean compulsion to have things her own way. The opening chapter of the novel signals Gwendolen's day of reckoning, the day

when she becomes a heavy loser not only at roulette but also in her earthly lot. That Eliot fully intended the parallel is revealed in the ominous words at the gaming table: "Faites votre jeu, mesdames et messieurs," said the automatic voice of destiny from between the mustache and imperial of the croupier; and Gwendolen's arm was stretched to deposit her last poor heap of napoleons. 'Le jeu ne va plus,' said destiny" (Book I, Ch. I). Not only the croupier but also the presence of Daniel Deronda, who appears in the opening chapter as an intent spectator, intensifies the general air of fatality surrounding Gwendolen. She winces under his "dreadful" and "measuring gaze," which she believes acts like "an evil eye." Like the voice of the croupier, Deronda's provocative stare functions as a superhuman judicatory agency of fate: "The darting sense that he was examining her as a specimen of a lower order, roused a tingling resentment which stretched the moment with conflict" (Book I, Ch. I). Deronda is an outsider to the gambling milieu. His entrance into Gwendolen's life is tangential to her personal story, yet his appearance serves to augment the ill-boding foretaste of doom regarding Gwendolen's future. His disapproval of her gambling is a prevision of her descent, a descent during which he plays no essential role excepting that of confidant or father-confessor for a lost soul. Like the spinning roulette wheel, his name, De-ronda, meaning "round," suggests the reversal of Gwendolen's luck and adds to the image of circuitry supported by the endless clinking and rattling of coins--five-franc and ten-franc pieces, louis, napoleons, and coppers--which shower the gaming tables at the foot of the giant revolving disk.

Since the Gwendolen Harleth plot begins in medias res at the apex of her career, the turning point in the upward swing of her good fortune, the narrative present is consumed with events of her denouement, the falling action in her tragedy. The successful part of her life is relegated to a series of flashbacks, which are inserted like enormous parenthetical remarks in the description of her downfall. The psychological effect of this literary strategy is to dramatize the immediacy of the retributive process. The omens, auguries, portents of her decline suggested by the striking opening scene of the gambling casino present us with a controlled focus of her inevitable future. Gwendolen's gambling loss in the casino parallels the gamble that marrying Grandcourt represents in her life.

That life is a game with established rules is a motif which is re-echoed on numerous occasions throughout the novel. Three chapters are devoted to Gwendolen's prowess in an archery contest, a traditional ritual with the local aristocracy. At this particular stage in her life, she is still a "winner" and reaps a coveted gold star for her dexterity. In the bucolic setting of Brackenshaw Park, where the archery meeting, the archery picnic, and the archery ball are held, Gwendolen still lives in a pagan "Eden" in a pagan state of grace. She is a "Calypso among her nymphs" (Book I, Ch. X), a "wood-nymph among the beeches" (Book II, Ch. XIV). Also reminiscent of a Classical Greek scene is the Archery Hall ". . . with an arcade in front . . . like a white temple against the greenery . . ." (Book I, Ch. X). Supreme in her self-assurance and the belief in her lucky "golden" star, Gwendolen, nevertheless, has

not yet violated the sanctities. For example, she discreetly refrains from pushing her luck too far by avoiding the competition for the golden arrow, the supreme token of sagitary excellence. It is also at the archery match that Gwendolen solemnly promises to honor Mrs. Glasher's plea to terminate further relations with Grandcourt. At this juncture in her life, her moral actions like her bow and arrows hit the target and thus are immune to the dire effects of vindictive supernatural agencies dispensing notorious "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

Besides roulette and archery, other instances of the game image occur. Eliot, for instance, makes a reference to:

. . . Retzsch's drawing of destiny in the shape of Mephistopheles playing at chess with man for his soul, a game in which we may imagine the clever adversary making a feint of unintended moves so as to set the beguiled mortal on carrying his defensive pieces away from the true point of attack.

(Book V, Ch. XXXVII)

The player's argot frequently punctuates the dialogue as well as Eliot's commentary in the novel. Grandcourt, for example, traveled ". . . after the manner of a creeping billiard ball . . ." (Book II, Ch. XV); he ". . . knew how to play his cards . . ." (Book IV, Ch. XXX); Lush, Grandcourt's toady, ". . . would as soon bet on it as on any other likelihood" (Book IV, Ch. XXX); "Ten to one he will not close for some time I would bet on your ultimate success" (Book IV, Ch. XXVIII); "I will take odds that the marriage will never happen" (Book II, Ch. XIII); "Here certainly was a 'mate' in answer to Lush's 'check'" (Book III, Ch. XXV); "That's a trump!" (Book IV, Ch. XXVIII). These statements support the total conception of a patterned world with fixed

rules, a world which "pays" a player according to the adroitness with which he manipulates within proscribed limits the intangibles of the game.

Eliot betrays a puritanical aversion to games of chance and would place worshipers of luck in one of the nether circles of her idea of Inferno. For her, the lure of gambling marked a signal phase in human dissolution and decline. In Middlemarch, for example, the billiard room of the Green Dragon heralds the disintegration of Lydgate's moral integrity and the loss of his self-possessed strength. Placing his bets, Lydgate had "that excited narrow consciousness which reminds one of an animal with fierce eyes and retractile claws" (Ch. 66). After losing money, he prophetically announces the beginning of his end: "The game is up" (Ch. 66). For Eliot, the temper of mind displayed at the gaming table is closely associated with the steps leading into all forms of temptation. Gambling is the "devil's bait" (Ch. 66), a passion which lures the individual into a dizzying vortex of increased risks, false hopes, and irresponsible commitments. In a similar vein, the opening scene in Daniel Deronda is a tableau of decadent cosmopolitan Europeans for whom les jeux son faits. As in Middlemarch, Eliot ladens this episode with reptilian imagery along with added surrealistic brushstrokes of loathsome, lifeless, and stagnant varieties of humanity. Gwendolen's striking mien is described by fascinated onlookers as the "ensemble du serpent." She is "cold and neutral," has "long narrow eyes," is dressed ". . . all green and silver, and winds her neck about a little more than usual . . ."; in sum, ". . . it is a sort of Lamia beauty she has" (Book I, Ch. I).

Her serpentine aspect is a prophetic announcement of her imminent downfall and strongly suggests a parallel with the metamorphosis of Milton's Lucifer:

 . . . a greater power
Now ruled him, punished in the shape he sinned,
According to his doom . . .
 . . . for now were all transformed
Alike, to serpents all, as accessories
To his bold riot . . .
 (Paradise Lost, Book X, 515-517,
 519-521)

The gamblers surrounding Gwendolen are fit "accessories" to her ophidian trappings. The company of the doomed includes such repulsive, artificial, and spiritually palsied people, as the following wisps from the opening pages show:

. . . a bony, yellow, crab-like hand stretching a bared wrist to clutch a heap of coin--a hand easy to sort with the square, gaunt face, deep-set eyes, grizzled eyebrows, and ill-combed scanty hair which seemed a slight metamorphosis of the vulture.

. . . that dry-lipped feminine figure prematurely old, withered after short bloom like her artificial flowers, holding a shabby reticule

. . . an occasional monotone in French, such as might be expected to issue from an ingeniously constructed automaton.

. . . an emaciated beau or worn-out libertine

. . . an old bewigged woman with eyeglasses pinching her nose.

. . . the statuesque Italian remained impassive

. . . his eyes fell on this scene of dull, gas-poisoned absorption

. . . the blank gaze of a bedizened child

" . . . that old Adonis in the George the Fourth wig?"

" . . . because I am bored to death. "

"He looked bored. "

But while every single player differed markedly from every other, there was a certain uniform negativeness of expression which had the effect of a mask--as if they had all eaten of some root that for the time compelled the brains of each to the same narrow monotony of action.

Such a supporting cast surrounding Gwendolen leaves little doubt as to the downward course of Fortune's rudder. To sum up, the roulette wheel in the Gwendolen Harleth story functions much as does the tree of society in Romola, that is, to transmit the picture of an undeviating world order faithful to the conception of finite limits in cosmic potential, faithful to the idea of fixed moral sanctions, and dedicated to the perpetual convolutions of eternal return.

The steadying of weights and counterweights in the universal equipoise is expressed in Romola in the marketplace vocabulary of barter: the economic balance of payments. Eliot uses the gambling rhetoric of gain and loss to communicate the mutual adjustment of successes and failures, of rewards and punishments in the non-progressive historical design of the Gwendolen Harleth plot. Like the language of the marketplace in Romola, the language of the gambling casino in Daniel Deronda provides the idiom which makes viable the concept of nemesis central to both stories. In Daniel Deronda, the narrative is peppered with such statements as these:

"I think it would be better for men not to gamble. It is a besotting kind of taste, likely to turn into a disease. And, besides, there is something revolting to me in raking a heap of money together, and internally chuckling over it, when others are feeling the loss of it . . . There are enough inevitable turns of fortune which force us to see that our gain is another's loss

(Book IV, Ch. XXIX)

. . . she felt herself standing at the game of life with many eyes upon her, daring everything to win much--or if to lose, still with éclat and a sense of importance.

(Book IV, Ch. XXIX)

"It is because of the gain, that I feel the loss."
(Book II, Ch. XIV)

"It seemed a gain to balance our loss."
(Book III, XXIV)

"Confess you hate them when they stand in your way--when
their gain is your loss."
(Book V, Ch. XXXV)

"I have thrust out others--I have made my gain out of their
loss"
(Book V, Ch. XXXVI)

"I would rather run my chance there and lose, than be sure
of winning anywhere else."
(Book V, Ch. XXXVII)

"I wanted to make my gain out of another's loss-- you remem-
ber?--it was like roulette It was as if I had prayed
that another should lose and I should win."
(Book VII, Ch. LVI)

It was all a part of that new gambling in which the losing was
not simply a minus, but a terrible plus that had never entered
into her reckoning.
(Book VI, Ch. XLVII)

Sentiments such as these couched in a verbal matrix of losses and gains are freely strewn throughout the novel and serve to underpin the idea of retribution, which presupposes a world view of fixed and compensating balances rather than an infinite vista progressively stockpiled with the goods of life.

The Gwendolen Harleth story resembles Romola not only in the implications of controlling metaphors such as the tree of life, the roulette wheel, and the specialized idiom of debits and credits woven into the texture of both novels, but also in the belief that "character is destiny." The individual "by reiterated choice of good or evil," to use a phrase from Romola, shapes his future by attempting to tailor circumstances through the resolute imposition of his powerful will. Both Tito of Romola and Gwendolen possess a

superabundant cocksureness coupled with an intrepid daring as plucky as it is wild. At the expense of others, both seek to do exactly as they like with the least distress to themselves.

"Gwendolen's nature was not remorseless, but she liked to make her penances easy . . ." (Book I, Ch. III), and Tito's mind ". . . was destitute of that dread . . . that awe of the Divine Nemesis the initial recognition of a moral law restraining desire [which] checks the hard bold scrutiny of imperfect thought into obligations which can never be proved to have any sanctity in the absence of feeling" (Romola, Book One, Ch. XI). Like Tito, Gwendolen prior to her fatal step was enveloped by a consuming conviction that she controlled the reins in her life, just as she controlled the reins of the horses she was so passionately fond of riding. Characteristic of her conversation are defiant outbursts, such as "I am determined to be happy . . ." (Book I, Ch. III); "But I don't resign myself . . ." (Book III, Ch. XXI); ". . . everything is to be as I like" (Book III, Ch. XXVII); "I will not submit to it" (Book III, Ch. XXI). She would ". . . conquer circumstance by her exceptional cleverness" (Book I, Ch. IV) and would crush sorrow, ". . . defy it, or run away from it . . ." (Book I, Ch. II). Both Tito and Gwendolen believe they can commandeer their fate without suffering ill consequences. Theirs is a presumption which constitutes that peculiar brand of pride called hubris, that excess of ego which prevents the cautious holding back and curbs the inner summons to

Be wise;
Soar not too high to fall; but stoop to rise.
(Philip Massinger. Duke of Milan)

The typical tragic hero is something of a gambler, headstrong and rash, ready to take reckless chances in the confident belief that he can best the worst crisis. He believes in himself, in the reality of freedom of choice, and in the consequent assumption of total responsibility for his acts. Eliot emphasizes the importance of free will and accountability in the Gwendolen Harleth story by naming three of the novel's eight chapters as follows: "Maidens Choosing," "Gwendolen Gets her Choice," and "Fruit and Seed," the last being reminiscent of a chapter heading in Romola called "Fruit is Seed." While Gwendolen's environment permits the unbridled exercise of her willfulness, environment nevertheless performs a secondary function in steering her decisions. Eliot stresses this priority in the epigraph to Book III, Ch. XXVII: "Desire has trimmed the sails, and Circumstance/Brings but the breeze to fill them." Gwendolen's passion to master is predominantly a native rather than an acquired trait. Her downfall is spurred by the domineering bent of her character, but her grandeur as a heroine derives from her acute perceptivity. Unlike other great women in nineteenth-century fiction such as Madame Bovary, for example, or Tess of the D'Urbervilles, or Diana of the Crossways, or even the petulant spoiled Rosamond Vincy of Middlemarch, Gwendolen has a scrupulous conscience and shoulders the consequences of her actions without blaming others. After her comedown, she displays what Thomas Hardy calls a capacity "to take a full look at the worst" and accepts that condition with patient acquiescence. She understands that she must suffer, that her wheel has come full circle, never to ascend again, that she

must pay her tribute to the avenging Furies, that she must even out the score. Like the portrait of Tito, Eliot's handling of Gwendolen follows a fixed pattern involving the initial inner flaw of character (hamartia), the exercise of overconfidence (hubris), and the inevitable retribution (nemesis), from which there is no escape. As in Romola, character in the Gwendolen Harleth plot edges out circumstance in the direction of one's personal lot. The reverse is true in Middlemarch. The concept of a pliant human nature molded entirely by outside stresses, a human nature which is handicapped or sustained by the "spirit of the times" is alien to the portrayal of Gwendolen. Eliot's comment about Dorothea on the last page of Middlemarch, that ". . . there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it," tilts the scales in favor of environmental determinism. In the case of Gwendolen, Eliot reverts to the classical formula, which makes due allowance for the puissance of individual will.

The precipitating cause of Gwendolen's moral tailspin is her rebellion against the stark presence of poverty. Shortly after leaving the gambling casino, she learns from a letter that her family has lost the comfortable income, which permitted a life of leisured ease. To avoid having to sink in the social scale and to submit to the indignities of an impoverished life, Gwendolen enters into a loveless marriage with a wealthy aristocrat, Henleigh Mallinger Grandcourt. She marries him with the guilty knowledge that she is impairing the legitimization of Grandcourt's four heirs, fruit of a long liaison with a Mrs. Lydia Glasher. Gwendolen's initial disgust with her husband's reprehensible past turns into

a virulent loathing for him, when the extravagant illusion that she could master him is shattered. Eliot charts the repugnance of Grandcourt's character with the familiar imagery of the first chapter, imagery conveying stagnation, frigidity, and disgust. He is "flaccid," "languid," "bored," "a handsome lizard" (Book II, Ch. XIII) with an expression "as neutral as an alligator" (Book II, Ch. XV). Behind his passive exterior, however, lies a tyrannical, even a sadistic will: ". . . like that of a crab or a boa constrictor which goes on pinching or crushing without alarm at thunder" (Book V, Ch. XXXV). His delight in making horses and dogs quail extends to the subjection of his proud wife: "He meant to be master of a woman who would have liked to master him . . ." (Book IV, Ch. XXVIII). Too weak for Grandcourt's ruthlessness, Gwendolen becomes submissive, her spirit broken; ". . . she answered to the rein" (Book V, Ch. XXXV). Her repressed fury finds no outlet until Grandcourt drowns in a boating accident in the Mediterranean off Genoa, a misfortune which perhaps could have been avoided had Gwendolen thrown him a rope in time. Legally innocent, Gwendolen, nevertheless, suffers remorse as a murderess and accepts her self-inflicted humiliation without hope for a revitalization of her life. "It can never be altered. That was what happened. That was what I did . . . It can never be altered," she exclaims (Book VII, Ch. LVI). Her capacity to feel the stings of guilt, her refusal to excuse herself, and the stoic acceptance of her lot make her fit material for a tragic heroine. Eliot's detailed rendering of Gwendolen's intricate psychological make-up, from the incipient impetuosity, the immoral choice, and the jarring confrontation

with the harsh aftermath of that choice, to the gnawing guilt, the intense repression, the defensive backlash, and the final acceptance of a blunted life, make the portrait of Gwendolen Harleth one of Eliot's finest. The connotations of Gwendolen's cognomen, Harleth, point to a looseness of the harlot, though not to sexual license, however, but to the license of a creature "not subject to control," such as the harlot Goddess of Fame. Within the scheme of the Classical Greek outlook of a restrictive and regulated universe, any such "looseness" is inevitably suppressed; nevertheless that insurgent human spirit, that protest against all forms of thralldom is man's titanic spark. Gwendolen's assertion of independence, no matter how petty, illusory, and risky is still a treasured token of man's, or in this case, woman's fierce defense of the right to be free.

One of the prevalent narrative techniques used by Eliot to underline Gwendolen's moral accountability is to highlight the inner stresses and strains, the internal debates, the weighing of advantages and drawbacks prior to making a commitment. To act freely, a character must be surrounded by options, by reasonable and readily available alternatives from which he makes an uncoerced autonomous choice. Gwendolen's warring pressures derive from her good and evil impulses rather than from a resistance towards victimization by the environment in the shape of a loss of fortune, for example, or the servitude of a woman's lot. Eliot makes it clear that Gwendolen's earlier noble resolve not to marry the immoral Grandcourt took ". . . the alternate dip of counterbalancing thoughts begotten of counterbalancing desires. . . ." (Book III, Ch. XXVII). Despite her reservations, she wants to wed Grandcourt;

she is not pushed into marriage, but does so with the air of
". . . 'God's will be done' of one who is eagerly watching chances"
(Book III, Ch. XXVII).

In order to convey the reality of Gwendolen's freedom of choice, Eliot saturates the narrative with a common syntactical device: the question mark. The profusion of interrogative sentences functions in several ways; first, to portray the inward wrangling of Gwendolen's better and worse self before committing herself to a definite decision; second, to emphasize the burden of responsibility inherent in her determinations; third, to create an air of free participation in which the reader is invited to exercise his own judgment in assessing the implications of a given situation. This last function, for example, strikes one at the very outset of the novel. Not one or two but five bald interrogative sentences startle us with their brisk summons to respond:

Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams? Probably the evil; else why was the effect that of unrest rather than of undisturbed charm? Why was the wish to look again felt as coercion and not as a longing in which the whole being consents?

(Book I, Ch. I)

The first function of the multitude of questions interspersed throughout Daniel Deronda lies in picturing the contest of inner voices battling within Gwendolen for supremacy. Such self-questioning presupposes a spectrum ranging from noble to base aims originating deep within the wellsprings of human nature, not in the world outside. Such self-questioning presupposes a conscience struggling to preside over strong wayward passions, a conscience

earnestly trying to cope with the lacerations of self-recrimination and self-exculpation. Before each critical decision, Gwendolen's social conversation as well as her private thoughts are riddled with endless pros and cons which unveil her guilt, her fears, and her repressions. Examples such as the following, chosen at random, load the text: "How could she believe in sorrow;" (Book I, Ch. II)? "What could she do;" (Book I, Ch. II)? "How much more might such trifles tell . . .;" (Book III, Ch. XXI)? "What was the good of living in the midst of hardships, ugliness, and humiliation;" (Book III, Ch. XXI)? "When was she to have any happiness, if it did not come while she was young;" (Book III, Ch. XXVI)? "Yet--was it triumph she felt most or terror;" (Book III, Ch. XXVI)? "Was she to decline Grandcourt's visit--close the shutters--not even look out on what would happen?--though with the assurance that she should remain just where she was;" (Book III, Ch. XXVI)? "Where was the good of choice coming again? What did she wish? Anything different" (Book III, Ch. XXVI)? Gwendolen's soliloquizing has a piquant air of self-possession and transmits the powerful impression that though circumstances may balk at her ambitions, her will nevertheless is free. Eliot's use of a throng of questions to mirror the intensity of moral struggle antecedent to a decisive commitment is pointedly illustrated by Dostoyevsky's classic study of guilt in Crime and Punishment (1866):

He suddenly paused in his reflections and stood still.
"It shall not be? But what are you going to do to prevent it?
You'll forbid it? And what right have you? What can you
promise them on your side to give you such a right? Your
whole life, your whole future, you will devote to them. . . ?
Yes, we have heard all that before, and that's all words, but
now? Now something must be done, now, do you understand

that? And what are you doing now? . . . who would arrange their lives for them? In another ten years? . . . and my sister? Imagine for a moment what may have become of your sister in ten years? What may happen to her during those ten years? Can you fancy?

(Part I, Ch. IV)

The second function of the interrogative statement in the Gwendolen Harleth plot acts as a challenge, a goad which wrests a definitive reply. In this manner, Eliot's method subtly focuses on the root of human responsibility. Responding to the countless questions posed by others, Gwendolen is constantly viewed in the causative role of making independent decisions which in turn lead to tangible consequences. Her resolutions affirm her liability; in her answers she becomes answerable. Innumerable examples of this kind of interrogative technique are interlaced within the narrative in so natural and unobtrusive a way as almost to escape attention. To capture the flavor of this compositional element, quotations must be lengthy, so that only two will be included here. The first bears upon Gwendolen's decision to renew Grandcourt's courtship despite her initial determination to sever relations with him, and the second concerns Gwendolen's decision to marry Grandcourt despite her vow to Mrs. Glasher:

Gwendolen felt a contradictory desire to be hastened: hurry would save her from deliberate choice. . . .

"But if you don't feel able to decide?" said Mrs. Davilow, sympathisingly.

"I must decide," said Gwendolen, walking to the writing table and seating herself. . . . Why should she not let him come? It bound her to nothing. He had been to Leubronn after her: of course he meant a direct unmistakable renewal of the suit which before had been only implied. What then? She could reject him. Why was she to deny herself the freedom of doing this--which she would like to do?

(Book III, Ch. XXVI)

"Perhaps there is some deeper interest? Some attraction--some engagement--which it would have been only fair to make me aware of? Is there any man who stands between us?"

Inwardly the answer framed itself, "No; but there is a woman." Yet how could she utter this? . . . A fish honestly invited to come and be eaten has a clear course in declining, but how if it finds itself swimming against a net? And apart from the network, would she have dared at once to say anything decisive? . . .

"Am I to understand that some one else is preferred?"

. . . She raised her eyes again and said with something of her former clearness and defiance, "No"--wishing him to understand, "What then?" . . .

Almost to her own astonishment, Gwendolen felt a sudden alarm at the image of Grandcourt finally riding away. What would be left her then?

* * *

"Do you command me to go?" No familiar spirit could have suggested to him more effective words.

"No," said Gwendolen. She could not let him go: that negative was a clutch. She seemed to herself to be, after all, only drifting towards the tremendous decision--but drifting depends on something besides the currents, when the sails have been set beforehand.

"You accept my devotion?" said Grandcourt. . . . how could she contradict herself? What had she detained him for? He had shut out any explanation.

"Yes" came as gravely from Gwendolen's lips as if she had been answering to her name in a court of justice.

(Book III, Ch. XXVII)

Implicit in Eliot's technique of incessant questioning in the Gwendolen Harleth plot is the solid entrenchment of individual responsibility for one's deeds. The fatalistic determinism which hovers over the Classical world picture, be it Gwendolen's, Tito's, or Antigone's, is mitigated by a fine sliver of human freedom, a sliver which raises a mortal from a comic or pathetic personage to the ennobling stature of a tragic figure. Whether Fortune's roulette wheel pitilessly spins its inevitable revolutions according to whimsical chance or inexorable law, that "chance" or that "law" by some mysterious agency is affected by even an insignificant puff of air,

such as the puff which uttered Gwendolen's catastrophic "yes."

Throughout Daniel Deronda, Eliot deliberately plays on the word "fortune" to exhibit the infinite shades of meaning contained in that ambivalent idea. Sometimes she equates this concept with destiny or fatalism, at other times with chance or luck. Sometimes fortune appears fickle, at other times cunning and deliberate. Often fortune is disguised as adversity, while misfortune, paradoxically, may bring happiness. In Daniel Deronda, the goddess of the revolving wheel showers favors by bestowing gifts of talent, personal allure, social status, and riches, or scourges her victims by reducing them to the bondage of poverty, the humiliation of social inferiority, or, as in the case of Gwendolen, by subjecting her to the servitude of a tyrannical husband. Yet Eliot again carefully emphasizes how human character can make the most of the assets and shortcomings which fortune imposes by avoiding the prostitution of personal integrity to what is all too glibly assumed to be "a fortune," namely material wealth. Attracted by the life of leisured ease offered by Grandcourt's vast holdings, Gwendolen ". . . had sold herself . . . had sold her truthfulness and sense of justice . . ." (Book VII, Ch. LIV). By contrast, Catherine Arrowpoint, an heiress and acquaintance of Gwendolen's, gives up "a fortune" to marry the musician, Klesmer, a genius inferior in social station but a man whose human endowments far outweigh any loss of lucre. Eliot's endless interplay of the contrary connotations of "fortune" appears in a conversation between Klesmer and Catherine's indignant parents:

"If Catherine disobeys us we shall disinherit her. You will

not marry her fortune. It is right you should know that."

"Madam, her fortune has been the only thing I have had to regret about her. But I must ask her if she will not think the sacrifice greater than I am worthy of."

"It is no sacrifice to me," said Catherine, "except that I am sorry to hurt my father and mother. I have always felt my fortune to be a wretched fatality of my life."

(Book III, Ch. XXII)

Successful cormorants, fortune hunters, "gold diggers," "free-loaders," and other varieties of the itching palm invariably lose in the Gwendolen Harleth world, in which unmerited gain is fittingly counterbalanced by an equitable loss. Even the supremely talented individual must earn his kudos the hard way. Klesmer, for example, discusses with Gwendolen the arduous road of the authentic artist. He tells her bluntly that she lacks the mettle to undergo the necessary trials to develop her dramatic gifts to the point of excellence:

"I am not decrying the life of the true artist. I am exalting it. I say, it is out of the reach of any but choice organizations--natures framed to love perfection and to labour for it; ready, like all true lovers, to endure, to wait, to say, I am not yet worthy, but she--Art, my mistress--is worthy, and I will live to merit her. An honourable life? Yes. But the honour comes from the inward vocation and the hard-won achievement: there is no honour in donning the life as a livery."

(Book III, Ch. XXIII)

Thus the fortunate few whom fate rewards with unusual gifts necessarily incur a compensating obligation to work unceasingly towards the perfection of their talents. To do less is a travesty of a benefaction. In presenting Klesmer's point of view, Eliot supplies a leitmotif to the general theme of the Gwendolen Harleth story of Daniel Deronda, the theme of affirming human responsibility in grappling with the constant giving and taking, the meeds and penalties, the awards and damages demanded by a regulated and disciplined universal order determined to keep its ballast.

Leaving the cyclical historical pattern of Gwendolen Harleth's story and entering the Zionist part of Daniel Deronda is to experience the same shift of historical perspectives met with by reading Middlemarch after Romola. From the roulette wheel vision of history moving round and round acknowledging change only for the purposes of achieving homeostasis within a fixed order, we move to a linear conception of time, in which the pull of the past no longer drags down hope for the future. The Zionist portion of Daniel Deronda views history as a progressive fulfillment of a vaguely understood but desirable future goal. From a dire sense of inescapable brewing ruin in the Gwendolen Harleth plot, we move to an atmosphere of sanguine expectations, an open-ended vista of obscure yet confident prospects, millennial dreams and uncharted regions of reassurance. Les jeux son faits theme, which from the very first page frames the Gwendolen Harleth section of the work through the imagery of the gambling casino, stands in sharp contrast to the closing picture in the last chapter of the novel. Here we see two Jewish pioneers, Daniel Deronda and his wife, Mirah, preparing for departure to the East in order to help establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. A third pioneer, the mystic Mordecai, who was to join them, dies before the voyage. His death, however, is looked upon as a successful portent of Daniel's mission. The failing Mordecai assures Daniel that death is ". . . both parting and reunion--which takes me from your bodily eyes and gives me full presence in your soul" (Book VIII, Ch. LXX). By ending the novel with an inspiring tribute to the mystic, Eliot reinforces the notion that Mordecai's demise in no way effaces the

buoyant optimism regarding the fate of David's voyage to the Holy Land or the eventual success of his calling:

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame; nothing but well and fair. . . .

Ideally, Eliot's twin plots in Daniel Deronda were doubtlessly intended to be structural counterparts of one another, the Gwendolen Harleth story performing as a "paradise lost" and the Jewish story performing as a "paradise regained." To put it another way, the second plot could serve as the smiling side of the wheel of fortune, in which a benign nemesis rewards a long-suffering people for their perseverance and trust. In either case, the two halves of the novel do not fit together, because the stringent ahistorical world picture of the first is at odds with the amoral historicism of the second. The Gwendolen Harleth plot is rooted in a cosmos driven by traditional ethical principles, whereas the predominant impulse of the Zionist portion derives from the modern ethos of ethnic self-realization, which is political, secular, and collective in nature. At first glance, this assertion seems contradictory because of the dense religious aura which surrounds the second portion of the novel. Judaism imparts a spiritual grandeur to the activities of characters such as Daniel, Mordecai, and Mirah; nevertheless their "providential" mission stems from a nationalistic rather than an ethical core. While Mordecai feeds his visions of a united Israel from the pages of the Old Testament, his justifications for unity reflect stirrings of nineteenth-century historicism, which views the history of a group as a developmental process evolving towards concrete self-definition. The following

words of the ardent Zionist, Mordecai, for example, sound less like those of a religious prophet than of a Fichte, a Guizot, or a Mazzini exhorting fellow citizens to recognize and honor their cultural bonds:

I believe in a growth, a passage, and a new unfolding of life whereof the seed is more perfect, more charged with the elements that are pregnant with diviner form. The life of a people grows, it is knit together and yet expanded, in joy and sorrow, in thought and action; it absorbs the thought of other nations into its own forms, and gives back the thought as new wealth to the world; it is a power and an organ in the great body of the nations. But there may come a check, an arrest . . . --the soul of a people, whereby they know themselves to be one, may seem to be dying for want of common action. But who shall say, "The fountain of their life is dried up, they shall for ever cease to be a nation"? Not he who feels the life of his people stirring within his own.

(Book VI, Ch. XLII)

The impetus for Mordecai's sublime exhortations to unite the Jews politically is a nationalistic fervor which ran rampant in the nineteenth century. While Mordecai's arguments in support of a Jewish state possess the staggering presence of Biblical testimony and the massive spiritual strength of an incredibly enduring Jewish cultural tradition, it must be emphasized that his sentiments are more patriotic than religious. Compare, for example, Mordecai's impassioned pleas to unite Israel with Mazzini's to unite Italy:

Mordecai

The degraded and scorned of our race will learn to think of their sacred land, not as a place for saintly beggary to await death in loathsome idleness, but as a republic where the Jewish spirit manifests itself in a new order.

(Book VI, Ch. XLII)

Mazzini

Without a Country, you have no name, no identity, no voice, no rights, no admission as brothers into the fellowship of nations. You remain the bastards of Humanity, Soldiers without a flag, Jews in a world of Gentiles; you will find neither trust nor protection.

(The Duties of Man)

Let the torch of visible
community be lit!
(Book VI, Ch. XLII)

Nationalities are sacred. . . .
("To the Italians")

I say that the effect of our
separateness will not be com-
pleted and have its highest
transformation unless our race
take on again the character of
a nationality. That is the ful-
fillment of the religious trust
that moulded them into a peo-
ple
(Book VI, Ch. XLII)

Show me if you can, a single
important sign of European
life, that does not proceed
from the social principle, which
does not depend upon the people,
the king of the future
[It is] the common, social faith,
which gains victories; the faith
which awakens the multitudes,
that faith in their destiny, in
their mission. . . .
("Faith and the Future")

The infusion of religious ardor into nationalistic sympathies is characteristic of both men. In the novel, Mordecai even eulogizes the work of Mazzini as Italy's political Messiah in the Risorgimento. Nevertheless, for the very reason that Mordecai has an authentic living religion to champion his aspirations for Jewish unity, his motives may easily be confused with purposes which are religious and ethical in nature rather than goals which, like Mazzini's, are secular, practical, and organizational. Both men, despite their lofty aims, are attempting to consummate a pragmatic ideal, namely, that in union there is strength. The underdog, be he Jew, Italian, or a proletarian worker, was implored by his nineteenth-century leaders to band together with his victimized confrères; he had nothing to lose but his chains. Eliot knew Mazzini very well and urged him to contribute an article to The Westminster Review on "Freedom v. Despotism." She fully shared in the English Italomania of the 1860's, which Mazzini had fostered, and upon his death wrote on March 17, 1872, to Mrs. Peter Taylor

that the impact of his presence would always remain, and that in her opinion:

The greatest gift the hero leaves his race,
Is to have been a hero.

Her democratic sympathy for subjugated peoples is one of the most liberal elements in Eliot's generally conservative temperament. Lord Acton went so far as to declare that Eliot's tolerance for Mazzini was a criminal matter (Harry Rudman. Italian Nationalism and English Letters, pp. 102, 164, 171). In Daniel Deronda, Eliot makes several topical allusions to current happenings which illuminate the desire of afflicted peoples to be liberated from oppressors in order to pilot their own destinies. For example, the plight of the Jamaican Negro is touched upon: "Grandcourt held that the Jamaican Negro was a beastly sort of Baptist Caliban; Deronda said he had always felt a little with Caliban, who naturally had his own point of view and could sing a good song. . ." (Book IV, Ch. XXIX). Daniel, like Eliot, has ". . . a passion for people who are pelted. . ." (Book VIII, Ch. LIX). Eliot in the novel also describes Negro emancipation in the American Civil War as a "mighty drama" in which ideas ". . . with fresh vigour [were] making armies of themselves. . . a time when the soul of man was waking to new pulses which had for centuries been beating in him unheard. . ." (Book II, Ch. XI). On two occasions, Eliot quotes Leopardi's "Ode to Italy," a glorious paean to Italian patriotism:

Beatissimi voi,
Chè offriste il petto alle nemiche lance
Per amor di costei che al sol vi diede

(Book V, Ch. XXXIX)

Leopardi's words are sung by Mirah in a much admired aria by Joseph Leo: "O Patria Mia." By including references to persecuted peoples united by cultural, racial, and other ties of a non-religious nature, Eliot acknowledges that Zionism is primarily grounded in the concept of nationality rather than religion. Yet so taken is she by the powerful cohesive thrust of groups who share a common history, a common culture, or a common racial inheritance, that like Mordecai and Mazzini, she elevates the very yearning for collectivity to a religious passion. In short, while Eliot does not equate Zionism and Judaism, she views Zionism as the finest expression of Judaism. Her peculiar loyalty to the developing historical awareness of all kinds of groups, be they clans, castes, tribes, or national states, is a typical characteristic of her age. To Eliot, the notion of a shared inheritance of a "race," the shared evolution of a people, is the focal point of the Zionist story in Daniel Deronda; and the intrinsic merits of Judaism as a standard-bearer of ethical and religious ideals remains tangential to the decided historical impress of the ideal of emerging nationality.

If the Zionist story unlike the Gwendolen Harlet plot is governed by a frame of reference that is historical rather than ethical in nature, why does such a disjunction of outlooks necessarily impair the artistic unity of the novel? Why is the Classical Greek world picture of Romola and the roulette wheel which rules the fortunes of Gwendolen Harleth necessarily at odds with an understanding of the past as an evolving historical process, such as is evidenced in Middlemarch and the Jewish part of Daniel Deronda? In what ways does the biological imprint of Middlemarch

resemble the stamp of nationalism apparent in Mordecai's Zionism? How is history related to historicism? These are pressing questions at this point, questions whose answers may help disentangle some of the idiosyncrasies not only of Eliot's thought but also those of the nineteenth-century mind.

Unity of structure is the hallmark of good aesthetic form. Henry James tells us in "The Art of Fiction" that "a novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like every other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found . . . that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts." His words seem to echo Aristotle's on dramatic plot: ". . . so too the plot of a play, being the representation of an action, must present it as a unified whole; and its various incidents must be arranged that if any one of them is differently placed or taken away, the effect of wholeness will be seriously disrupted" (On the Art of Poetry, Ch. VIII).

The foremost cause of the artistic fracture within Daniel Deronda lies in the creation of character. The driving forces which influence Gwendolen's sphere, the interaction of freedom of choice, human responsibility, the balancing wheel of fortune, and the strict score card kept by the avenging Furies, bear little or no relevance in assessing a figure whose importance is at least equal to Gwendolen's in the compositional make-up of the novel: the figure of Daniel. Daniel's character remains peculiarly enigmatic, because he does not function according to the assumptions which control the modus operandi of human behavior in the Gwendolen section. To interpret the conduct in the first story with that of the second is like judging a game of tennis with the rules of golf.

Both Gwendolen and Daniel are two irreducible fractions without any common denominator. Unlike Gwendolen's, Daniel's actions are not controlled by his own impulses or even by his own decisions. He does not move on his own but is buffeted by the winds of mysterious historical forces like a man of straw. The great ancestral "collective unconscious" of his undisclosed Jewish heritage forges its way unchecked into his receptive psyche. Unbeknownst to him, Daniel was born a Jew, but was reared as the Gentile stepson of an English aristocrat, Sir Hugo Mallinger. By rescuing a distraught young Jewess, Mirah, from drowning in the Thames, Daniel becomes involved in a circle of London lower-class Jewry in order to find Mirah's long lost brother. His pursuit ends with the discovery that a dying tubercular visionary, Mordecai, who had befriended Daniel, is the object of Mirah's search. Inspired by the Zionist passion of the mystic, Daniel devotes hours to the study of Hebrew and Jewish theology. Mordecai is certain that Daniel is a Jew who has been sent as a spiritual recruit to carry out plans for establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine. "You will be my life: it will be planted afresh; it will grow," Mordecai tells Daniel. "You shall take the inheritance; it has been gathering for ages" (Book V, Ch. XL). Unconvinced by Daniel's gentle protestations to the contrary, Mordecai doggedly sticks to his intuitions, which at the end of the novel turn out to be completely justified. Daniel learns that his parents descended from a long line of distinguished Spanish Jews who settled in Italy to escape the Inquisition. His mother, a great singer, had abandoned him as a child in order to pursue her artistic career, whereupon Sir Hugo adopted him and kept Daniel's

origin a secret. Embracing his newly found birthright, Daniel automatically assumes the obligations of Mordecai's Zionist mission on the strength of racial inheritance alone. The power of his past heritage exacts total concessions from his acquiescent nature, and the pull of his happy home life with devoted Sir Hugo, the pull of his upbringing as an English gentleman exert no pressures on his resolve. History has spoken using Daniel as a marionette. As if he had little choice in the matter, he tells Gwendolen of his sudden awakening to the call of duty:

"I am going to the East to become better acquainted with the condition of my race. . . . The idea that I am possessed with is that of restoring a political existence to my people, making them a nation again, giving them a national centre, such as the English have, though they too are scattered over the face of the globe. That is a task which presents itself to me as a duty: I am resolved to begin it, however feebly . . . At the least, I may awaken a movement in other minds, such as has been awakened in my own."

(Book VIII, Ch. LXIX)

Deronda's mechanical conversion is less an adherence to religious convictions than fealty to the idea of race and nationality. His action parallels a similar situation in Eliot's poem, The Spanish Gypsy, in which Fedalma, "a faithful soul," gives up marriage to a nobleman when she learns she is a gypsy. She joins her father to help regenerate her tribe and goes to ". . . a promised land beyond the sea . . . [to] make a nation" (Book I, p. 135). Hereditary bonds of race strengthened by a developing historical consciousness are rendered in evolutionary terms. She feels the power of community in ". . . the mystic stirring of a common life" (Book I, p. 124), and the linear movement of that collective history ". . . feeding an embryo future, offspring strange/Of the

fond Present . . ." (Book I, p. 25). Like Fedalma, Daniel feels ". . . the electric chain of ancestry . . ." (Book VIII, Ch. LX) when he discovers his Hebrew origins, and like Fedalma goes off to a promised land to found a nation. Viewing Daniel's motives through the reasoning of the Spanish gypsy girl isolates the predominant impulses of his energies, namely, a romantic fascination with the past history of his people coupled with a patriotic compulsion to unite them. Just as Gwendolen's decisions are centered squarely within her will, Daniel's are determined entirely by forces outside himself. Frequently pictured on horseback controlling the reins, Gwendolen is given full measure of credit for the control and direction of her steed. On the other hand, in Daniel's world, one sits like a child on a wooden horse in a merry-go-round and waits patiently for the unknown sources of energy to stir things into action. In Hegelian terms, Daniel is a "world-historical" individual, the implement of history's grand design, like a will-less Napoleon, whom Hegel described as "the world spirit on horseback."

Characters in the Zionist section feel coerced into doing things and usually submit without a murmur. Mirah is submissive to the point of dullness: "It is not her nature to run into planning and devising: only to submit" (Book III, Ch. XX). The consumptive Mordecai, despite his prophetic self-confidence, knows himself to be driven by "remote stirrings" of the "growing soul" of a growing world. What reaches man ". . . stays with him, rules him: he must accept it, not knowing its pathway" (Book V, Ch. XL). Daniel in turn accepts Mordecai's transfer of spiritual vocation with the

words: "That blent transmission must go on without any choice of ours . . ." (Book VIII, Ch. LXIII). Like Fedalma, Daniel sees inherited tradition as the clue to meaning in life, the ancestral life which lies within us ". . . as a dim longing for unknown objects and sensations, and the spellbound habit of their inherited frames . . ." (Book VIII, Ch. LXIII). The force of tradition is most tellingly accentuated in the splendid minor figure of Daniel's mother, who had in her youth vehemently renounced Judaism. Nevertheless, she feels inwardly compelled to meet with the son whom she had abandoned in order to tell him of his origins. "I obey something tyrannic . . . I have been forced to obey my dead father. I have been forced to tell you that you are a Jew, and deliver to you what he commanded me to deliver" (Book VII, Ch. LI). That compelling power, she says, is the expression of "something stronger" than her own defiant will. "But that stronger Something" Daniel replies, "has determined that I shall be all the more the grandson whom also you willed to annihilate" (Book VII, Ch. LIII).

The vagueness of that "Something" lies like a pall over the entire Zionist portion of Daniel Deronda. Shrouded in religious mysticism, that "Something" is historical determinism, or "historicism," a belief that the individual is at the mercy of the zeitgeist, a progressively advancing collective consciousness moving towards an abstruse collective destiny. The zeitgeist is a romantic principle. This principle assumes that a nation is an organic unity, a race with a unique cultural identity moving towards greater self-determination. A nation like an individual is natus or born. History, be it of a class, a territorial region, or a culture becomes a secular providence

working itself out through the medium of earthly affairs. Like the theory of biological evolution, cultural or racial historicism emphasizes the notion of continuous, not cyclical progressive movement, the developing self-realization, and the unconscious emerging apperception of a people. In Mordecai's words, "I believe in a growth, a passage, and a new unfolding of life whereof the seed is more perfect . . . the life of a people grows . . ." (Book VI, Ch. XLII). This sentiment is not Judaism, but pure nineteenth-century historicism in a Jewish setting. The concept of a "chosen people" is used by Mordecai as a convenient camouflage of an ethical ideal by an historical one. While the Jews were the first to believe in a messianic commitment, that is, a prophecy of deliverance through historical time, the faith in transcendent universal divinity remained paramount to more mundane hopes of perpetuating a nation. Eliot obviously intended to fortify Biblical echoes of the messianic idea by using the names of Daniel and Mordecai as the principal Zionists in her novel. In The Bible, messianic expectations appear in the last chapter of The Book of Daniel, and nationalistic virtues are extolled by praising Mordecai's deeds in The Book of Esther. Nevertheless, nationality in the Old Testament never displaces the presence of God, while in historicism, the nation becomes a divine end in itself.

If the principle of nationality and the zeitgeist are endowed with religious attributes, then history becomes holy and the collective destiny of a people becomes sacrosanct. Like Bildad, the secular tempter in Archibald MacLeish's J. B., historicism proclaims that God is history. History becomes a protagonist, an immanent

spiritual entity replacing both the idea of a transcendent deity and the idea of a universe based on moral sanctions enforced by the agency of nemesis. According to an historicist point of view, standards of good and evil are interpreted in the light of securing the fullest blossoming of history's inner bent, whether that bent be the slow maturation of a dialectical movement such as a Hegel and Marx might suggest, or a step-by-step advance in an enormous program with dimly understood beginnings moving towards obscure ends, such as a Comte and a Buckle would assume. The study of the past contained the prognosis of the history's successive stages of self-exteriorization. In the nineteenth century, man's redemption, as John T. Marcus puts it in Heaven, Hell and History, lay in participating in the historical ideal. History then had a theological burden as a new instrument of salvation by immortalizing the individual through his contribution to the infinite progress and to the eternal presence of mankind (p. 71). It became the function of the historian to decipher the hidden clues of history's master plan. The past was an oracle, the lodestar of the future, and the historian a prophet. In biology, historicism inspired The Origin of Species, in philosophy The Phenomenology of Spirit, in poetry Faust, in politics the unification of Italy and Germany, and in the works of George Eliot, historicism produced the milieu of Middlemarch and the Zionist part of Daniel Deronda.

Both Daniel in Daniel Deronda and Dorothea in Middlemarch are prey to the permutations of the time-spirit. "Who that cares much to know the history of man," Eliot writes in the Prelude to Middlemarch, would learn ". . . how the mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of Time. . . ." Dorothea's ardent nature

blunders gauchely in a medium foreign to her potentially heroic temperament, a ". . . young and noble impulse struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect social state, in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith the aspect of illusion" (Finale). Like Dorothea, Daniel flounders but luckily is rescued by a Zionist ideal, which provides the spiritual stimulation absent in Dorothea's life. Neither, however, has any choice in the matter. Both wander aimlessly, vaguely hoping for something to happen. Luckily for Daniel, the call of nationality via a newly discovered inheritance provides him with a mission, but the less fortunate Dorothea, "a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing" (Prelude), merely keeps on drifting. In a historicist world, one either fits in with the changing times or one settles for a life bereft of profound meaning. Since evolutionary movement is central to this vision, the relativity of all human concepts, barring the necessity of history's ineluctable thrust forward, is an inescapable condition of knowledge and belief. Virtue and a sense of duty are arrived at by a kind of sensitivity training to the incessant shower of obscure new cues which bombard the individual consciousness through the agency of continuing change. Good and bad are no longer absolute ethical norms but degrees of personal adjustment. Good is defined by the ability to "tune in," and bad by "tuning out."

In such a system, evil is not centered in human volition but is the result of an incompatibility between the group will versus the individual temperament. The traditional values of responsibility, fault, error, and sin have little relevance for historicism. Loyalty to felt stirrings of the historic sense is the one redeeming virtue.

If Fedalma in The Spanish Gypsy had not returned to her gypsy people, she would have thwarted a collective social faith to satisfy selfish individualistic inclinations. That her tribe may have been a band of thieving cutthroats ill-deserving of her fidelity would in a historicist world be entirely beside the point. If Daniel had traced his lineage to one of less elevated moral stature than Judaism, his conversion would be still considered proper and right. Would he have joined the Tartars, if such were his ancestral race? Or the Australian aborigines? The Terra del Fuegians? In The Mill on the Floss, Eliot comments, "If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie" (Book VI, Ch. 14)? This confinement of duty to the honoring of local community and immediate family ties in the earlier novel is expanded in Daniel Deronda and The Spanish Gypsy into a glorification of "duty" towards all ancestral and racial bonds, whatever they may be. Daniel is compelled to obey historical powers beyond the verdict of his own judgment. If Gwendolen lived in an evolutionary cosmos lacking the strict canons which bound her conscience, she need not have suffered any remorse for her "crime." How could she help it if unfortunate conditions pushed her into marrying Grandcourt? How could she foresee the changes which forced her to break a vow to Mrs. Glasher? Why should she feel guilt about her murderous intentions towards her husband? After all, she didn't make him drown. She was just a victim of circumstances:

Guilt is a sociological accident;
Wrong class--wrong century--
You pay for your luck with your licks, that's all.
(Archibald MacLeish, J. B.,
Scene Nine)

Placed in a historicist setting, the Gwendolen Harleth story would

lack the ethical imperatives which raise her portion of the novel to the level of tragedy. On the other hand, in a tragic setting the Daniel story would dissolve for want of a constraining individual conscience genuinely responsive to conflicts between pressures of id and super-ego, between a person's will and an unyielding environment, or between a moral and a tribal bond. A double standard of values exists at the core of Daniel Deronda, one for Gwendolen and another for Daniel. This double standard inhibits the integral vision fundamental to the novel's unity, since the reader see-saws from one frame of convictions to another like a fascinated spectator seated on a park bench situated midway between two prepossessing soapbox orators on a fine Sunday morning.

The amorality of Daniel's motives is screened by Eliot's presentation of Judaism as a powerful moral stimulus in the shaping of the Western mind, ". . . a national faith, which had penetrated the thinking of half the world, and moulded the splendid forms of that world's religion. . ." (Book IV, Ch. XXXII). Mordecai is convinced that ". . . a whole Christian is three-fourths a Jew. . ." (Book VII, Ch. LII), and he declares, "Where else is there a nation of whom it may as truly be said that their religion and law and moral life mingled as the stream of blood in the heart and made one growth. . ." (Book VI, Ch. XLII)? His words paraphrase Eliot's feelings. In a letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe (29 October 1876), Eliot wrote:

But towards the Hebrews we western people who have been reared in Christianity have a peculiar debt and, whether we acknowledge it or not, a peculiar thoroughness of fellowship in religious and moral sentiment. Can anything be more disgusting

than to hear people called "educated" making small jokes about eating ham, and showing themselves empty of any real knowledge as to the relation of their own social and religious life to the history of the people they think themselves witty in insulting? They hardly know that Christ was a Jew. And I find men educated at Rugby supposing that Christ spoke Greek. To my feeling, this deadness to the history which has prepared half our world for us. . . lies very close to the worst kind of irreligion.

(Haight, ed. The George Eliot Letters, Vol. VI, pp. 301-2)

Prior to becoming a novelist, Eliot shared the provincial narrowness of Englishmen towards the Semite. She vehemently disliked Disraeli's exalted portrait of the Jew, Sidonia, in Coningsby, and she stated flatly in a letter to John Sibree (11 February 1848) that "Everything specifically Jewish is of a low grade" (Haight, ed., The George Eliot Letters, Vol. I, p. 247). In the same letter, she also says that Disraeli's theory of racial inheritance ". . . has not a leg to stand on." Her early intolerance was gradually erased by closer acquaintance with a widening circle of impressive Jews, people like Sidonia, Mordecai, and Daniel. Before Eliot wrote Daniel Deronda, the old stereotype of the Shylock-Fagin-Barabas tradition was still strongly entrenched in the popular imagination of the nineteenth-century gentile. The Jew portrayed in literature as Christ-killer, miser, fawning hypocrite, usurer, and greedy parvenu, continued to activate deep-seated hatreds, although a few sympathetic portraits, besides those of Disraeli, began to fracture ancient prejudices. There exist Lessing's Nathan the Wise (1799), Maria Edgeworth's Harrington (1811), Scott's Ivanhoe (1819), Byron's Hebrew Melodies (1814-16), Shelley's The Wandering Jew (1810), and Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra" (1855). Eliot's novel displays a socio-

logical spectrum of Jewish types, which include the musical genius, Klesmer; the mystic, Mordecai; the English gentleman, Daniel; the actress, Mirah; the second-hand bookseller, Miller; the saddler, Buchan; the watchmaker, Pash; the optical instrument maker, Gideon; the shoemaker, Croop; the wood-inlayer, Goodwin; the laboratory assistant, Marrables; the copying clerk, Lilly; the pawnbroker, Cohen; the thief, Lapidoth; and the "wanderer," Kalonymos. Last but not least, the novel contains the superb characterization of Daniel's derelict mother, whose classic comment curiously anticipates a modern Jewish archetype. "I was not," she tells Daniel, "a Jewish mother to you" (Book VII, Ch. LIII).

A second reason for Eliot's sympathetic rendering of Judaism has already been touched upon, that is, her democratic support of all oppressed peoples seeking a centralized core, a state or a territory from which to shape their own destinies. From her standpoint, nationalism was a sacred impulse which bound communities together and fostered their best interests. Little could she foresee the militant forms of rabid patriotism which bred the racial hatreds of a later day, hatreds which sought the extermination of "inferior" races, such as Jews and Gypsies, and ironically impelled the shocked conscience of the world to create the modern state of Israel. Despite the fact that Eliot could not envision the kinds of destruction caused by separatist beliefs in the "blood-consciousness" of a group, the theory of racial determinism which she championed led to the sundering and splintering of the grand eighteenth-century cosmopolitan ideal of universal fraternité. Like many thinkers in

her time, Eliot embraced the ideal of "racial" solidarity because of the biological saturation of historicism with Darwin's The Origin of Species. Collective entities were looked upon as distinct species united not only by cultural bonds but also by ties of blood and common ancestry, with each species struggling, evolving, and progressing towards self-realization. In Daniel Deronda, Judaism as a religion and a cultural heritage too often becomes obscured by Eliot's repetitive insistence on Hebrew ties of race, blood, and parentage. The following statements are typical of this kind of emphasis throughout the Zionist part of the novel:

"The divine principle of our race is action, choice, resolved memory."

(Book VI, Ch. XLII)

In fact, pure English blood . . . did not declare itself predominantly in the party [of Jews] at present assembled.

(Book VI, Ch. XLII)

"What is the citizenship of him who . . . has no hearty kindred . . . with his own race?"

(Book VI, Ch. XLII)

". . . our separateness will not be completed . . . unless our race take on again the character of a nationality."

(Book VI, Ch. XLII)

". . . the Hebrew blood which has maintained its vigour in all climates. . . ."

(Book VI, Ch. XLII)

"Then our race shall have an organic center. . . ."

(Book VI, Ch. XLII)

"The degraded and scorned of our race. . . ."

(Book VI, Ch. XLII)

"But I consider it my duty . . . to identify myself . . . with my hereditary people. . . ."

(Book VII, Ch. LIII)

It seemed as if her words called out a latent obstinacy of race

in him.

(Book VII, Ch. LI)

"I am going to the East to become better acquainted with the condition of my race. . . ."

(Book VIII, Ch. LXIX)

". . . I was a Jew and felt the heart of my race beating within me."

(Book V, Ch. XL)

"You are perhaps of our race?"

(Book IV, Ch. XXXIII)

Eliot's emphasis on hereditary unity based on the nebulous concept of race, her equation of "race" and "people" in Daniel Deronda and The Spanish Gypsy, leads to a fatalistic determinism of birth and blood, which relegates religious persuasion, ethical belief, and individual conscience to subordinate positions in the spiritual framework of nationality. Eliot neatly avoids the problem of evil raised by the racial myth by engaging her historicist characters in "good" collective causes. Though Dorothea in Middlemarch misses her vocation by being born at the wrong time, Daniel's birth coincides with the sublime mission of helping to rescue his people from the subjugation of a millenium and a half, and Fedalma of The Spanish Gypsy becomes involved in a patriotic venture on behalf of her distressed gypsy tribe. Each mission, however, rings false. Unlike Verdi's Aida (1871), whom Fedalma resembles, the gypsy girl was not raised with her people and never developed the true communal bonds of family and caste, bonds which spring out of love and long association. So Daniel. It is curious that Eliot's historicism, which stresses the consequence of shared collective past ties, should slight the importance of a shared upbringing in shaping that very historical consciousness. Instead of crediting

nurture for the construction of our loyalties, Eliot credits the collective voice of ancestors communicating mysteriously through hereditary channels of kinship and blood.

To the historicist mind, the Jews as a group had the added appeal of being a living relic of antiquity, a "chosen people" who had in Darwinian terms successfully endured an arduous struggle for existence since Biblical times. "If there are ranks in suffering," Eliot quotes Zunz in Daniel Deronda, "Israel takes precedence of all the nations-- if the duration of sorrows and the patience with which they are borne ennoble, the Jews are among the aristocracy of every land. . ."(Book VI, Ch. XLII). What Zunz calls "aristocracy" is the extraordinary adaptability and pliancy of the Jewish will-to-live. To Jewish commentators of the late nineteenth century, this collective capacity to survive fitted in well with Darwinian ideas of natural selection. Because of their unusual history, the Jews as a nation appeared not only divinely chosen but naturally select. In an essay by Simon Dubnow, "The Doctrine of Jewish Nationalism" (1897), Zionism is expressed in Darwinian metaphors:

What force, then, was it that kept alive this dispersed nation, without state and without territory, all these centuries? . . . Over a period of many generations, unique characteristics, emotions, and historical tendencies, the effects of the sufferings and pains of the past, were brought out by the law of heredity. . . The weapons used by the nation in its struggle for survival were adapted to more difficult conditions. In this struggle there were critical and dangerous moments. . . when weaker parts of the nation were cut off and assimilated with other peoples. In the end, however, the healthy kernel of the nation survived and drew its strength from a determined national will.

(Michael Selzer, ed. Zionism Reconsidered: The Rejection of Jewish Normalcy, pp. 140-1)

Eliot's growing admiration for Judaism was amplified by her Darwinism and her avid historicist belief in the power of resurgent nationalism especially in a people inspired by a Divine Covenant. These reasons moved her to examine the messianic strain of Jewish thinking in Daniel Deronda. While Eliot infuses the Zionist part with impassioned displays of what Walter Houghton describes in The Victorian Frame of Mind as the nineteenth-century "cult of noble emotions," that is, a sublime enthusiasm for exalted vague longings exciting aspiration, hope, and love, Eliot nevertheless recognized the dynamics of those noble emotions in shaping the future state of Israel. A street in Tel Aviv is named after her in deference to her substantial support of the Jewish cause in the prophetic Daniel Deronda. How curious that a provincial English girl who grew up to write novels about early nineteenth-century English life should end her creative career with a proclamation of Jewish nationalism! How strange that among the foremost nineteenth-century partisans of the Jewish national awakening, such as Moses Hess, Leon Pinsker, Sir Moses Montefiore, and Theodor Herzl, there stands a Zionist Gentile: the author of Silas Marner and Adam Bede!

To objectify the sublime feelings, the solemn yearnings, and the nascent sympathies kindled by an unfulfilled ideal, Eliot laces the Zionist section with the language of aspiration. An overdose of such language in a novel often leads to an affected artificiality, sentimentality, and nebulosity. The speech of the characters becomes stilted, as ordinary conversation strains to be impressive and lofty in keeping with the grandeur of the ideal goal. Such is the

case in the Jewish part of Daniel Deronda. The atmosphere of the Sabbath pervades the sermonizing discourses of Daniel; Mordecai's utterances are unrelieved mystical outpourings, and Mirah gushes forth geysers of high-minded munificent expressions like a school-girl reciting her daily catechism. The language of aspiration, if uncontrolled in a novel, imparts a loose and indefinite flavor of generality to the text, a flavor which tends to destroy the palpable down-to-earth sense of reality for which the novel as a genre is justly celebrated. Such writing is typical in a romantic disposition, which too often offers obscurity as a substitute for the ineffable and muddies waters to make them appear deep. In an essay, "Romanticism and Classicism" (1913), T.E. Hulme describes his irritation with romantic verbal extravagance, which had for a hundred years or more debauched us into believing that vagueness and hankerings after the infinite were unimpeachable signs of great writing:

You might say if you wished that the whole of the romantic attitude seems to crystallize in verse round metaphors of flight. Hugo is always flying, flying over abysses, flying up into the eternal gases. The word infinite in every other line.

In the classical attitude you never seem to swing right along to the infinite nothing. . . You never go blindly into an atmosphere more than the truth, an atmosphere too rarefied for man to breathe for long.

(Stallman, ed. Critiques and Essays in Criticism, p. 6)

Unfortunately, the Zionist part of Daniel Deronda suffers from precisely this sort of romantic overindulgence. Doubtless the mystic, the fanatical idealist, and the dedicated patriot are less apt to express themselves with the humor, the easy tolerance, and the petty trivia which fills the chatter of a less committed mortal.

Nevertheless, a steady diet of sanctimonious statements, such as the following, robs the Zionist narrative of the rich human tone which pervades the Gwendolen Harleth story:

"Death and life are one before the Eternal. I know our fathers slew their children and then slew themselves to keep their souls pure. I meant it so. But now I am commanded to live."
(Book II, Ch. XVII)

She lifted her eyes to his and said with reverential fervour, "The God of our fathers bless you and deliver you from all evil. . . ."
(Book II, Ch. XVIII)

"A curse is on your generation, child. They will open the mountains and drag forth the golden wings and coin them into money. . . ."
(Book V, Ch. XXXVIII)

"For the sin of the father my soul must go into exile. For the sin of the father the work was broken, and the day of fulfillment delayed. She who bore me was desolate, disgraced, destitute."
(Book VI, Ch. XLIII)

"But there came new messengers from the Eternal. I had to bow under the yoke that presses on the great multitudes born of woman: family troubles called me. . . ."
(Book V, Ch. XL)

". . . for as our life becomes more spiritual by capacity of thought, and joy therein, possession tends to become more universal, being independent of gross material contact. . . ."
(Book VIII, Ch. LXI)

". . . yet it does not exclude the willing marriage which melts soul into soul, and makes thought fuller as the clear waters are made fuller, where the fulness is inseparable and the clearness is inseparable."
(Book VIII, Ch. LXIII)

Such "conversation" approaches the heightened reaches of prayer, invocation, and incantation and thus remains foreign to the commonplace idiom of everyday speech, Jewish or otherwise. The elevated and generalized language of the Zionist section of Daniel Deronda jars strikingly with the tangibility of metaphor, the graphic

quality of thought and action, characteristic of the Gwendolen Harleth plot, examples of which have already been cited from the gambling scene of the opening chapter of the novel. This contrast in the use of language contributes substantially to the separation of mood between the two sections of Daniel Deronda and inhibits any attempt at reconciliation between the two stories. To use T. E. Hulme's dichotomy in his forementioned essay, the idiom in the Gwendolen Harleth part is classic, while that of the Zionist part is romantic. By "classical," Hulme means that a writer rarely gets carried away by vagaries inspired by idealism: "In the classic it is always the light of ordinary day, never the light that never was on land or sea. It is always perfectly human and never exaggerated: man is always man and never a god" (Stallman, ed., op. cit., p. 10). Just as the classical conception of man as a fixed and limited creature controls the vivid graphic rhetoric of the first portion of the novel, so the romantic dream of the limitless potential of the human being moving steadily towards a progressively brighter future controls the amorphous rhetoric of aspiration of the second portion. Each hemisphere of the novel has its own vernacular, so to speak, and neither speaks a common tongue.

Eliot never explicitly states just how she understood the two plots of Daniel Deronda to be connected to one another, except to assert unequivocally in a letter already quoted that they were. Though a critical examination of the novel argues against the success of her artistic intention to unite both stories, it is important to investigate what she had in mind. To reach the marrow of her conceptual out-

look requires the winnowing out of preconceptions which make her position appear justified.

From Eliot's standpoint, one could argue that both stories are cemented together by an all-encompassing environmental fatalism to which Daniel and Gwendolen with varying degrees of cooperation or resistance are forced to submit. In a few afterthoughts on The Spanish Gypsy, Eliot stated that fatalism is the essence of tragedy, which she defines as the adjustment of our lot to the unrelenting necessity of forces beyond our control. Tragedy, she quotes, is "The dire strife/ Of poor Humanity's afflicted will/ Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny." She explains that fate in The Spanish Gypsy is symbolized by ". . . hereditary conditions in the largest sense, and of the fact that what we call duty is entirely made up of such conditions. . . ." (J.W. Cross. George Eliot's Life, Vol. III, pp. 32-3). In The Spanish Gypsy as in Daniel Deronda the inexorable pressure of biological inheritance brought into prominence by Darwinism serves as a substitute for the fates and furies of Greek drama. Thus the findings of modern science supplied for Eliot the stringent laws of necessity characteristic of the inescapable moira of the ancient pagans. Eliot avoids having to distinguish between the two kinds of determinism by covering both sections of the novel with a conveniently comprehensive umbrella: the term "destiny." This word had a peculiar vogue in the last century, when phrases such as "a man of destiny," "manifest destiny," or the title to Verdi's opera, "La Forza del Destino," were commonplace. Both parts of Daniel Deronda are riddled with references to destiny, which at times refers to a foreordained state, a predetermined

course of events. At other times the word is befogged in a romantic haze of blurred allusions about an indeterminate future. Often destiny is associated with God's will or Providence, and sometimes the power of destiny appears to be dominated and driven by capricious agencies of luck or chance. The following selections from Daniel Deronda illustrate the inordinate diversity of connotations inherent in the term:

. . . the automatic voice of destiny . . .
(Book I, Ch. I)

"Le jeu ne va plus" said destiny.
(Book I, Ch. I)

. . . her destiny must be one of luxurious ease. . . .
(Book I, Ch. II)

. . . who can wonder if Gwendolen felt ready to manage her own destiny?
(Book I, Ch. IV)

. . . Mr. Grandcourt who had come . . . to make a chief epoch in her destiny. . . .
(Book II, Ch. XIII)

. . . a losing destiny did not press upon her as a fear. . . .
(Book IV, Ch. XXXI)

. . . destiny in the shape of Mephistopheles playing at chess with man for his soul. . . .
(Book V, Ch. XXXVII)

The thoughts of his heart seemed too precious . . . not to have a further destiny.
(Book V, Ch. XXXVIII)

". . . as if I were awaiting the destiny that could interpret the oracle."
(Book V, Ch. XL)

"I have had experience . . . in the story of a spiritual destiny embraced willingly. . . ."
(Book V, Ch. XL)

. . . but he was not caring for destinies still moving in the dim streets of our earthly life. . . .
(Book VI, Ch. XLIII)

. . . a mind consciously, energetically moving with the larger march of human destinies. . . .

(Book VI, Ch. XLIII)

. . . Deronda's life could be determined by the historical destiny of the Jews. . . .

(Book VI, Ch. XLIV)

Gazing with a sad surprise
At surging visions of her destiny--
(Motto, Book VII, Ch. LI)

. . . moving like creatures who were fulfilling a supernatural destiny. . . .

(Book VII, Ch. LIV)

. . . she no more thought of . . . [them] as likely to make a difference in her destiny. . . .

(Book VIII, Ch. LXV)

He felt more than a presentiment . . . at this turn of destiny.

(Book VIII, Ch. LXIX)

. . . the great movements of the world, the larger destinies of mankind . . . enter like an earthquake into their own lives. . . .

(Book VIII, Ch. LXIX)

The use of "destiny" to replace Greek "fate" obscures the notion of progressive expectation implicit in the former word. Belief in destiny is often associated with an optimistic turn of mind, while fate brings with it overtones of pessimism and despair. Though both words are used as synonyms, a subtle distinction remains between them. Destiny often points to the genius of the open future, while fate alludes to the hopeless strangleholds by unseen powers smothering the hopes of men. In short, destiny befits the determinism of an historicist world drunk with the future, while fate accords better with the Classical Greek vision. For example, to substitute fate for destiny in Schiller's famous line from Wallenstein's Death would undermine the buoyant surge of confidence felt by the hero. To say that "I am a man of fate" sounds dismal

when compared to the sanguine anticipation of "I am a man of destiny." Both words imply an irrevocable course for man, a course governed by stringent cosmic laws, either cyclical or progressive. In this respect, Eliot is warranted in using the terms interchangeably. A world controlled by scientific laws of biological determinism or by pre-established historical patterns resembles the relentless prescriptions of a Classical Greek order of things. In Science and the Modern World, Whitehead sees a close similarity between scientific determinism and Greek drama:

The pilgrim fathers of the scientific imagination as it exists today are the great tragedians of ancient Athens, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides. Their vision of fate, remorseless and indifferent, urging a tragic incident to its inevitable issue, is the vision possessed by science . . . The laws of physics are the decrees of fate.

(Ch. 1)

Whitehead's attitude could validate Eliot's assumption that the biological destiny regulating Daniel's life is of the same nature as Gwendolen's battle with nemesis. From the viewpoint of individual behavior, however, the difference is critical. A scientific world is not an ethical universe, yet a Greek world is. Scientific laws are impervious to the moral actions of men, while the very stability of the Greek cosmos depends on keeping human passions in balance. Sin, hubris, hamartia vitally disturb the harmony of the spheres and necessitate the defensive vigilance of the Furies. Morality is an intrinsic part of the physical order in the Greek picture; morality in the modern scientific sphere is irrelevant. Thus Gwendolen's miscarriage of virtue demands an acknowledgment of guilt and responsibility and the consequent burden of retributive payment. On the other hand, Daniel's actions are impelled by a hereditary determin-

ism imposed by biological laws beyond the reach of his conscience, his accountability, or his freedom of choice. The rift between the two plots remains, because the spiritual forces germane to the Gwendolen Harleth story are alien to those which propel the Zionist part.

In conclusion, the study of Romola, Middlemarch, and Daniel Deronda has brought to light the dual strain in Eliot's attitude towards history. In labeling herself a "conservative-reformer," she was aware of this conflict in her temperament. As a "conservative," Eliot treasured the traditional tableau of a fixed and ordered universe, in which the writing of history was merely a preservation of vicissitudes bearing little vital connection to the underlying structure and functioning of the total system. The historical novelist filled an important craving to satisfy what Henry James called "the hunger for history," that is, an intense curiosity to know not only ". . . the immediate crudity of what 'happens,' but the much finer complexity" in which ". . . hats and dental work. . . form part of the un-created history of the race. . ." (Novel, A Forum on Fiction, Spring 1970, p. 260). The traditional concept of the role of history in the novel appears in the minutely detailed static canvas of Romola. As a "reformer," however, Eliot began to view history as an evolutionary process, so much so that Darwinism and historicism indelibly mark the last two novels, Middlemarch and the Zionism of Daniel Deronda. Like Darwinism, Zionism was spurred by the doctrine of development, one in the biological, the other in the political sphere. Eliot, like many in her age, turned to the idea of nationality as spiritual succor in counteracting the religious

bankruptcy of The Origin of Species. History as historicism was imbued with mystical attributes, and history became prophecy. Despite modern disesteem for nineteenth-century historicist predictions, the establishment of the state of Israel in the twentieth century prompts even the most jaded skeptic to acknowledge Eliot's astonishing prescience.

The "conservative-reformer" split in Eliot's outlook mirrored a similar duplexity in the Victorian psyche, that is, the coupling of the critical spirit and the will to believe, a psyche which was, to use Carlyle's words, "at once destitute of faith and terrified at skepticism." This state of mind resulted in a tension, such as Walter Houghton described in The Victorian Frame of Mind, a "tension between the emancipated head and the traditional heart" (pp. 106-7). In honoring the advanced intellectual thought of her day, Eliot carefully sifted and salvaged the wealth of the past. A foolish consistency, Emerson's hobgoblin, was secondary to Eliot's urgent impulse to rescue the precious cast-offs of the scientific avant-garde. If all truth were prey to the permutations of the time-spirit, this fact also applied to the latest paradigms of science. Holding The Origin of Species in one hand, Eliot kept a strong grip on Oedipus Rex in the other. The two worlds were not fused by her, but neither was refused.

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